

Newsbit

for European local governments and their associations

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Food for thought – cities centre stage in the energy debate

EUSEW 2010 highlights a strong European movement

With its 5th edition, the European Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) held from 22 to 26 March 2010 encompassed 86 events in Brussels and across Europe - bringing together energy experts in vibrant dialogue. The European energy community discussed important developments and trends, with financing, cities and the use of low-carbon technologies three key issues covered in a number of sessions.

During the opening the new Energy Commissioner, Günther H. Oettinger, focused on the vast potential for renewable energy and energy efficient technologies – an attractive investment, especially when considering that Europe needs to replace about half its power generation capacity by 2030. “We have the technology, we have the organisational capacity, we have the finance”, said Claude Turmes, Member of European Parliament, who stressed the political nature of existing barriers. Despite the clear 20-20-20 EU targets, is political will to act still lacking? How can more widespread motivation and active engagement be stimulated?

Many speakers and experts have stressed the role of cities in this context, viewing them as catalysts to bring about a quicker transition to RES and EE implementation across Europe. The vital role of the Covenant of Mayors (CoM), as a major city initiative, supports local climate and energy action. A number of organisations and local government networks, many of which are Supporting Structures to the CoM, shared their approaches in providing guidance and expertise to local governments.

The Sustainable NOW project workshop “Guiding cities towards an effective, integrated Local Energy Action Plan (LEAP)”, was one of a number of interesting sessions hosted by local government networks. In a room filled to capacity, eight communities shared their enthusiasm and developments in planning and implementing local sustainable energy solutions. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability presented the integrated management approach as a basis for Local ENERGY Action Plan (LEAP) development, with Climate Alliance sharing highlights of the capacity development activities in the project such as study tours, staff exchanges and expert workshops on financing. More information under www.sustainable-now.eu

“A sustainable energy week should not happen just once a year, but 52 times”, said Miguel Sebastián, Spanish Minister for Industry, Tourism and Trade, addressing the daily relevance of sustainable energy. Efforts from all stakeholders should merge to achieve a sustainable energy society, in particular the dialogue between the local and national level needs to be intensified to further unfold potential. The roles of local governments and their contribution to achieving national and European climate and energy targets are addressed through the project LG Action (www.lg-action.eu), exploring needs, challenges and replicable experiences that can support achieving a sustainable energy future sooner rather than later.