

# GENERAL APPROACH RES-Partnership

# The Challenging Communities Sweden

*A stated goal of the Campaign for Take-Off is the identification of "100 communities" aiming at 100% renewable energy supply preferably using a combination of several different technologies. The Challenging communities was a project launched by the Swedish Society for Nature conservation in 1998. In three years running period the five participating Swedish municipalities have exchanged experiences and ideas while working to become more independent of fossil fuels.*

## THE CITIES

**Uppsala** is one of Sweden's largest municipalities, with 188 000 inhabitants. The city has a long tradition in trying out new ideas and technologies, mostly due to the fact that two large and modern universities are situated in the city.

**Lund**, a university town with 98 000 inhabitants is situated in the dynamic Oresund region in the southern part of the country.

**Växjö**, "the town bordering the lakes where the roads come together" has a population of 73 000. It's the capital of the Kronoberg län.

**Säffle** has a population of 17 000. The business sector is highly varied with processing, e.g. pulp and paper industries and mechanical industry as well as high tech companies and small and medium scale enterprises.

**Övertorneå** is a small town with 6 000 inhabitants, situated in the Torne River valley near the Finnish border.



## CONTEXT

Five Swedish municipalities Uppsala, Lund, Växjö, Säffle and Övertorneå were invited to join in the project "Challenging Communities" by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC). The Challenging Communities was a three year co-operation between the SSNC and the five mentioned municipalities started in the beginning of 1998 to create practical examples on how to phase out the use of fossil fuels in society. The aim was also to produce challenges towards other municipalities and companies to join the phase out and towards the national government and different international bodies to cut back on the obstacles that counteract the vision of a future free from fossil fuels.

These municipalities are aware that the rich countries must take the lead and show the way towards sustainable development. Therefore they wanted to take their share of the responsibility, to make a constructive contribution to raising the tempo of political action on the issue of climate change, in brief to change their society. They decided to initiate this development. As far as possible these five municipalities desire to use the absolute minimum of fossil fuel, initially in municipal activities but in the long term in the entire area of each municipality. In the activities of the municipality and each municipality owned company shall, on the long term basis, cease to use fossil fuels.

# EXPERIENCE OF THE CHALLENGING COMMUNITIES

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, SSNC<sup>1</sup>, and the municipality of Växjö were co-operating from 1995-1997 on Agenda 21 programs. This collaboration inspired the City Council to decide to “stop using fossil fuels within the municipal activities”. This decision was taken in autumn 1996 (see case card on Växjö). By launching the project “Challenging Communities” in the beginning of 1998, the SSNC intended to make use of the experiences from the co-operation with Växjö and to inspire other communities to decide getting fossil fuels free as well. SSNC invited the five Swedish cities: Lund, Säfte, Växjö, Uppsala and Övertorneå to be the Challenging Communities for the three year project period (1998 to November 2000).



## The organisation of The Challenging Communities Program

The SSNC's headquarter has co-ordinated the project through out the three years. The purposes of the participation of the local SSNC groups are that they should share their ideas of action/measures to be taken and to be the connection the local citizens. The municipalities should then execute the appropriated measures.

Representatives for the five communities and from the local SSNC group met 4-5 times a year in 2 or 3 days seminars and workshops to educate, to exchange experiences and to discuss certain issues. These seminars have had different themes, as: carbon dioxide measurements/calculations, environmental political leadership, EU and dialog at national level, methods, strategies and target setting, how to motivate people, environmental work in schools and kindergartens, public transport solutions, how to decrease the demand for transportation, how to increase the energy efficiency, heating, etc.. Between the seminars, the municipalities continued their work often in communication with the local SSNC group or help from each other.

## Objectives for the five cities

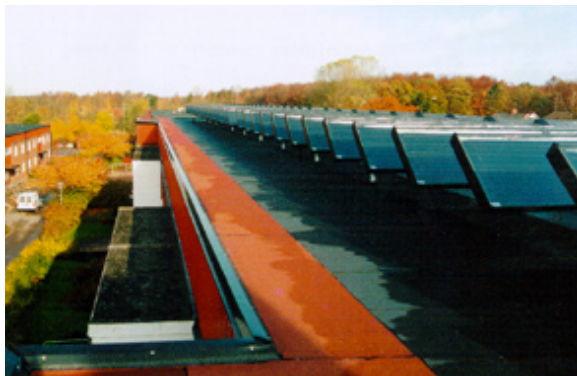
City	Base year	Target year	CO <sub>2</sub> - reduction in percent
Lund	1995	2005	Reduction of road traffic emissions by 25%
	1995	2050	75% taken as a whole
Säfte	1995	2025	50% taken as a whole
Växjö	1993	2010	50% / inhabitants (from 4.62 ton/ inhabitant in 1993 till 2.31 ton/ inhabitant in 2010)
Uppsala	1990	2010	Reduction of road traffic emissions by 25 %, energy consumption shall be based on fuels that do not increase the greenhouse effect.
Övertorneå	1990	2020	50% taken as a whole

<sup>1</sup> SSNC is the largest NGO in Sweden on environmental matters, with approximately 140,000 members and 274 local branches across the whole country. It was established in 1909.

### **The strategy to reduce outlet of greenhouse gasses**

During the three-years period, the municipalities ought to initiate processes and to develop methods to phase out the use of fossil fuels in the city area. To do this, the project has used three main methods:

1. The cities worked towards using less energy and more effectively, reduced or will in the long term phase out the use of fossil fuels for heating and transport services and decreasing the need of transports.
2. The cities therefore challenged trade and industry, neighbouring cities, the Swedish Parliament and government, citizens and NGO's to take their share of the common responsibility for the fossil fuel free future.
3. The municipalities must found ways to organise better involvement of the citizens and the NGOs, specially important for this project was of course the involvement of the local SSNC groups.



### **Most important results so far**

In all the five participating cities, remarkable measures have been taken to reduce the outlet of greenhouse gasses. Generally there is today a better contact and exchange of ideas between the local SSNC groups and the municipalities in the five cities. The Swedish government Climate Committee has been challenged to propose stronger national objectives. The Challenging Communities have challenged all the schools of Sweden to work with the climate change issue, and send out information on this matter to all the schools.

Following is presented some of the most exceptional result or actions in Säfte and Övertorneå, results from Växjö, Uppsala and Lund are represented in separate case-cards.

#### **Säfte**

- > Extension of district heating plant "Birka Värme", use of process-heat of pulp and paper production from "Petersson Scanproof AB", this constitutes two third of the whole heat consumption.
- > Waste heat from "Petersson Scanproof AB" plant is going to be collected and lead to "Birka Värme".
- > More households have been connected to district heating, partly financed by the Swedish Environmental Ministry
- > Exchange of oil fuelled boilers to bioenergy pellet boilers in smaller villages
- > Environmental statement of accounts, with key numbers to compare, 1999 the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decreases to about 4500 kg/inhabitant
- > Inventory of the municipal traffic flows; main emission sources are the travels to and from jobs
- > Municipal bike program, called "Velocity", aims to make cycling more attractive and to influence car drivers to change over bicycles

#### **Övertorneå**

- > An environmental dialog was organised for the whole municipal staff; a brainstorming about how to improve the environmental situation in Övertorneå. The result was 1416 suggestions and 30 activity fields were selected by the administration; these have to be considered as priority in administrative work as whole
- > An CO<sub>2</sub> inventory has been performed; in 1999 was 542.2 ton in municipal activities
- > Guidelines were written to define how to work structured with environmental projects
- > Exchanges of oil boilers to bio pellet boilers in five villages
- > Education in eco driving for high school pupils staff

### **Financial resources**

The total expenses for the project amounted to approx. 232,300 EUR (2.2 million SEK). The participating municipalities paid 8,000 EUR (75,000 SEK) per year in the three years. The other half of the total expenses has been given in grants from The National Road Administration and the National Environmental Protection Agency.

### **External communication**

The experiences of the challenging communities were regularly published in the magazine Hållbart, ("sustainable") and a summary of the seminars have been published on the internet homepage of SSCN. The project has been an issue in the national media several times, and even more in the local papers in the municipalities. There have also been made several advertisements for the project and to challenge.

## **EVALUATION AND OUTLOOK**

Even though the project is officially finished, since end 2000, the networking of the five cities is not ended. The municipalities are now (summer 2001) discussing the structure of the future co-operation. They are thinking of enter to dialog with the Association of Swedish Local Authorities (*Kommunförbundet*), to develop a common program. The municipalities will in autumn 2001 send a letter to the national environmental department asking economic support to make a new association for municipalities working with climate change programmes. Up to now, twenty Swedish municipalities have expressed their wishes to join such a network.

Furthermore, different options can be seen to continue the climate work, which has been started in *The Challenging communities*. They are all motivated to go on with exemplary work. Umbrella organisations like Energie-Cités or ICLEI (International Council for Local Environment Initiatives) and umbrella programs like KLIMP (local climate related investment programs proposed by the government), the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency or the planned project "Eco-Energy-Communities", hosted by the National Energy Board, can have a role in supporting future work.

The Challenging Communities project has known a big success due to it's exemplary character of cooperation. Key elements have been synergy effects, know-how transfer, mutual encouragement and the involvement of citizens associations.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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