

UNECE Commission Session, Tuesday 9th of April 2019, 17:20- 18:00

Roundtable „Regional and national solutions towards smart sustainable cities and the impact of UNECE instruments“

Session 4: Reducing the environmental footprint of cities

Honorable chairs,

Dear delegates;

Introduction

Cities are the places where most of today's people live and work. It is the place where they enjoy education, health care and recreation. Since most of the human activities in urban areas have impacts on the environment, it is on us to find solutions reduce those footprints. Integrated land-use planning, based on strategic environmental assessment is crucial to overcome existing challenges in cities.

Picture 1

The Regional Garden Show in Überlingen is a great example for sustainable and green urban planning which links an urban environment with ecological value. The city of Überlingen took action to develop innovative solutions for smart und sustainable cities which I am honored to present you today.

Regional Garden Show in general/our aims

In 2020 Überlingen will host the annual Regional Garden show for 179 days, the first one ever presented at Lake Constance. In May 2012, an open, single-phase ideas and implementation competition for landscape design invited proposals from across Europe. A total of 27 entries were submitted in anonymous form to the jury. The latter convened in October 2012 – and picked relais Landschaftsarchitekten Stuttgart/Berlin as the winner. Why? The planning team created a convincing design which contrasted the fashionable shore of the historic old town with softer ground shaping elements.

From the outset, the goal was to design an exhibition area that would provide ecological added value for the city even after the garden show and could be used for urban recreation. The results were permanent gardens for generations: the shoreline park and a joined-up greenbelt through the historic city center. The open spaces created as permanent fixtures comprise the shoreline park on the western edge of Überlingen and three sets of central gardens linked together as part of the Joined-Up Greenbelt project: the "Villa Gardens", the "Menzinger Gardens" and the "Rosenobel Gardens". In total the exhibition area covers about 11 hectares.

Regional Garden Show – what we focus on

In order to create a sustainable city development and to prepare for the Regional Garden Show we mainly focused to 4 topics:

1. Land Management and urban planning

Picture 2

The park's close-to-nature shoreline landscaping will create generously dimensioned new open spaces and points of access to the lake.

Ecologically valuable greenery will thus take the place of what used to be paved areas. Where a high wall used to prevent access to the lake and the available space was devoted to a camping site, a building materials trader, parking spaces, a spacious park will now offer leisure and recreation.

Picture 3

The road has also been realigned to make room for the park. Furthermore the new greenbelt in the city is protected for the next 25 years. Contracts ensure that on the land near the shore cannot be built on.

Picture 4

We do not want hotels or residential buildings in this sensitive area; we aim for a green park for plants, animals and the people who come there for recreation.

In addition to that we see indicative elements for the orientation of our urban planning in the future: In times of climate change and increasing population, this project is an important counterpoint to the structural densification of the city of Überlingen.

The slogan is to work with what we have and develop it further for a sustainable future.

2. Ecological Renaturation

The diverse structure of endemic shrubs and trees, already present in rudimentary form, will be rejuvenated. Especially along the waterside wall, non-native trees and plants will be replaced by typical local flora. Extensive meadows with endemic herbs and flowers will be interspersed with intensively used lawn areas. Grove plantings of various species will guide the street that leads to the exhibition area.

Picture 5

One exceptional feature is the location of the beach meadow on part of the flat shore area, which merits special protection. Two species those are now almost exclusive to this region and under serious threat of extinction will find a new place to take roots here. The University of Constance and the Horticultural Department of the City of Überlingen have made a substantial contribution to this beach meadow, cultivating and sowing 14,000 individual plants.

This aspect not only reduces the footprint of urban development but adds ecological value to our city.

3. Competitiveness

The City of Überlingen is situated at the heart of what is known in German as the "four-country region". The Regional Garden Show is easily accessible from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein. As such, Überlingen 2020 opens up borderless options to also present the culture and customs of neighbouring countries. However, the Garden Show gives the opportunity to stand out from other cities and to advertise for getaways in our city. We are convinced that our actions for sustainable urban development will also find imitators in the region.

In the future our new standards will reduce the ecological footprint across the region.

4. Traffic

A very important aspect of urban living is mobility. We expect up 1 million visitors to see our garden show. Since Überlingen already is a popular place to visit, this can add a lot of additional traffic to the city centre. Therefore we developed innovative traffic strategy. The strategy focusses on public transportation, decentralized parking und the use of

e-Mobility. We offer individual arrival concepts in order to relieve the traffic. Visitors can come to Überlingen via bus or train and even by ship from the shore across Lake Constance. We developed innovative partner-programs with various stakeholders around the Lake. A central parking space will be offered outside the city centre and a shuttle-service with e-busses will transfer the visitor to the exhibition area. This redirects the traffic from the historic town reduces the pollution in this environmental fragile area.

We expect to continue to use those busses on a long-term. This will redefine our whole public transportation system.

Picture 6

Honourable Chairs, dear delegates, I hope you have received a little insight into our efforts towards a green and sustainable city planning. Please note, that the Garden Show always is a motor for urban development. But it is on us to use this occasion and redefine the standards. Only long-term planning and innovative solutions can reduce the environmental footprint of cities – our Regional Garden Show is the best way to start with.

Thank you for your attention!