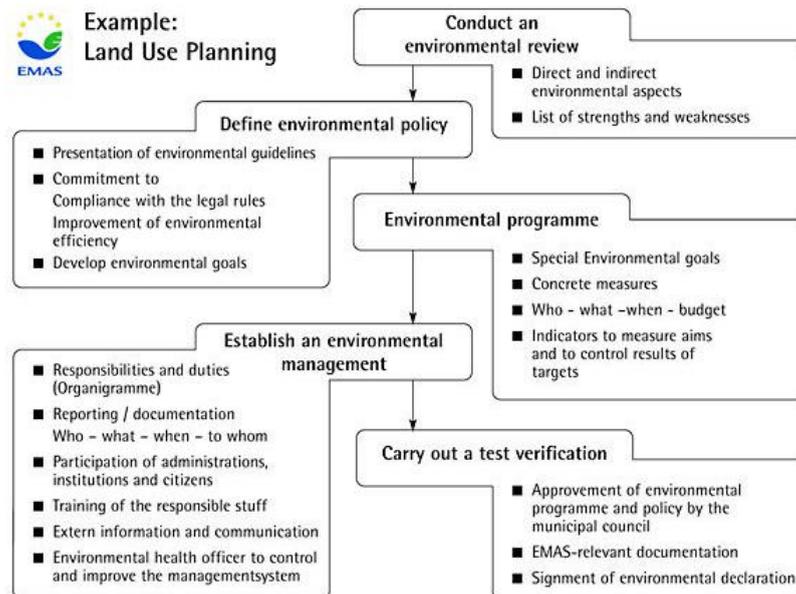


ECOLUP – Ecological Land Use Planning

Together with the cities of Constance, Überlingen and Dornbirn and the municipality of Wolfurt, the Lake Constance Foundation has put together the model project ECOLUP in 2001. Both involved German cities lie directly at Lake Constance, the Austrian project partners lie in the back-country of the canton Vorarlberg close to the Rhine valley and Lake Constance.

The aim of the LIFE project which was aided up to spring 2004 was to apply the European Environmental Management System EMAS II to the processes in communal urban land use planning. In the four involved cities the concept was put together as a model, and the city of Überlingen is now the first European city whose communal urban land use planning will be certificated by EMAS II directives still in this summer.



At the beginning of the project, a SWOT analysis (test of environmental efficiency) was carried out in order to take stock of strengths and weaknesses in the communities. On the basis of the results of the SWOT analysis, the communities set local priorities and established how topics could be consolidated to form a reasonable basis for their environmental programmes. In each community, an environmental team was put together consisting of interest groups and all relevant bodies with power of decision. Within the framework of communal workshops, this working group drew up concrete environmental goals and measures for all relevant environmental aspects that can be directly or indirectly influenced by urban land use planning:

- excessive urban expansion

- sealing-off of soil /use of green areas
- transportation / mobility
- energy / climate
- landscape development
- flowing waters

Additional workshops were conducted on implementing an EMS within planning processes and on participation and public involvement under inclusion of experts. Each community's compiled program was presented to the responsible political bodies for discussion and approval. The entire process was documented in accordance with the EMAS stipulations and at the end of the project, a test validation (internal organisational environmental assessment) was conducted.

At the example of the city of Überlingen specific results can be illustrated: The city is located in the south of the federal state Baden-Württemberg on the north-western shore of Lake Constance.

Approximately 21.500 inhabitants live spread throughout the city proper and in seven incorporated communities. Within the municipal boundaries lie 5.867 ha; 43% of this land have been designated nature conservancy areas or protected landscape.

An important pillar of the commercial economy is tourism with 550.000 overnight stays per annum. The attractive scope of the surrounding landscape, the city's location on the shore of Lake Constance and its proximity to the Alps are of great importance for its inhabitants and for the tourism industry. In order to maintain this natural and landscape capital, it is necessary to exercise great restraint in zoning new construction areas.

The municipality of Überlingen did not hesitate when the Lake Constance Foundation asked if Überlingen would participate in the new programme: "Through our participation in the ECOLUP project, we hope to build a basis for the introduction of an environmental management system that will optimise urban development and land use planning in Überlingen. Along with providing educational opportunities for the city administration's employees, sharing our experience with others at a national and international level is an equally important argument for participating in this pilot project."

The results of ECOLUP show that the method of approach and the results are transferable on other countries and municipalities with similar fundamental design. The fundamental purpose of the entire procedure is to a great extent to promote environmental education. It makes the environmental impact of planning processes more transparent and includes in the environmental team important representatives of the community's structure and its citizens who can disseminate the knowledge they gain through their participation. The fact that the specialised departments and offices, representatives of economic interest groups and of private nature conservation all participate in it "spice up" the process and contribute to the formulation of more ambitious goals and measures.

Public Opinion Survey in Participating Communities - Findings on Participation: Analysis

Interviews with a standardised questionnaire in March of 2003, total of 235 citizens (45 in Wolfurt, 60 in Dornbirn, 60 in Überlingen and 70 in Constance)

Results (excerpt):

- Knowledge of opportunities for becoming involved (only 55%)
 - Of these, the majority sees good to average potential for participation
 - Opinion that the right to participate is makes sense (51%)
 - Own level of influence of planning processes is low (61%)
 - Urban development planning is important (66%)
 - No active participation in initiatives (only 15% active!) due to lack of time (20%), no particular need (18%!) and lack of interest (11%)
 - The majority of the 66 active citizens (=15%; see above) are dissatisfied with the results of their participation
- To date no personal participation in planning processes
 - Personally involved in future city development (31% yes, 38% no, 31% don't know)
- Only 44% of those surveyed could provide concrete suggestions:*
- Higher degree of transparency
 - improved clarity of terminology
 - expansion of public relations work
 - Greater involvement of young people
 - Public forums, referenda, open office hours, etc.
 - Take citizens' concerns seriously

ECOLUP makes the environmental benefits involved in the field of communal land use planning the central topic of interest. Thus, they can be given a more important position in the process of interest-weighting. Methods of monitoring allow communities to recognise harmful developments in the environment early and manage them through targeted measures.

The management system helps to ensure that all specialised offices included in the project and the regional authorities are better informed about it. Administrative procedures can also be made more efficient. The EMAS structure and its predetermined elements such as the environmental assessment, the environmental goals and programme and the yearly internal audit provide the community with support for the application and observation of new EU directives such as the EU Water Framework Directive or the Fauna-Flora Habitat Directive (NATURA 2000). The EMAS framework is able to integrate other instruments such as the Local Agenda 21 and to take advantage of synergies that come about as a result.

However, the quality of environmental management and its benefit for the environment depends, as always, on the good will of those currently in political office. EMAS does not specify any environmental goals of its own, but rather accepts the goals the organisation sets and assesses their implementation. The continual improvement to the condition of the environment is felt only in the long term in most of the relevant environmental aspects.



To the question of benefit the counterquestion can be put. How can improvements to the quality of the environment be monetarised into cents and euros? A municipality using environmental management in its urban land use planning will most likely not achieve higher prices for its building sites. Deregulation of how local governments can adjust and alter structures at higher levels of administration, plus points for applications to funding programmes, etc. would serve to make the benefits EMAS brings to communities, and therefore to their motivation to become active, even greater. In this respect, it is up to the national and European authorities responsible for the EMAS programme to provide incentives that would give a municipality with EMAS validation further advantages over other communities.

From the beginning of the project, an important aim was the claim of transferability to other countries and communes. The specific results are held in a guidance with accompanying CD-ROM now to support all interested municipalities to reach a continuous improvement of the environment performance of their urban land use planning. The guidance is also available as a download under www.ecolup.info in German and English language.

 The image shows the cover of a brochure titled "ECOLUP-GUIDANCE: Environmental Management for Communal Urban Land Use Planning". The cover features a vibrant blue sky with white clouds, a city skyline with modern skyscrapers, and a body of water in the foreground with two people's legs sticking out from the water. The ECOLUP logo, which consists of a stylized green and blue globe, is positioned at the top center. To the right of the cover is a list of sponsors under the heading "Förderer".

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