



Networking event 2: Baltic Sea Forum

Time: 26 March 2015

Place: Tallinn, Estonia, Sokos Hotel Viru Conference Centre

Baltic Sea Forum was the second of two big Baltic Sea Challenge networking events organized by CITYWATER. The Forum was entitled “Water protection in municipalities – it costs money, because it saves money” and it focused on water protection tools for municipalities. It was organised as part of the Estonian Municipality Days 2015 and the program was in English and Estonian with simultaneous translation. It was organized in collaboration with the Association of Estonian Cities.

There were about 60 participants from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The Forum provided the latest information about the state of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland; presented tools for water protection; brought up concrete water protection measures done by local actors and provided a space for participants to discuss, network and share experiences. It was also possible to follow the seminar online.



Gulf of Finland Year 2014 and looking ahead

The opening started with welcoming words by Mr. Arvo Sarapuu, Deputy Mayor of Tallinn. After this, leading researcher Mr. Kai Myrberg from the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) spoke about the topic “Reflections after the Gulf of Finland Year 2014 and looking ahead”. (Pictures of speakers below.) Chair was Ms. Irja Alakivi, consultant at the Association of Estonian Cities.



Tools for water protection work

The second part of the seminar was entitled “Challenges in municipal water protection work – a need for tools?”. An introductory speech was held by Hannamaria Yliruusi, project manager at the The Union of the Baltic Cities. After this followed presentations of tools for municipalities’ water protection work. Ms. Salla-Maria Lauttamäki and Ms. Lotta Ruokanen, coordinators of the Baltic Sea Challenge network, spoke about the power of networking; Mr. Arko Olesk, researcher from Tallinn University Communication institute spoke about the upcoming environmental communication strategy for the Baltic States; and Ms. Eliisa Punttila, project expert from the City of Helsinki Environment Centre brought up a cost-benefit perspective on water protection. (Pictures of speakers below.) Chair was Ms. Kajsa Rosqvist, project manager, City of Helsinki/CITYWATER. After this followed small group discussions about the different water protection tools networking, environmental communication and cost-benefit analysis.

During lunch, participants were encouraged to continue discussions, in the restaurant separate tables were reserved for Baltic Sea Forum participants.



Local water protection actions

The third part of the seminar showcased local water protection actions. Three partners of the Baltic Sea Challenge network presented their actions: Ms. Barbara Jackson from Race for the Baltic presented the new report “Restoring Waters in the Baltic Sea Region: A Municipality Strategy to Capture Local Benefits”; Ms. Karolin Kairo-Gasman from Tallinn City/CITYWATER, presented the natural storm water treatment system built in Tallinn Botanic Garden, and Ms. Matilda Gradin from Trelleborg, Sweden presented the municipality’s work with biogas from beach cast algae. (Pictures of speakers below.) Chair was Ms. Lotta Ruokanen, Baltic Sea Challenge coordinator.



After this followed another small group discussion. The discussions were facilitated by the speakers of the thirds session. The seminar participants had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the different themes more in depth.

The Estonian Municipality Days

The Estonian Municipality Days is an annual event taking place in Tallinn. This year the event gathered 1400 participants, mainly Estonian civil servants. The Municipality Days is an arena for discussing various issues related to municipalities and cities, this year other topics included social, environmental and economic issues; there were discussions about public procurement, planning and construction, mobility in rural areas and energy, to mention just a few. This year the Municipality Days were more international than usually, since the whole day Baltic Sea Forum brought participants from around the Baltic Sea region.



The Baltic Sea Challenge also had a stand during the Municipality Days 25-26 March and conference participants had the opportunity to talk to the Baltic Sea Challenge coordinators.

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