



LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Malmö, Sweden: *Green fleets and traffic concept*



Integrating environmental criteria into purchasing practices

Case study performed in the course of the "Check It!" project by ICLEI's Eco-Procurement Programme.

Abstract:

Malmö, soon to be connected through a bridge to Copenhagen, is one of the biggest and most crowded cities in Sweden. In 1997, the city council approved a Traffic Environment Programme, which is connected to other current environmental programmes. It contains political and regulatory actions, e.g. on creating an environmental zone, which is open only to pollutant reduced vehicles, information campaigns, pilot projects like the purchasing of electric vehicles, and specific privilege actions, e.g. free parking lots for low pollution cars. Another aspect of this integrated approach is green procurement, which is based on the principle of "keeping one's own house tidy" and taking it seriously.

Background and objectives -

Malmö is one of the most densely populated cities in Sweden, high air pollution, noise pollution and a high accident rate being the consequences. In 1995, before the city council endorsed the Local Agenda 21 Action Plan in 1997, Malmö decided to combat these constraints by developing a Traffic Environment Programme. Today, both initiatives are being connected to each other. The former Traffic Environment Programme went through further development and is now part of the "Environmental Strategy for the city of Malmö 1998-2002". Its fundamental principles and main contents contribute to the meanwhile existing Local Agenda 21 Action Plan.

Because of the considerable traffic pollution the Malmö Traffic Environment Programme has the highest priority in the whole Local Agenda process.

Implementation and Analysis

Strategy

Green Purchasing is just one part of the whole Traffic Environment Programme involving both the municipality and citizens of Malmö. The concept ranges from awareness-raising campaigns and pilot projects, e.g. on purchasing of electricity-powered vehicles, to political and regulatory measures, like the creation of an environmental zone for low emission vehicles, or environmental purchasing and environmental management. The Vehicles Management Unit was one of the first municipal departments to be certified according to ISO 14001.

Another important strategic feature is the intense scientific and political cooperation between Malmö and its surrounding municipalities of the region Skåne on one hand, and the two biggest Swedish cities, Stockholm and Göteborg, on the other hand.

Activities

Before the Traffic Environment Programme was passed, the city of Malmö started the project "electricity-powered vehicles in Malmö" (1995). The project was initiated as a model for the citizens, to inform them about the use of electric and hydro-powered vehicles and to demonstrate their practical use. The activities intended to stimulate public demand for such vehicles. A regulation for tax-free use of electro and hybrid vehicles in the first 5 years is one of the project accomplishments.

The Vehicles Management Unit of Malmö, in the meantime, owns some 52 electrical vehicles, including also large working machines, e.g. refuse collection vehicles.

Meanwhile, the project has expanded to the surrounding region of Skåne. The municipalities of this region cooperated in the campaign to promote electric vehicles. Joint purchasing activities, however, have not been explored so far. All municipalities simultaneously adopted the rules on green procurement for working machines and trucks and the creation of environmental zones for heavy traffic (created by the cities of Malmö, Stockholm and Göteborg).

The Traffic Environment Programme from 1995 contains the goal that a minimum of 25% vehicles of the Service Management Department has to be "green vehicles" by the year 2000. The city council, as per definition, considers all bio-diesel (RME) gas-driven, compressed natural (CNG) gas propelled or electric vehicles to be "green" vehicles. This goal was nearly achieved already in February 1999 with 23 %.

The planning and extension of attractive bicycle tracks serves the goal of reducing air pollution. The creation of short, fast and safe connections shall motivate citizens to switch to the use of bicycles.

Following the example of the city of Copenhagen, Denmark, a municipal bike fleet was established: Bicycles are - apart from a deposit fee - free of charge for any municipal user.

To place an order in the field of road construction, the contractor has to comply with defined environmental criteria, e.g. buses and trucks must comply with the highest Swedish environmental standards for motorised vehicles (catalyst, reducing the pollution of exhaust

gases), and contractors must have started to work according to an environmental management system (e.g. EMAS, or ISO14001, etc.).

To realise a new public transport concept an electrical street train is being introduced. The electrical train will move at 30 km/h on bicycle tracks. It is not supposed to compete with the existing public transportation system, rather, it is designed as a supplement to offer a safe alternative public transportation system for elderly and handicapped citizens.

The train project started in 1999 for a period of 2 years, after this the project will offer medium-term occupation for unemployed.

Partners

- Municipalities of the region Skåne: Cooperation in the project "electric vehicle in Skåne".
- Göteborg and Stockholm: Common draft of guidelines for green purchasing of trucks and working machines as well as for defining Environment Zones.

Legal framework, awarding of contracts

Swedish tax legislation is designed to support the purchasing and use of electric cars. Owners of electric cars are not obliged to pay road tax (1000-1500 SEK/year); those who drive cars based on alternative fuels are privileged as well, because their tax rate is considerably lower compared to ordinary fuel cars. These recent changes in Swedish tax legislation can be seen as a result of political discussions between Malmö, Stockholm and Göteborg and the national government.

Financing & resources used

Both the bicycle and the street train project received financial support from the national government made available for municipal projects which support sustainable development. The introduction of electric vehicles in Malmö and the region Skåne is financed by the city of Malmö, the supply enterprise Sydkraft and the Swedish authority for transport and communication research (KFB).

Results and impacts

In Feb. 1999, 23% of the fleet of the Vehicles Management Unit were powered by environmentally friendly energy sources. 52 of the 1143 municipal vehicles are electro or hybrid vehicles. Besides this, 200 vehicles are powered by bio-diesel and natural gas, e.g. 75% of all municipal buses are powered by natural gas. The project for introducing electro and hybrid vehicles expanded to the surrounding region of Skåne. The experience of Malmö shows that a strong municipal position can influence business activities and national policies.

Barriers and Conflicts

The case study shows that by using electrical vehicles cities can reduce their pollution output substantially. However, in order to make the use of electric vehicles palatable to the Swedish population, tax reductions will not be sufficient. It is still substantially more expensive to drive an

electric car than a conventional vehicle. In addition, there is still a lack of bigger vehicle models, which are obviously preferred in the wide but sparsely populated Swedish countryside.

Lessons Learned

With the common goal of passing guidelines and programmes, the coordinated introduction and guiding of political and administrative processes in the three biggest cities of Sweden, Stockholm, Malmö and Göteborg, was sometimes difficult. But it has also strengthened the whole process. To name an example, the increasing demand for electric vehicles helped to increase competition between car suppliers. This is an example supporting the statement of municipal green procurement strengthening alternative markets. The activities have also had an impact on the development of Swedish legislation and guidelines, because during the cooperation between the three biggest cities of Sweden, they could drive the whole process for supporting alternative power sources for vehicles. This example shows how intensely local initiatives can increase their political and economical power and finally are able to influence decision making even at a national level. Local environmental protection activities can help to realise the goals of the Rio conference of 1992 at a national level.

Additional Information

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