

★ Municipal authorities have a key role to play in reducing Europe's overall greenhouse gas emissions, says **Inka Thunecke** of the BEAM-21 project. An EU-funded initiative training local authority's staff and decision makers on climate protection and intelligent energy measures

Municipal authorities trained for green house gas reduction

More than two thirds of Europe's population already lives in cities and the urban lifestyle depends on a reliable, sustainable supply of energy. However, with concern rising over whether current methods of supply will be capable of meeting long-term needs in line with necessary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and changing to renewables is a real priority for Europe's policy makers. Municipal authorities have an important role to play in this regard, according to Inka Thunecke, the overall coordinator of the BEAM-21 project. "The project's target group is municipalities. We aim to enable municipal authorities to develop and implement sustainable energy action plans," she explains. Therefore a consortium of fourteen partners including energy agencies, environment- and energy consultants, environmental organisations and educational institutions from nine European countries has been formed to develop and implement a suitable training offer. The training will be piloted by 70 interested cities, among which are Tirgu Mures in Romania, Baden in Austria, Rokiskis in Lithuania and Tomaszow in Poland.

The overall target is to enable municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions beyond the EU targets of 20 per cent.

Intelligent municipal energy measures could potentially be implemented in a number of areas, as municipal housing, spatial planning, traffic and procurement. Thunecke points out "To take appropriate decisions, municipalities need to understand how different action fields are interlinked. With our training offer we aim to provide people with the information they need to decide what is best for their area"

Local circumstances

This varies according to a number of factors,

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Introduction to Global Climate Change
Learning targets are: to understand why we need sustainable energy plans in municipalities in order to respond to global climate change and its impacts.
At the end participants will be able to explain the basic principles of climate change and the role of energy supply in mitigation. They understand the necessity of THG emissions reductions as well as the need for action on municipal level and can appraise their municipalities responsibility concerning mitigation.
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including the wider legislative framework, availability of key materials, and the local environment. Indeed, although intelligent energy management is a global issue, local circumstances must be taken into account. "Taking municipal energy supply as an example, it is organized very differently all over Europe. There are countries where central energy supply plays an important role, others where decentralized solutions are possible and on the way", explains Thunecke. "And for example, if you want to promote solar energy then you need to find ways to forward this effectively as for example by pointing out promising areas for solar energy in your municipality. And immediately you have a link from municipal energy supply to town planning. But the possibilities vary between the European countries" outlines Thunecke.

Reducing municipal green house gas emissions significantly demands not only the development of renewable sources, but

also the engagement of the public and a real shift in the way we use energy. The BEAM-21 project looks at both of these aspects, as Thunecke points out "We will collect examples of best practice which have been implemented by towns, and which may point the way towards a better approach in future."

Effective training is crucial to sharing this expertise and bringing intelligent energy management methods to a wider audience. "We have chosen a blended learning approach, so we combine eLearning - via the Internet - with on-site learning. With on-site learning we are able to react, adapt and respond to the specific issues facing each municipality," explains Thunecke. In larger municipalities this often means issues like the organisation of public transport and traffic. While this is part of the project's work, Thunecke says they are also looking at other areas in which energy efficiency could be improved, such as

building renovation or implementation of green procurement measures. Furthermore the project wants as well to provide an outlook on visions and ideas for the future on how to organize life in the city. "I recently looked at the work of some architects from the Netherlands, which are developing concepts for building integrated agriculture. Their idea is that you have roof gardens in cities, which will help us to address the problem of how to feed people in our towns," she explains. "

Long-term scope

This work is very much long-term in its scope, and with much of Europe still in the grip of the financial crisis, some observers have suggested that environmental protection should not be municipal authorities top priority. Measures to improve

municipalities to realise even much higher reductions.

The environmental consequences of inaction in this area are predicted to be severe, including more draughts and floods, as well as a sustained rise in the global temperature. Practical action at the local level, alongside close collaboration with projects addressing complementary areas, represents an important first step in addressing these issues. "I recently visited a project dealing with the financing of energy measures for municipal housing in different countries. We are looking at whether models which have proved effective in one country could be used in another," says Thunecke. "There are a lot of ways in which energy management could potentially be improved," she confirms. "BEAM-21 is a three-year project and will end in 2012. We plan to set

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energy performance are often perceived as a constraint on economic growth; however, Thunecke believes that work in this area can in fact act as a vehicle for economic development. "If a country decides to adapt its buildings to improve their energy efficiency then that generates a lot of jobs in the building sector. This is what makes up a Green New Deal and leads us towards a low carbon society." she points out.

Developing renewable resources will also lessen nation's dependence on conventional energy imports, which in the long-term will bring significant financial benefits. "Many people think that improving energy efficiency requires a big initial investment which they will not see a return on. But in the long-term people will save money if they use energy-efficient methods and increase the share of renewables and decentralised solutions," stresses Thunecke. However, the main reason we must implement intelligent energy measures is to move away from the current carbon-based economy which emits high levels of CO2. We must move away from this economic model." The EU aims at emission reductions of 20 % till 2020. The BEAM 21 training wants to enable

up the training programme, and as a result of our initial work further municipalities and city councils will be interested in the training, and we will be able to follow up the project's initial work and widen it further." The training offer is right now in the process of being developed, before implementation of the course will start at the beginning of next year. Thunecke encourages municipalities and experts to participate in setting up the training content. "We are open to involve people's ideas and best practices to be further multiplied by the training." ★



At a glance

Full Project Title

Blended capacity-building on sustainable energy measures and action plans for European municipalities (BEAM-21)

Project Partners

- University of Applied Science Eberswalde (DE) • Forum Soziale Technikgestaltung (DE) • Energy Agency like Local Energy Agency of the Greater Lyon France (FR) • Public Environmental Centre of Sustainable Development Bulgaria (PECSDBG) • Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology Lithuania (ECAT LT) • Focus Eco Centre Romania (Focus RO) • Foundation for Environmental Education Latvia (VIF Latvia LV) • Foundation Institute for Sustainable Development Poland (InE PL) • Centre for Environment and Development Poland (CSIR PL) • Association First Warsaw Agenda Poland (PWA 21 PL) • Movement Rainbow - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic (Hnutí Duha CZ) • City of Geislingen (DE) • Austrian Green Foundation Austria (GBW AU)

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Inka Thunecke has a Masters Degree in East European History and French Literature. Since 1986 she has worked in the field of education with different target groups and approaches. As manager of the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Brandenburg she develops concepts for multinational projects, works together with different partners in diverse fields of education.

