



RATKAISUJA

Lähellä, yhdessä

LÖSNINGAR

Nära, tillsammans

SOLUTIONS

Local, together

Nordic Conference on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region
31 Jan – 2 Feb, Turku 2011 www.solutions2011.fi

Report of the Solutions local, together – Nordic Conference on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region, 31 January – 2 February Turku 2011

Content

1. Solutions local, together in brief.....	2
2. Preparatory phase.....	2
2.1. Organization.....	2
2.2. Aims and principles of the conference.....	3
2.3. Marketing and Communications	3
3. The programme of the conference	4
4. Participants of the conference.....	5
5. Finances	5
6. Evaluations	6
6.1. “For once the conference was sustainable, not just in talks but in actions”	6
6.2. “Informative and clear”	7
6.3. “Impressive logistics and organization of the conference”	7
6.4. “More offered than one could benefit from” – Local Solutions on 1.2.2011.....	8
7. Outcomes of the conference.....	9

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1. Solutions local, together in brief

Solutions local, together – Nordic Conference on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region gathered **584** participants from **16** different countries in Turku Finland. During **2,5** days the conference participants got the opportunity to hear **88** speakers with several practical solutions to share. The conference offered also a choice of **13** local solutions, **3** side events and **8** restaurants offering local food. All this was done as inspirationally and sustainably as possible.

2. Preparatory phase

2.1. Organization

The planning process of the Solutions local, together started officially in February 2009. Already before that the preliminary preparations had taken place, such as tendering of the hosting city of the conference, participating in the previous sustainable development conference in Odense, Denmark, and formation of the composition of the national steering group of the conference.

The National steering group of the conference was lead by the Senior Adviser Ms Annika Lindblom from the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and the secretary of the steering group was Network Manager Stella Aaltonen from the Union of the Baltic Cities, Commission on Environment, who also was the main organizer of the conference. Other members of the steering group were (primary/deputy):

- Ministry of Education and Culture, International Relations, Planning Officer Mr Hannu Vainonen/ Counsellor of Education Ms Annu Jylhä-Pyykönen
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Senior Inspector Mr Mika Honkanen / Planner Ms Marjukka Piiparinen
- Ministry of Environment, Senior Architect Ms Anne Jarva / Senior Inspector Mr Olli Maijala
- Ministry of Finance, Financial Counsellor Ms Katju Holkeri / Counsellor Mr Jukka Erkkilä
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Secretariat for Nordic Cooperation, Project coordinator Ms Anne Ben Ammar / First Secretary Mr Ville Andersson
- Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Manager for Environmental Affairs Ms Maija Hakonen / Energy Engineer Mr Kalevi Luoma
- City of Turku, Director of Environmental Affairs Mr Mikko Jokinen / Environmental Planner Mr Olli-Pekka Mäki
- Southwest Finland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Assistant Manager Mr Osmo Purhonen / Head of Information and Communication Services, Ms Merja Haliseva-Soila
- Union of the Baltic Cities, Commission on Environment Secretariat, Head of Secretariat Mr Björn Grönholm and Network Manager Ms Stella Aaltonen

The National Steering group was the main decision-making body in the conference preparations. In total of 17 steering group meetings were held during the planning phase.

In addition to this, a **Nordic planning group** acted as a communication/marketing platform and influences the conference programme. It was composed of one representative from each of the Nordic Associations of Local and Regional Authorities and from the ministries responsible for sustainable development in the Nordic countries. This group had four meetings during the planning phase.

Also a **local planning group** was established in the city of Turku. The group had in the beginning brainstorming sessions for the side events and local processes. After these, each of the side events had their own group meetings preparing the different processes. In total the local group engaged 100 persons into the planning process of the conference.



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The Solutions local, together – Conference was a kick off to **the Finnish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in year 2011**. This enabled a high level presentation of Nordic cooperation ministers at the conference and also a larger media exposure of the conference and the presidency programme. The conference was also linked with the **European Culture Capital Turku 2011** year through different side events.

One bigger **planning workshop** was organised in January 2010 in the city of Turku for further developing the content and the methods for the conference. This workshop brought together 38 experts from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In addition to that, experts from Russia, Estonia and Lithuania attended the workshop. Through the workshop the programme of the conference was reinforced by the Nordic and Baltic Sea approaches. The participants of the workshop got to know the conference venue, plans for the side events and practical arrangements of the conference.

2.2. Aims and principles of the conference

The Solutions local, together - conference aimed to

- offer practical solutions through which one can reach environmental and economic savings and advance well being of citizens.
- enable networking, exchange of practices and ways of work for future cooperation.
- inspire participants to carry out the work in the future.
- bring together over 500 participants from the Nordic and the Baltic Sea Regions. Therefore the entire conference programme was organized in three languages English, Swedish and Finnish. This was carried out by using simultaneous interpretation in the conference.

The Solutions local, together - conference aimed to bring sustainable development into practice! The entire conference preparation was focused on arranging an event with as low carbon footprint as possible, yet having a physical meeting of the participants. This was being reached through following principles:

- All amenities and hotels were in close proximity in order to minimize the use of transportation. For this reason, the conference was organized in the City Theatre that is located in the center of the city.
- The conference promoted responsible travelling.
- The catering was to be organized using local products and environmentally friendly suppliers.
- The use of disposable products was to be eliminated.
- Only products/materials, that could be reused/recycled after the conference, were going to be used.

2.3. Marketing and Communications

The conference marketing was carried out by using different means. These included among others following actions:

- Active conference website in three languages, English, Finnish and Swedish
- A conference Facebook page with further information on the event
- Conference blog with 73 posts.
- Marketing of the conference in over 40 events and meetings.
- Active use of National, Regional and Baltic Sea Region networks
- Person-to-person contacts.
- Twitter was used actively during the conference to bring in new discussion and information.



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3. The programme of the conference

The conference name “Solutions local, together – Nordic Conference on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region” stressed the practical solutions that are carried out together with stakeholders. Therefore the different conference days were labelled in a following way: Monday 31.1. *Together*, Tuesday 1.2.2011 *Local* and Wednesday 2.2.2011 *Inspire*. The choice of key speakers reflected this division of days. In the end the key speakers of the conference came from Finland (14), Sweden (3), Denmark (1), Åland (1), Iceland (1), Greenland (1) and Estonia (1).

The elements of the parallel sessions of the programme themselves reflected the current sustainable development challenges prevalent in the Nordic and Baltic Sea Regions. Nordic culture, integrated management, innovativeness and stakeholder involvement were also highlighted in the programme. There were four main topics of which each had three subtopics that were arranged into 12 parallel sessions during the conference:

1. Earth – Urban planning for citizens and nature

- 1.1. Sustainable urban planning
- 1.2. Creative urban planning
- 1.3. Diversity of nature

2. Water – Water for life

- 2.1. Water and recreation
- 2.2. State of the Baltic Sea
- 2.3. Water and climate change



3. Air – Climate and energy

- 3.1. Processes to tackle climate change
- 3.2. Eco- and energy efficient technologies
- 3.3. Renewable energy

4. Fire – Inner inspiration – knowledge, new skills and partnerships

- 4.1. Education and learning for sustainable development
- 4.2. Rethinking working methods
- 4.3. Sustainable consumption and lifestyles

An open call was organized in spring 2010 to get proposal for the presentations at the Solutions local, together –Conference. The call gathered over 80 proposals for the conference presentations. In addition to the proposals, several proposals were received from different conference facilitators.

In the end the parallel session programme consisted of 56 presenters from 8 different countries: Finland 24, Denmark 11, Norway 10, Sweden 7, Germany 1, Iceland 1, Estonia 1 and Lithuania 1. The presenters represented 17 local authorities.





4. Participants of the conference

In total of 584 participants took part in the Solutions local, together Conference. Majority of the participants were from Finland, 56%. Represented were in total 16 countries. Majority of the participants, 42%, represented local authorities. In total of 85 different local authorities were represented. The second group represented were the NGOs, including multitude of project consortiums, this being 32% of the participants.

In the table the number of different organizations (in brackets) is represented in relation to the number of participants per country. In addition to this information, the conference gathered in total of 25 representatives of media to attend the conference and over 100 persons were involved in organizing the conference.

State / Autonomous area	Total Number	State organization	Local authorities	NGO, incl project consortiums	Educational establishments	Business	Media
Austria	1		1 (1)				
Belgium	1			1 (1)			
Denmark	40	4 (4)	16 (8)	15 (2)	4 (4)	1 (1)	
Estonia	15	1 (1)	12 (6)	2 (1)			
Faroe Islands	5		3 (2)	2 (1)			
Aland	5	3 (1)	2 (1)				
France	1			1 (1)			
Germany	1		1 (1)				
Greenland	9	9 (3)					
Iceland	5	3 (2)	1 (1)			1 (1)	
Japan	1				1 (1)		
Latvia	6	1 (1)	3 (2)		2 (2)		
Lithuania	10	2 (1)	3 (2)	5 (2)			
Netherlands	2			2 (2)			
Norway	49	3 (3)	26 (8)	16 (11)	2 (2)	2 (1)	
Poland	5	5 (4)					
Russia	21	2 (1)	10 (4)	6 (4)	2 (2)		1 (1)
Sweden	79	6 (2)	49 (18)	15 (11)	3 (2)	6 (4)	
Finland	328	17 (8)	118 (31)	124 (44)	46 (17)	23 (20)	
Total	584	56 (31)	245 (85)	189 (80)	60 (30)	33 (27)	1 (1)

5. Finances

The Solutions local, together Conference finances were well kept according to the original budget. The total conference budget was approximately 500 000 EUR.

Following organizations co-financed the event: Nordic Council of Ministers, Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finnish Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the city of Turku.

In addition to this, the conference had following sponsors: Raisio Oyj, Verso, Paperinkeräys, Turun Seudun Jätehuolto, Molok Oy and Sita Suez.



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6. Evaluations

An online questionnaire was sent out to all conference participants on the 4th of February and a reminder on the 4th of March. A total of 197 respondents answered to the evaluation of the Solutions local, together -Conference. This represents 34% out of total of 584 participants.

The respondents' age groups were equally spread between different language groups and ages. One third of the respondents were male (63) and two thirds were female (131).

Majority of the respondents, 60%, were from Finland. This corresponds to the fact that 56% of the conference participants came from Finland.

The main mean of transportation to the conference was by train. 75% of those travelling by plane had a stop in between. Only 18 respondents compensated their CO₂ emissions through their own organizations. The main channels of compensation were directly through employer, air company, CDM gold and Trocorona and klif.no. Many of the respondents did not know if they compensated, and some consider walking, using train or driving in a full car also as ways to compensate the CO₂ emissions.

6.1. "For once the conference was sustainable, not just in talks but in actions"

For 57% of the respondents, the main reason for attending was the content of the conference. For 29% the networking opportunities and for 8% the conference speakers were the main reasons for coming. Majority of the respondents felt that the conference offered a good combination for gaining knowledge, increasing networking and getting inspiration for their own work.

52% of the respondents think that the conference fulfilled their reasons for attending fully. 47% considered that the conference was good, but did not fulfil all their expectations. Only one respondent considered that his/her expectations were not fulfilled.

The evaluation reveals that majority of the key speakers were appreciated by the audience. Only some comments evidenced that there were too many Finnish key speakers. The comments received about the parallel sessions showcase that the majority of the presentations were practical and inspiring. The quality of the sessions varied, however, and in some cases the speakers seemed to underestimate the knowledge of the audience.

The conference participants were especially impressed by (number in brackets indicate the number of commentators)

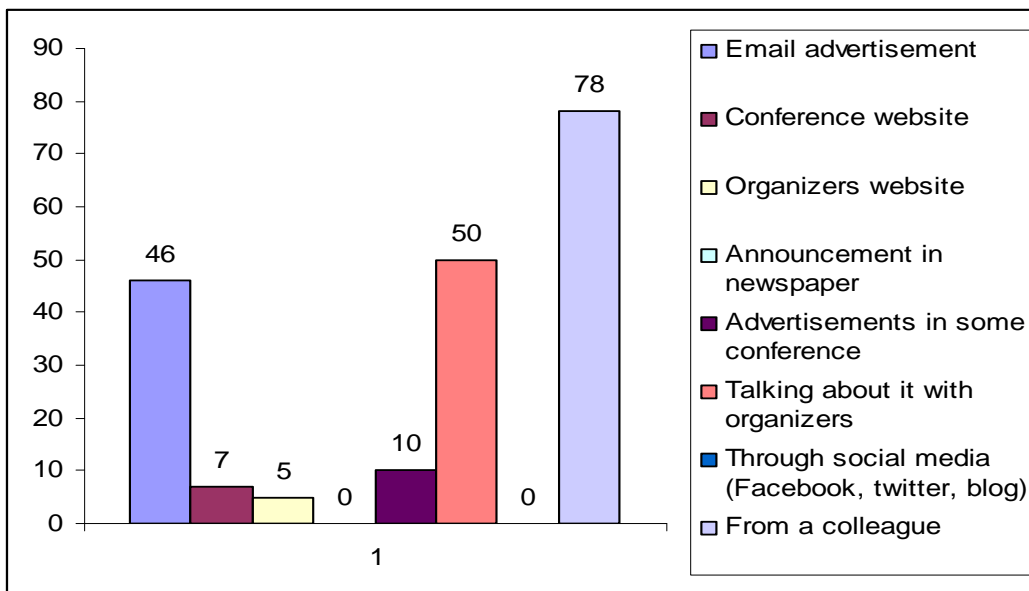
- Impressive logistics and organization of the conference (12); Impressive arrangements in different buildings, one could see the advantages of a small city, and could get some fresh air while moving from one location to other.
- The fact that you got the restaurants in Turku to develop green food for the Conference, was a fantastic conference "spinoff" effect, which I see as a great local solution!!! (11)
- Very hard to make it better! (7)
- Sustainable practical conference arrangements (aprons, name lanyard, voting in the panel, flower decorations, reminders on individual choices on nametag and by e-mail, feedback automats, not receiving a conference bag with unnecessary documents etc) (6)
- In the conference practicalities was done excellently. (4)
- Versatile programme, pedagogical - same in the future! (8)
- Innovative interior of the theatre with stage settings, auction (3)
- Good, positive learning oriented atmosphere (2)
- Conference book was superb!! (2)



- A very good and interactive way to run the plenary panel (3)
- Good key sessions. It was good that also the third day of the conference was thought well through. (2)
- Great main moderation (3)
- High quality interpretation (3)
- Impressive number of participants (2)
- Good venue for a conference (2)

6.2. “Informative and clear”

Majority of the respondents heard first about the conference from their colleagues. Other important channels of advertisement were the direct e-mails send to target groups and talking about the conference with the organizers personally.



Graphic 1. How did you hear or learn about this conference?

The respondents have been active in communication. 70% of the respondents had been following the conference through website, 14% through Facebook, 5% Blog and 3% Twitter.

6.3. “Impressive logistics and organization of the conference”

The evaluations received regarding the practical arrangements are either good or very good. This is well in line with the overall conference evaluation.

	—	poor	fair	satis	good	Very good
Information prior to the conference		4	11	33	109	39
Registration online	1	11	16	42	87	39
Registration at the venue	8			16	90	82
Conference book	11		3	21	87	74
Availability of support by the Conference secretariat staff	2		2	13	76	103
Accommodation/hotels	27		2	12	95	59
Conference venue/Turku city theatre	4		2	10	91	89
Conference venue/Radisson SAS Blue Hotel	40		1	25	87	42
Lunches	8	2	13	26	67	77
Dinner 31.1.2011 hosted by the city of Turku	35	16	16	48	56	25
Cocktail on Tuesday 1.2.2011	74		10	33	62	17
Dinner on Tuesday 1.2.2011	48	1	1	12	71	62



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Pre- and after tours

Only 15 respondents commented the pre- and after tours. They considered the quality of them to be either good or very good.

6.4. “More offered than one could benefit from” – Local Solutions on 1.2.2011

2/3 of the conference guests visited a local solution on the 1st of February 2011. Surprisingly, the respondents of the evaluation represented all the 12 different local solutions and 3 side events that were organized during that day. Thanks to a large number of engaged organizations this was possible.

The conference participants felt that the organization of the local solutions was good or very good and content in average satisfactory. The local solutions organized were:

- Combined waste water treatment and heat production
- Biovakka biogas plant and Turku Energy biofuel plant
- History as a part of modern urban development
- New life behind defunct walls – Kakolanmäki ja Linnakaupunki
- New tools in regional planning
- Implementation of the climate and environment programme of the city of Turku
- Self evaluation of sustainability work in municipalities
- Wellbeing with culture and exercise
- Quality and sustainable development in the public sector organizations
- NordMaB “get-together”
- To manage and measure emissions from motor vehicles
- European Capital of Culture Turku 2011
- Gender, Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Sustainable – Not sustainable – Sustainable –Short ecological films

The small short film festival showcased 16 short films that focused on sustainable transport, water management, climate change, eco-energy and ecological education. The short film show was well received by the visitors, but unfortunately reached only some 60 participants.

Market of Solutions

The Market of Solutions was visited by appr.1000 visitors during the 1st of February 2011. It reached the visitor goal that was set up for it in the beginning. The external visitors that took part at the Market of Solutions gave a very positive feedback on the event and hoped that more of these kinds of events would be organized in the city.

The School event - Sustainability paths to schoolchildren's lives

The School event - Sustainability paths to schoolchildren's lives - had appr.1000 visitors during the day. This was nearly double the amount that was estimated in the beginning. The activity path that was participated by the school classes gave a positive push for the sustainable development in the school sector of Turku. Now there are new cooperation schemes established and also more engaged teachers involved.





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7. Outcomes of the conference

The Solutions local, together – Conference had a very inspiring and active atmosphere and this is reflected also in the main outcomes of the conference. This can be also considered as the main guiding principles for future work:

- **CO-OPERATE**, network and find friends
- **INTEGRATE**, look beyond sectors, niches and create win-wins
- FROM STRATEGIES **TO ACTION** AND SOLUTIONS
- **INSPIRE THE LEADERS**,, *convince the masses, show example*

Under each conference theme, following main points were raised:

Earth - Urban planning for citizens and nature

- **HUGE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE**: Once implemented the sustainable transport and planning solutions tend to be extremely popular. Solution: network and find right people to break the ice and **INSPIRE** the politicians and citizens
- Car sharing is a sustainable transport solution: reducing the amount of cars in the traffic brings more choices for different users and transportation needs, and gives signals to markets.
- Don't underestimate the social concerns and wishes of the citizens in planning: safety, attractiveness etc
- Nature and Culture is possible to combine! Green spaces are important in cities as they provide an integrative and socially-inclusive approach connect functions, disciplines and people.
- Biosphere areas represent joint local efforts for sustainability with a strong brand which raise awareness for the role of biodiversity at all levels.

Water - Water for life

- Implementation now! On-going programmes must be put into action like HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan
- Involvement of stakeholders! People are more committed, when they have been involved in the planning.
- The EU Water framework Directive is a good basis for more efficient management of water basins BUT
 - Further development of water basin *management tools* (monitoring, evaluation, modelling etc.) is needed. Avoid artificial and unnecessary knowledge barriers between authorities.
 - Modelling and various mapping tools will help in *identifying adaption options* for proactive adaptation measures, and enable communicating in creative, visual ways

Air - Climate and energy

- Due to a *huge number of players on the energy arena* the local authorities have a central role in facilitating the energy strategies, solutions and the broad energy development.
- Developing *local excellence* into *green growth business*. Local authorities can be huge players on local, national and global arena.
- Local and regional initiatives create new jobs. The economical crisis can boost or make things happen even more rapidly (e.g. Lolland).
- Solving challenges usually demand innovative approach and informed risk taking. This requires strong leadership.
- Perceiving mitigation and adaptation efforts as an opportunity instead of a burden to the community is one of the keys in achieving real changes.
- The technology exists, but there is not a technical solution to everything. Dare to build the future!



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Fire - Inner inspiration-knowledge, new skills & partnerships

- Education for sustainable development is a lifelong learning PROCESS, not a project or a campaign. The people exposed for a change of mindset and consumer behaviour are well-known, but who will educate the politicians and how?!?!)
- Local solutions and targets should be compatible with national plans and programmes (yet they can go further!!)
- Public sector needs to clean its home base: environmental criteria to procurement policies and management systems
- Small steps and everyday practices make a difference: you are not alone in your efforts, but why not take the leadership!
- Sustainable development is COOL!

The practical arrangements of the conference have raised a lot of interest and therefore one outcome of the Solutions local, together -conference will be a practical inspiring book on how to create an event that is truly sustainable.

The next host of the Nordic Sustainable development conference is **Umeå, Sweden** in year 2013.

The conference presentations are all available in their original languages in the conference website www.solutions2011.fi. In addition to this, the plenary sessions are visible in Youtube channel so11utions. Each parallel session has short summaries included under the presentations.

