Policy Recommendations "Ecovillages for Sustainable Rural Development"

Introduction

The formulation of a set of policy recommendations to facilitate the development of ecovillages in the Baltic Sea Region is one of the main outputs of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 project "Ecovillages for sustainable rural development" (www.balticecovillages.eu). Reflections about policy recommendations have been initiated, discussed and sketched by all project partners and associated project partners in collaboration with different stakeholders during 2012, and, most intensively, since the first half of 2013.

The policy recommendations presented in this document are a result of intense collaboration. They are a condensed set of scientifically based and democratically deliberated policy recommendations, which can be used in the tailoring of the rural development policy measures at different levels of government. Importantly, they are sensitive to socio-economic and technological development needs of Ecovillages.

The careful reflection about policy-making and legal obstacles and the resulting formulation of policy recommendations are crucial also from the perspective of increasing the impact and potential of the main project outputs produced by the Ecovillages project. This is

- a manual on eco-settlement practices and environmentally friendly technologies,
- a manual on ecovillage establishment and governance, and
- a manual on ecological business cases practiced in/by ecovillage communities.

The removing or flexibilization of some of the regulation- and policy- related obstacles that currently limit the further development, application and spreading of the solutions and innovations tailored in ecovillages would significantly facilitate the adoption, utilization and real potential of important eco-technologies and -practices as well as governance and green entrepreneurship as documented in the manuals. Thus, the policy recommendations should also be seen as a means to increase the impact of the manuals.

The commonly recognized standpoints resulting in policy recommendations also provide further insight and consultative support to aspired eco-village stakeholders. Among other things, this is due to the fact that many of the inspirational examples and cases on ecological solutions, governance and self-governance as well as entrepreneurship documented in the manuals encounter currently obstacles related e.g. to legislation, trans-national/national/local regulation practices or lack of knowledge sharing and coordination between authorities, decision makers and policy actors.
As long as the obstacles that the policy recommendations below refer to persist, the insights, innovations and aspirations developed by ecovillage communities and documented in the manuals may not be utilized to their full potential.

The following policy recommendations are meant to trigger public deliberation at national and EU levels on the policy implications drawn from the results of the Ecovillages project in order to facilitate the development of ecovillages in the Baltic Sea Region.

We identified 6 core issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the state of development of ecovillages and in order to utilize the full potential of ecovillages as drivers for sustainable development of rural areas:

1) Energy issues;
2) Land use, planning & building regulation (incl. sewage);
3) Public funding & support;
4) Alternative business & organizational models;
5) Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, publicity;
6) More R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production.

All 6 areas need to be tackled through a number of reforms we consider in our policy recommendations listed in section I below.

Section II describes the process of identifying these areas and sheds light on the processes of deliberation and formulation of the final policy recommendations.

Section III contains country specific recommendations.

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations are presented around 6 core themes -- Energy issues, Land use, planning & building regulation, Public funding & support, Alternative business & organizational models, Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, publicity and More R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production. Each core theme contains:

- one or several recommendations (indicated with numbers),
- more specific sub-themes and justifications (indicated with letters), and
- the main addressees.
I. 1. Energy issues

Starting Consideration: Ecovillages have been ‘living laboratories’ for many areas of an ecological life style. Ecovillages develop (and do pioneering work in) decentralized models and practices of ecological living, energy saving, and energy production from renewable resources.

In order to stimulate these positive effects throughout the BSR, financial support and expert advice should be made available in order to:

1) Promote decentralized power plants (using renewable energy sources with high efficiency).
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Possibility to sell energy to the grid on household level (e.g. possible at the moment to transfer energy to the grid in Sweden, but not get payment);
   b) Clear, long-term contract / regulation about renewable energy production, with guaranteed price;
   c) Subsidies for small / middle scale power plants;
   d) Off-grid solutions
      - Diversifying resources for energy security
      - Promotes transition to the renewable energy production
      - Reduces pollution, environmental aspects
      - To promote decentralized power plants to get building permission.

2) Promote and support further retrofitting with renewable materials to make existing houses and buildings more energy efficient.
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Possibility to save energy;
   b) Better to use existing houses and buildings (e.g. saves natural resources).

Addressees: EU Commission, the Council of the EU, appropriate national MEPs; nationally appropriate ministries, Swedish Energy Agency (SWE).

I. 2. Land use, planning & building regulation (incl. sewage)

Starting consideration: Ecovillages are mostly built in rural areas because it is important for the residents to live near the nature and have farmland to grow their food. Usually they want to cycle nutrients in an own territory and for that they use dry toilets and an own sewage treatment system. In many European countries it is very difficult to get building permissions in rural areas, especially if your aim is to build more houses near each other. (One argument is that it is expensive to build infrastructure in remote areas.) This standard impedes establishing new ecovillages in the countryside. Sometimes the obstacle for a new ecovillage is the common prejudice toward communal lifestyle.

Often the settlements are forced to join the common drainage system, if such exists. This is against the goals and practices of ecovillages.

Ecovillages are forerunners in "natural building". This does not mean only the use of natural building
materials (wood, clay, straw etc) but also concerns the natural technologies and practices that help avoiding machine-driven technical solutions in houses (for example in heating, cooling and ventilation). Building legislations do not usually recognize the special characteristics of the use of natural materials and the advantages of natural building. Hence it is difficult or even impossible to get building permissions for naturally built houses in many countries.

1) We ask the EU to promote building low impact villages in rural areas.
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Give a status for ecovillages so that they can get planning and building permissions more easily.
   b) Enable decentralized infrastructure, for example small waste water treatment systems, and share reliable and easy-to-access information how to build and maintain it properly.
   c) Promote the idea of communal living by research and sharing information.

2) The EU should permit building with natural materials and using low-tech solutions in houses.
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Revise the regulations concerning building materials, and share reliable and easy-to-access information about building with natural materials.
   b) Revise the regulations concerning ventilation and energy saving in houses that use only renewable energy.
   c) The building legislations and the regulations that complicate natural building and cycling nutrients locally hinder the overall political aims in sustainability.

3) The EU should enable the transfer of unmanaged land for common use (in the cities) for food production and for recreation.
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Growing own food should be enabled for the citizens by means of city planning.

Addressee: EU Commission (DG Envi, DG Regio), ESPON, the Council of the EU, appropriate national MEPs; nationally appropriate ministries

1.3. Public funding & support

Starting Consideration: Ecovillages in the wider fabric of the rural area are located in have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of this surrounding area. There is empirical evidence for a positive impetus (see for instance the case of ZEGG in Brandenburg and Die Bedeutung des ZEGG als Wirtschaftsfaktor für die Region, and Berliner Tagesspiegel “Auswertung des Zensus Brandenburg”).

In order to stimulate these positive effects throughout the BSR, funding should be made available in order to:

1) Enable decentralised and sustainable regional development through a reallocation of EU Structural Funds (EAGGF, EARDF, ESF etc.) to be targeted at ecovillages as motors of socio-economic development.
   Subthemes / justifications:
   a) Simplification of funding procedures (e.g. application method, forms etc.)
Furthermore, we ask the EU to:

2) Support socio-economic entrepreneurship through education and training (funding procedures, EU legislation and rules

3) Opening up LEADER for eco-initiatives, particularly its social but also its economic dimensions

4) Channel R&D funds to eco-projects, especially those that have a clearly defined social dimension

5) Foster the emergence of a basic income throughout the EU and as empirical evidence suggest (e.g. http://www.grundeinkommen.at/index.php/grundeinkommen/ist-grundeinkommen-finanzierbar)

6) Subsidise alternative, local / regional food chains. One option would be transportation from producer to local / regional food markets.

7) Invest more money into programmes that foster collaboration between rural areas and ecovillages located in the EU and non-EU countries. The European Neighbourhood Programme (ENP) should be more intensively utilised for this.

Addressees:
- The European Commission’s Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Directorate General for Regional Development;
- The European Parliament, especially the Commission on Agriculture as well as “local” Members of the European Parliament (local understood as those from the BSR);
- The Committee of the Regions and Local Authorities;
- The Council of the Baltic Sea States, here understood as a regional and macro-regional addresssee.

I. 4. Alternative business & organizational models

Starting Consideration: Support for traditional business does not help to solve unemployment and poverty problems. Therefore, in recent years there was an increased number of community initiatives to build businesses, which are designed to meet the economic needs of their members. These companies are non-profit businesses and their goal is to generate income and create jobs for community members. This is an alternative to traditional business. Ecovillages have created many examples of these types of businesses, which can also be called social enterprises. This experience can be used in other communities with the aim to solve economic and social problems. They correspond to the public interest. Establishment of this type of enterprises should be supported as they reflect public interest. The companies are tools/instruments to reduce unemployment and social exclusion, and to ensure sustainable use of local resources. These enterprises are an example of the organization developing their activities in the environment where size of resources is decreasing and with special focus to use these resources very attentively. New organizational models offer new forms of entrepreneurship that involve more people in decision-making processes. Support means supporting businesses in rural communities in order to increase employment and to reduce social exclusion. Priority should be given to alternative businesses, which are initiated by the rural community. Residents of rural areas can independently create services they need by using resources in effective way for creation services they need.

1) The EU should encourage new forms of business and organizations that have a focus on eco-
entrepreneurship & enterprises managed by community.

Subthemes / justifications:
- a) Eco-incubators, eco-banking, community owned (eco)-business, community activity centres for ecological practices, advisory centers for eco-business initiatives;
- b) Tool for decreasing social exclusion and unemployment problems;
- c) Decrease social exclusion and increase social skills;
- d) Promoting eco-lifestyle by supporting survival of ecovillages;
- e) Social benefits of the community-owned business;
- f) Examples on how models function in reality.

Addresses:
- European investment bank;
- Ministries of social affairs;
- The Committee of the Regions and Local Authorities.

I. 5. Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, publicity

Starting Consideration: Recent education is designed for city residents. Low attention to rural elements is an unsustainable approach for future development. Education should give a choice. Eco-education should become one of the disciplines leading to sustainability approach applied in many fields. Ecovillages have the potential to become education and training centres having resources to organise practices on site, also to be used as a tool for information dissemination and exchange. Residents of ecovillages can spread their knowledge as consultants for various ecological education and training activities. Unsustainable use of resources should be better reflected in educational content in various programmes. The main question is how we create a sustainable environment with our neighbours. Universities can be seen as main teachers of the subject. Thus cooperation with universities and educational institutions is important. It is very important to start these initiatives from young age. Knowledge is needed not only for the residents in the cities but also in rural areas. As society is not paying enough attention to ecological aspects, there is a need to update educational programmes. If people are educated on eco issues, this might cut cost in other sectors, too.

1) The EU should promote eco-education as part of promoting rural life

Subthemes / justifications:
- a) Training in secondary schools (including kindergarten and parents);
- b) Training for rural and cities communities how to save resources;
- c) Department on education in technological parks;
- d) Educating teachers on sustainability approach in universities;
- e) Synergy, choice and decrease of emigration.

Addressees:
- Ministers of Education (Council of the European Union);
- The Ministers of Youth.
I. 6. More R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production

Starting Consideration: Ecovillages have the potential to function as ‘living laboratories’ in eco-living and alternative food production solutions/practices. This provides opportunities for various kinds of research & development activities/initiatives, e.g. together with the academia and other research institutes.

In order to fully utilise these best practices and make them available to societies outside the ecovillages the EU should:

1) Encourage universities & research organizations to direct more research on innovations initiated in/by ecovillage communities.
    Subthemes / justifications:
    a) Encouragement of dialogues and collaboration between ecovillages and the R&D community.

The rationale is that ecovillages develop (and do pioneering work in) decentralized models and practices of ecological living and food production. A closer and more active collaboration with the research community would provide opportunities for both parties and the society at large.

Addressees: EU Commission’s education and science officials.

2) The EU should encourage more research and development focus on the broad range of ecological initiatives (e.g. transition towns, permaculture projects, urban gardens etc.).

The rationale is that they would benefit each other, yield holistic synergies and generate ecological innovations.

3) The EU should promote and support further development of local & decentralized food production (e.g. decentralized organic food production, city gardens) in ecovillages and beyond.
    Subthemes / justifications:
    a) Oppose and aim to forbid the owning/ownership/patenting of seeds.
    b) Design and develop policies and regulations that enable actors/organizations (e.g. schools, kindergartens) to favor local products.

The rationale is to tackle trends & developments detrimental to biodiversity, strengthen trends/innovations that foster & protect biodiversity.

Addressees: EU Commission, the Council of the EU; nationally ministries of agriculture and the environment.
II. IDENTIFICATION, DELIBERATION AND FORMULATION OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

II. 1. Distinguishing between EU-level and National Level Recommendations

In the autumn of 2012, all Project Partners organized a session at a National Workshop dealing with the strength and weaknesses of the Ecovillage movement as well as with external factors / obstacles effecting the further development of ecovillages in their countries. External factors were understood as “coming from outside” of the movements and villages and are diverse phenomena, such as building legislation, forms and practices of agriculture, availability of funding or access to / utilisation of decentralized energy solutions and waste water management. Workshop participants were members and stakeholders of national ecovillage networks and movements. The joint deliberations and discussions among this national discourse community served to identify the main problems to be solved in the national and EU environment. All Project Partners wrote summaries of main policy relevant obstacles and formulated policy recommendation drafts (see appendix).

In a next step, leaders of the project’s Work Package (WP) 3 and 4 have screened these national policy recommendations sent by Project Partners and organized the recommendations according to their common themes, country specific issues and policy making levels, both as regards topics relating to WP3 and WP4. A number of common issues were identified in the reports submitted by all Project Partners. These common issues were seen as the best candidates for EU level policy recommendations. To be able to formulate policy recommendation these identified common issues “in the name of the project” were further discussed and developed to be finally addressed at various EU institutions.

At project level the teams decided to mainly addressing the EU level policy recommendations and propose a set of high priority EU level recommendations.

In sum, the team in cooperation:

1) Identified core common themes that are suitably addressed at various EU institutions with the help of a matrix developed by WP 3 and WP 4 leader

2) Formulated policy recommendations with the help of the tentative recommendation lists provided by all Project Partners

3) Identified the various addressees at the EU level

In addition to the common themes culminating into EU level recommendations, there are themes that are rather the subject for national policy and decision making. “National” is here understood in a multi-level fashion, which means it concerns central government, the regional level, as well as municipalities. The national level recommendations, both in substance and in relation to addressee, are more or less up to the Project Partners to feed into the policy and
lawmaking channels. However, the value added of this project was also to identify, "benchmark" and learn from the viable recommendations and ideas from other project partners.

II. 2. Joint Identification of EU Level Recommendations

In the project meeting in Finland in May 2013, Work Package 3 and Work Package 4 leaders organized working groups based on six general thematic categories with the ultimate aim of developing sound and deliberate policy recommendations through the contributions of all Project Partners, Associated Project Partners and invited stakeholders. The identified 6 general thematic categories to formulate policy recommendations for were the following ones:

1) Energy issues;
2) Land use, planning & building regulation (incl. sewage);
3) Public funding & support;
4) Alternative business & organizational models;
5) Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, publicity;
6) More R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production.

These topics were deliberated upon by utilizing the World Café approach, which is "a powerful social technology for engaging people in conversations that matter"\(^1\). Using this approach we initiated a series of small-group conversations, divided into six 10 minutes rounds with changing participants but the organizer (table host) staying with the specific topic. The participants were asked to deliberate on the core theme (one of the thematic categories), potential sub-themes with a justification for its importance and potential addressees at the EU level. At the end of the 10 minutes, participants moved to a different table to discuss another core theme, and leaving the ‘table host’ behind. The table hosts later presented the results of this opinion harvesting and brought it to the debate with the whole community of participants of the national meeting.\(^2\) The participants brought to the discussion table also feedback, issues and points that had been collected from the national workshops with stakeholders in their national countries in 2012 (for National Policy Recommendations see appendix). This ensured that a thorough and wide array of experiences, opinions and expert knowledge on the development of ecovillages and eco-technologies/practices in the Baltic Sea Region was represented in the working group discussions. The Swedish partner published some of the results of these deliberations on the project page to receive additional public feedback and comments. The result of all these efforts

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\(^1\) See http://www.theworldcafe.com/about.html.

are presented in the following section listing the main set of policy recommendations formulated for various institutions at EU level.

III. COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This section visualizes the core issues that were identified nationally and around the 6 core themes as discussed in the previous sections. Six tables are meant to highlight and summarize issues that emerged in the specific national discourses.

These observations or recommendations might be different from what the project feeds in to the EU level policy-making processes. However, project partners can still use these recommendations in their national policy arenas. Furthermore, national-level policy-makers and politicians are invited to also “benchmark” and learn from the viable recommendations and ideas that emerged in other BSR countries. It is under these considerations that the following 6 tables are constructed and presented below.

Table III.1. Energy Issues

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote small decentralized power plants</td>
<td>Change legislation to allow ECovillages to utilize decentralized energy production</td>
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Table III.2. Land use, planning & building regulation (incl. sewage)

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<tr>
<td>More flexible building; permission for eco-settlements; Building legislation; use of natural materials building;</td>
<td>Change legislation to enable establishment &amp; functioning of Ecovillages; Change legislation to allow Ecovillages to use decentralized local infrastructure; Status for Evs as protected areas;</td>
<td>Transferring unmanaged land to citizen's food cultivation, distribution, consumption &amp; storage</td>
<td>Amend building legislation and spatial planning to support ecological designing &amp; construction</td>
<td>Facilitate a) implementation of low-impact village b) house design c) use of ecological materials; d) implementation of small-scale closed loop &amp; sewage systems for rural settlements</td>
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### Table III.3. Public funding & support

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<tr>
<td>Basic income guarantee; More support for R&amp;D on sustainable communal lifestyle</td>
<td>More funding for a) alternative sustainable (small-scale, non-industrial) agriculture, b) Ecovillages &amp; Ecovillage movement in the 2014-2020 RDP</td>
<td>More co-funding for eco-projects (tech, services &amp; production) at different scales; Support projects to develop eco-areas &amp; self-provision territories</td>
<td>Supportive environment for eco-entrepreneurship &amp; initiatives; Incentives (e.g. taxation) for adoption of eco-technologies; Create legal and financial bases (regulations) supporting and stimulating development of Ecovillages.</td>
<td>Opening LEADER LAGs for more innovative eco-initiatives; Simplify funding opportunities for eco-villages; Strengthening admin. capacity of those in charge of rural development; Offer business support for sustainable entrepreneurship &amp; ideas found in Ecovillages</td>
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### Table III.4. Alternative business & organizational models

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<tr>
<td>Eco Incubators to help establish new Ecovillages &amp; eco-initiatives</td>
<td>Developing national eco-banking network; Database of eco-projects; Establishing activity centers aimed at reviving citizen’s interest towards traditional ecological practices; National trademark system to promote ecological products</td>
<td>Supportive environment for eco-entrepreneurship &amp; initiatives; Promotion of eco-technological best practice-exchange; Ecovillage communities should stimulate the multifunctional rural cultural centres; Developing ecological rural cooperative movement (cultivation &amp; distribution of healthy food with eco standards).</td>
<td>Creation of a national advisory service where eco-initiatives could get advice in different areas of Ecovillage development; Support creation of innovative Ecovillage employment and exploit innovation in Ecovillages (Sustainable entrepreneurship)</td>
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### Table III.5. Education, training, information dissemination & exchange, publicity

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory eco-training lesson in schools (eco-tech, community living &amp; SD)</td>
<td>Regional technological and educational parks &amp; centers on eco-technologies; Ecological education &amp; training as part of vocational schools (building, food &amp; forest mgmt); Centers of excellence on innovative eco-technologies; Public database for ecological products; National trademark system to promote ecological products</td>
<td>Promoting ecological ideas &amp; practices and healthy life style in education within the concept of sustainable development; Promotion of eco-technological best practice-exchange</td>
<td>Creation of a national advisory service where eco-initiatives could get advice in different areas of Ecovillage development</td>
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Table III.6. More R&D focus on eco-living, alternative food production etc

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<tr>
<td>R&amp;D on sustainable communal lifestyle</td>
<td>Simplify certification process of seeds and plants grown in Ecovillages; Methodical support by researchers for Ecovillages</td>
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</table>

REFERENCES

Die Bedeutung des ZEGG als Wirtschaftsfaktor für die Region

Berliner Tagesspiegel “Auswertung des Zensus Brandenburg”

http://www.grundeinkommen.at/index.php/grundeinkommen/ist-grundeinkommen-finanzierbar

About The World Café & The World Café Community Foundation, available online at http://www.theworldcafe.com/about.html.

APPENDIX - COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

FINLAND

These policy recommendations are based on the important topics raised in the discussions and opinions presented in the Finnish national workshop in Keuruu 3-4 November 2012. Workshop participants were members and stakeholders of the Finnish ecovillage network/movement. The analysis and summing up of the topics according to their policy relevance into a preliminary list of policy recommendations was done by the experts of the Finnish ecovillage-network and members of the Finnish Ecovillage-project team.

Basic income guarantee.
The question of basic income is widely discussed in the world at the moment. Basic income would be particularly necessary in the ecovillages where people often earn their living from many sources, aim at consuming as little as possible and pursue self-sufficiency. Every country should start preparing legislation for the introduction of a basic income. (For more information on the international discussions concerning basic income, see e.g. www.basicincome.org)

Planning and building permissions in rural areas. The goal is to facilitate sustainable communal living (ecovillages) with decentralized energy production, and water supply and sewerage.
In many European countries it is difficult to get planning and building permissions in rural areas. One argument is that it is expensive to build infrastructure in remote areas. Ecovillages should be recognised as an exception in the building legislation so that they would get permissions more easily if they have arranged their own energy production, water supply and sewerage systems.

Promotion of small decentralized power plants (e.g. change the feed-in tariff system in Finland).
The feed-in tariff system for renewable energy doesn’t concern small power plants nor solar energy in Finland. This is a remarkable disadvantage for the ecovillages that could often have an opportunity to extra income from the small power plants (as is common for example in Germany). This, in turn, would enable investments to use renewable energy sources more efficiently. So the feed-in tariff legislation should be changed in Finland (and in other countries if there is the same problem.)

Building legislation should better recognize the special characteristics of the use of natural materials and the advantages of natural building.
The concept of natural building refers not only to the use of natural materials (wood, clay, straw etc) but also to natural building technologies and practices that help avoiding machine-driven technical solutions (for example in heating, cooling and ventilation). The new national building regulations in Finland have made it very difficult, sometimes even impossible, to build naturally. Building legislation should better recognize the special characteristics and benefits of natural building, and there should be a possibility to build experimental houses where simple ecological solutions are studied and developed further.

More financial support should be targeted to research and development projects that focus on different aspects of sustainable communal lifestyle.
Sustainable lifestyle is needed throughout the society if we want to survive. The issue has very many aspects, at least ecological, economical, social and cultural. Ecovillages are living laboratories where people develop technologies and practices to make their lifestyle more and more sustainable – mostly without any support from the society. Financial support from the EU and from national governments should be provided for such projects and initiatives that focus on exploring, researching and developing different aspects of sustainable communal development. To facilitate the achievement of this goal, co-operation between ecovillages, universities, research and development institutes and other stakeholders should be intensified.
LATVIA

Recommendations for policy decision makers and administrators, other government and non-governmental institutions, ecovillage/eco product/eco technology developers, research and educational institutions, companies for awareness raising etc.

1. Awareness Building.

Recommendations for policy decision makers, who design development, incl. support programs, allocate financial resources. LR Ministry of Education and Science, LR Agriculture Ministry, Regional schools, Regional Development agencies, local municipalities, etc.

1. To create technological and educational parks for demonstration of the old and new eco technologies in the regions.
2. To develop eco demonstration and training households under vocational schools, i.e., training sites of eco building/eco construction technologies under the construction vocational schools, training sites of eco technologies on production and preservation of food products under the agricultural vocational schools, forest management demonstration households under the forestry vocational schools, etc.
3. To develop/expand the study centers/laboratories of innovative eco technologies and infrastructures for testing the obtained results under a university/institute of every sector, providing long-term national support programmes to finance the scientific work.
4. To develop an active recreation weekend centre in Riga aimed at informing/involving the city population, especially children and young people, in acquiring of the old eco technologies, such as domestic gardens, smoking meat/fish, wooddressing, masonry, etc.
5. To develop a publicly available database, where there is some detailed information on availability of eco products in Latvia and various events for educational and informative purposes included.
6. To adjust the trademark system in the country in order to promote recognizability of various products/services delivered according to different approaches in the public.
7. To organize cleaning and improvement events of the environment, which contribute to acquiring the knowledge of the nature and the process in the nature, depending on a season.
8. To renew or increase the product cultivation in gardens in rural area schools and kindergartens and cultivation works employing pupils or children aimed at studying/acquiring/getting involved in the principles for self-provision of food.

2. Support Policy.

Recommendation for policy decision makers, who design development, incl. support programs and allocate financial resources. LR Ministry of Economics, LR Agriculture Ministry, Regional Development agencies, local municipalities, non-governmental organizations, Payment agencies for support administration, Latvian Development bank and Guarantee Funds etc.

1. Higher rate of co-financing and guarantee rate for the supported projects, which are implemented to create and develop eco technologies, eco services and the production of eco products. To ensure the availability of support to the target groups of different scales, amounts and recipients.
2. Establishing the eco banks and development of their network in Latvia to finance the eco projects.
3. Development of a database of eco projects to inform the public, exchange experiences, share the contact details.
4. To support the territorially attached and the integrated activity projects aimed at developing eco areas, including the self-provision territories.
5. Municipalities should develop transferring the free or unmanaged plots of land for use to the local and city inhabitants who are willing to cultivate food for their own self-consumption needs, when required, providing the agricultural equipment services to manage the land, preservation services, services of the public kitchen in order to prepare the products for preservation.
LITHUANIA

Spatial planning:
1. To prepare the legislation enabling the establishing and functioning of communal villages.
   According to current Lithuanian legislation the communal villages can’t be established.
   Submit to: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania and Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania
2. To prepare the legislation, abolishing the requirement to join the industrial centralized infrastructure systems for communal villages that use alternative water, electricity, sewerage technologies and create local system.
   Submit to: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania
3. To grant the status of protected area to ecovillages on their request.
   Ecological requirements have to be set for the ecovillage design project, its buildings and infrastructure objects. Villages that pass the set requirements must obtain the juridical status of the protected area. This is intended to prevent the emerging of fabrics, big industrial farms etc near the village areas.
   Submit to: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania
4. To publicize projects of detailed special plans in the internet.
   This way people who are planning to create ecovillages would know in advance what kind of developments are intended to take place in particular areas in the near future.
   Submit to: Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania

Business:
5. To give support to all farms that use nature-friendly technologies for the agricultural production.
   The support should be given not only to organic farms but also other subjects who work a farm in a nature-friendly ways - biodinamic agriculture, non-ploughing cultivation way etc.
   Submit to: Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania
6. To simplify the certification process of seeds and garden plants that are grown in ecovillages.
   If person wants to sell seeds grown in ecovillage, when the procedure certificating these seeds as eco-seeds should be simpler.
   Submit to: Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania

Education:
7. To introduce compulsory eco-training lessons in schools.
   To start qualifying schoolteachers that would be familiar with the most up to date eco-technologies applied in households and alternative community living organization ways that help to protect the environment and create sustainable and harmonious interrelations. This point is dedicated to raising environmentally-aware generations that would be familiar with sustainable living values.
   Submit to: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania

Directions for the financial, institutional, methodical support for the Ecovillages movement:
8. To allocate the budget for projects that aim to disseminate and implement Ecovillages movement ideas and establishment of ecocovillages in the 2014-2020 m. Rural development programme.
9. To create an Eco Incubator that would provide help in establishing new ecovillages or transforming old ones, disseminate information on the Ecovillages movement, be an information centre, serve as a representative homestead.
10. To provide methodical support by researchers and consultants for co-operation among ecovillage small operators in organizing joint work processes, sharing facilities and resources.

Submit to: Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, Committee on Rural Affairs
Recommendations regarding ecovillages for policy makers as supportive means to extend use of ecotechnologies and related practices in Baltic Sea Region (WP3)

- Creating a favourable environment for eco-technologies
  Creating the environment that would encourage those who develop, purchase and use eco-technologies, creating conditions for commercialization and dissemination of eco-technologies used in Polish ecovillages, promotion of the best practices exchange related to eco-technologies used by ecovillage residents
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Environment, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, local authorities

- Effective incentives
  Effective incentives, for example tax incentives for introduction and development of eco-technologies including eco-technologies used by ecovillage inhabitants
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Environment, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture

- Implementation of the European environmental regulations
  Implementation of the European environmental regulations for reduction of the obstacles and promotion of the use of eco-technologies
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy

- Amendments in building code and spatial planning
  Creating the environment for the ecovillages through facilitating the ecological designing (inter alia spatial planning), creating norms and standards for the alternative and ecological construction in the framework of the building code, gaining permission for the alternative building (ecological houses)
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Transport, Construction and Maritime Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, local authorities

Recommendations for policy makers regarding ecovillages as a tool for sustainable rural development (WP4)

- Promoting the healthy lifestyle and ecology in education within the concept of sustainable development
  Provoking changes and intensification of the healthy lifestyle within the concept of sustainable and competitive development of the economy and society; emphasis put on the ecological education with the examples of practical use of knowledge in the society, showing opportunities and threats
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry of Health, local authorities

- Fostering the ecological movements and ecovillages
  Fostering the ecological movements in the villages, which propagate healthy and environmentally-friendly relations between people and the nature; create legal and financial bases (regulations) supporting and stimulating the development of the ecovillages as the easiest way of changes of attitudes of the rural society, including migrating urban people
  Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, local authorities
- Stimulation of the multifunctional rural cultural centres
  - The communities should stimulate the multifunctional rural cultural centres, including the following functions:
    - Library (with the access to computers and internet)
    - Education (lectures, courses, talks on different subjects, meetings with the doctors, dieticians, scientists)
    - Art (music, theatre, cinema, painting)
    - Entertainment and gastronomy
    - Leisure (optionally leisure and sport)
  - Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Finance, local authorities

- Supporting the rural cooperatives
  - Creating the environment and supporting the development of the rural cooperative ecological movement taking which is involved in cultivating and distributing healthy food compatible with the ecological standard
  - Corresponding bodies the recommendation should be addressed to: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, Ministry of Economy, local authorities
Based on the SWOT analysis of the Swedish Ecovillage Movement, the Swedish Project Partner has suggested policy recommendations and also identified the policy makers suitable to contact for the different recommendations. Both the SWOT and Policy Recommendations have been created with input from movement representatives. We believe that our recommendations can be transferred to other countries in the BSR even though they might need slight modification due to differences in the political structure. Altogether we have identified four problem areas and given suggestions of improvements as well as suggested which measures that should be done on different levels in the political structure.

1. **Overall support:** Financial, social, and technical support; Creation of a national advisory service where ecovillages and eco-initiatives could call and get advice in different areas of ecovillage development. The advisory function could also arrange courses etc. to support new ecovillage initiatives.
   - **ERCO (GEN Sweden):** Apply for funding to create the advisory service.
   - **LEADER:** Inform the Swedish Board of Agriculture that LEADER LAGs should be more pro-innovation and less conserving in nature, and point out how the Local Action Groups are inherently conservative due to their so-called "grass-roots" composition of rural power elite which works against the goals of the Programme.
   - **County Administration:** Point out that the Rural Development Programme is administrated very bureaucratic and lacks administrative resources and capacity for efficient disbursement which complicates funding development of ecovillages.
   - **The Swedish Board of Agriculture:** Lacks administrative resources and capacity for efficient disbursement to run their programmes.
   - **Ministry of Agriculture:** The Swedish Board of Agriculture and the county administration need help to prioritize resources so as to solve their lack of administrative capacity for the above programmes.

2. **Building permission:** Facilitate the implementation of low-impact village and house design and the use of ecological materials.
   - Municipalities & through Association of Municipalities: their set of regulations and procedures are preventing innovation for sustainability (for instance their definition of a household is unsuitable for modern low-resource usage) and do not support ecovillage and community lifestyles.
   - **National Board of Housing, Building and Planning:** The national plan and building law should be adjusted to a sustainable society and sustainable lifestyle. They could facilitate from experience of other EU countries (for instance low impact settlements in the UK). Local traditional and natural materials need to be promoted by the Board, not as today discouraged due to state regulations' preference for performance type-approved certification.
   - **Ministry of Environment:** Needs to instruct the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning to practically implement its policies for sustainable housing development and repeat the above message.

3. **Sewage Treatment:** Facilitate the implementation of small-scale closed loop systems for rural households and businesses.
   - **ERCO:** Document Swedish municipality-approved wastewater solutions to member ecovillages that in turn can utilize these peer decisions as support in permit applications to their local municipalities.
   - Municipalities & through Association of Municipalities: Facilitate permitting of coming performance type-approved certification systems and the flow of information to citizens about new approved systems.
   - **County Administration:** Support municipalities to have a positive attitude towards closed loop systems and facilitate flow of information to citizens.
   - **Swedish Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Engineering (JTI):** Needs to ensure that tailor-made system designs using local natural materials are type approved at the same pace as industrially-manufactured predominately inorganic product systems. JTI should cooperate at the European level to...
facilitate that performance type-approved certification is recognized throughout the EU.

- National Agency of Maritime and Water Resources: Facilitate branch interest so that more small-scale closed loop systems obtain performance type-approved certification and in a significant way facilitate flow of information to municipalities on these systems.
- The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Finance need to ensure that their subordinate agencies and state companies listed above implement this position.

4. Sustainable Entrepreneurship: Support ways for innovative ecovillage employment and exploit innovation found in ecovillages in the transition process of the whole society. Offer alternative business support that recognizes that entrepreneurship ideas found in ecovillages that reflects future sustainable thinking of the post-growth era.

- ERO: Perform study about ecovillage employment in Sweden
- Almi Business Advisory Services: Ensure that advisers have an understanding of alternative and innovative business thinking and can refer to onward to specialized advice
- Municipalities & through Association of Municipalities: Ensure that support and programmes offered are adapted for ecovillage business models
- County Administration: Ensure that support and programmes offered are adapted for ecovillage business models
- National Agency for Regional and Economic Growth: Ensure that support and programmes offered are adapted for ecovillage business models
- National Agency for Innovation: Ensure that support offered is adapted for ecovillage business models
- Ministry of Enterprise: Needs to instruct the National Agency for Regional and Economic Growth and National Agency for Innovation to practically implement its policies for sustainable entrepreneurship development and repeat the above message.