

Delegation Brandenburg on the topic 'Sustainable development within the framework of Saksa Kevad'

Report on the fact-finding mission to Estonia from 18 - 20 September 2024

Travel Report by Reinhard Hanneschläger (Consultant in the Global Sustainable Municipality Brandenburg project) Baruth/Mark, 06.11.2024

The trip provided several valuable insights for my work as a consultant for Brandenburg's municipalities.

While the inputs on digitalisation were highly interesting, it was clear that municipalities would be reliant on decisions and preliminary work at the federal level. However, the approach to communicating and presenting sustainability issues was different. During meetings at the E-Estonia Briefing Centre, the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture, the Ministry of Climate, the Estonian Leader Region, and the City of Tallinn, several examples and ideas were shared that appear relevant and applicable to the municipalities of Brandenburg.

Adopting the 'Tree of Truth,' as demonstrated by both the ministries and the City of Tallinn, would be challenging to implement in Germany due to the limited availability of comparable data. However, the example provides good guidance for Brandenburg's municipalities. In many local administrations, sustainability-related information is still presented in the form of flowing text or tables, occasionally supplemented by graphics. The goal, as exemplified in Estonia, should be to present information using simple, clear graphics that provide an overview while enabling readers to intuitively access detailed data or background information by clicking on the visuals, which can then display supporting details in tables or text format.

Since the trip, I have frequently referred to the visit to Tallinn's municipal administration in presentations to Brandenburg municipalities."

The following aspects left a particularly strong impression on me:

- 1 - A realistic and pragmatic approach to managing conflicts of interest.
- 2 - The selection of flagship projects to communicate sustainable development. I was especially impressed by the diversity of these projects, which ranged from simple initiatives, such as installing seating islands in the main square, to more complex endeavours, like developing an extensive green belt across the city.
- 3 - The format and technical structure of the sustainability report. It presented information in a clear and accessible manner while offering substantial depth. I found it particularly interesting how progress toward targets was tracked over time.

Looking ahead to potential future collaboration or a return visit, I see numerous opportunities for mutual learning. The City of Tallinn's approach to sustainability reporting could offer valuable insights for a city like Cottbus. On the other hand, Estonia's delegates may find current experiences related to the design of the Cottbus Ostsee lake of considerable interest, as well as the knowledge repository at the Study House of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) in Großräschen, with numerous other projects in the surrounding area, which are internationally recognized for its inclusive approach to developing post-industrial spaces and fostering regional identity.

The work in rural municipalities also offers intriguing approaches for the exchange with Estonia. For instance, projects such as the Wanderkneipe ("mobile pub") and the "38 unter einem Hut" ("38 under one roof") village network in the northwest of Uckermark—a municipality with a population density of just 16 inhabitants per square kilometre, similar to Estonia's rural population density—could provide valuable insights.