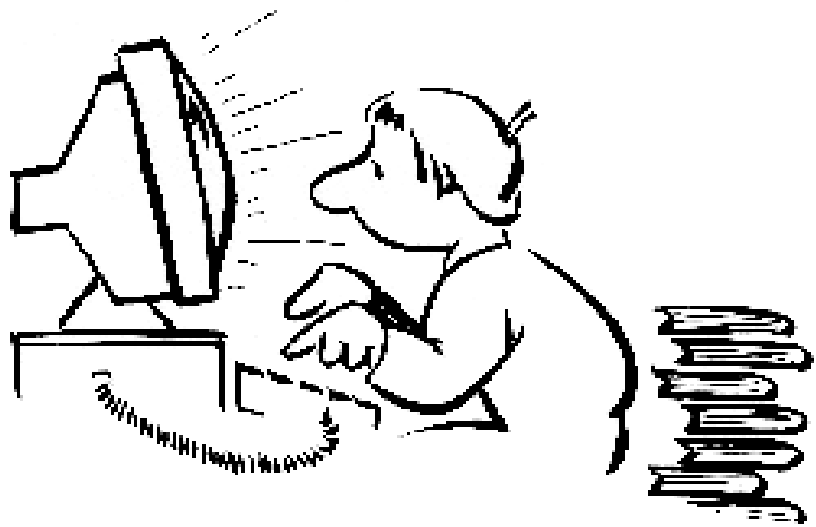


The UBC Commission on Environment has developed a model for municipal environmental auditing, the MEA-model. It was tested and completed in Tallinn 1996 - 1997, and the idea is that UBC member cities would adopt this model and use it to improve their state of the environment. The second MEA to be carried out was started in Pärnu, Estonia in November 1997.

MEA in Pärnu



PRIORITIES

The auditing shall be carried out in cooperation with Pärnu's Finnish twin city, Vaasa, as well as the Swedish city of Oskarshamn. The Pärnu-audit started with negotiations between auditors and experts and a steering group meeting. Based on these, the following list of priorities has been set for the audit:

1. water quality
2. waste management, contamination of soils
3. air quality
4. green areas, nature protection and urban ecology
5. environment and health, safety issues
6. energy management
7. environment and planning
8. environmental management system for the entire city

The local steering group assigned Estonian auditors and experts to the mentioned topics. They shall prepare the material together with the first report for the foreign experts from Vaasa and Oskarshamn, who will in turn be responsible for the actual auditing.

The estimated budget for the MEA project in Pärnu is ECU 32 000. The City of Pärnu has already covered 20 % of the total costs. The remaining 80 % is to be raised from the Nordic Council of Ministers and other sources (EU).

BENEFITS

As Pärnu is a sea resort and a health center that has committed itself to improving the state of its environment, municipal environmental auditing is a very useful tool for it. It provides the possibility of getting an overview of the current state of the environment in the city and reveals strengths and weaknesses. The MEA also supports Pärnu's aim of getting a Blue Flag, the international label of good environment, for its beach.

The auditing team is realistic in its work and as Ms Maria-Kristiina Kontus, the Pärnu MEA co-ordinator said: "It is possible that negative things may show up as a result of the auditing, but it is better to be aware of these than just ignore them." The Pärnu audit is planned to be

finished by November this year, but the detailed schedule depends on the required financial resources.

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If you are interested in the MEA-model itself, please contact the UBC Commission on Environment.

Detailed material describing the auditing step by step is available in English, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian.