

Odense (Denmark) and the *Green Business Growth* partnership: training craftsmen to accelerate the energy transition

Odense has been a member of Energy Cities since 1995.

The context: Odense, a specific approach to the energy transition

Odense, the third largest Danish city with 190,000 inhabitants, is pursuing an **ambitious environmental and energy policy**. As of 2008, the municipality decided to become the most sustainable Danish city. In 2012, its environmental policy set out an overall vision, “Sustainable together” (*Bæredygtige sammen*) and a strategic energy plan (*Strategisk energiplan*, SEAP) aimed at supplying the city with 100% renewable electricity and heating by 2030. In line with Danish national policy, the environmental policy of the city of Odense focuses on the opportunities provided by a green economy.

The city of Odense stands out by its innovative approach to the energy transition, which is seen as a common task and an economic opportunity, centred on **collaboration and the development of partnerships with local stakeholders** and aimed at developing a **local green economy**. Aware of the importance of networking, cooperation and communication, the city of Odense has joined a number of Danish and international partnerships and networks, including *MiljøForum Fyn*, *Klimaværket*, *Energy Cities* and the *Green Business Growth (Grøn Erhvervs vækst)* partnership.

Participation in the *Green Business Growth* partnership

It all started with the observation that encouraging owners to renovate their houses was quite a challenge. What is the best way to provide incentives? How can the message be conveyed in a timely manner? Local craftsmen appeared to be the solution: they are in contact with consumers and have the attention of those seeking advice on how to save energy and improve the comfort of their homes.

The city of Odense therefore decided to join the *Green Business Growth* partnership, a partnership uniting municipalities, businesses and training centres, which has been in operation since 2009 (90% of the municipalities on Funen Island, of which Odense is the main city, are part of it). The partnership aims to **improve local craftsmen’s training in energy consultancy (energy efficiency), marketing and business development**. For municipalities, the important point is to improve craftsmen’s skills so that they can play a role as energy transition relays, whereas the private partners see the partnership as a way to win new contracts and benefit from cooperation opportunities.

Three employees from the Culture and Urban Development department of the city of Odense, Martin Thomsen, Christoffer Kirk Strandgaard and Jane Immerkær, collaborated with the *Green Business Growth* partnership and worked on organising training sessions and an energy fair.

The craftsmen's training programme

The fact that the partnership already existed was certainly an advantage, in the sense that the municipality of Odense could benefit from previous experience. The municipality brought together all the relevant partners: the heat network operator¹, financial institutes, private businesses, educational centres, etc. Together, they set up the **training programme** composed of the following modules: customer relations, renovation costs, business models, financing sources, etc.

Three training sessions were organised (in 2011, 2012 and 2013). After each session, participants' feedback was collected in order to improve the following sessions. The sessions consisted of evening classes and culminated in an **energy fair**, which gave participating craftsmen the opportunity to present their energy retrofitting services to the general public. Now, in 2015, the project has been temporarily stopped. Indeed, the market is saturated and training more professionals in the same skills straightaway would serve no useful purpose. Providing more advanced training, however, is under consideration.

Results and lessons learnt

For the municipality, it was clear that pressure from civil society alone was not sufficient to change energy use patterns: it therefore had to **initiate an energy transition process**. However, it refused to position itself as an opinion leader and preferred to **facilitate networking between local stakeholders and the exchange of know-how and experience** by providing impetus and ideas.

Each year, a statistical survey is conducted by *Clean*, the partnership parent organisation, on all the professionals trained in southern Denmark as part of the partnership. Over the 2013-2014 period, **the craftsmen who received training increased their turnover by 29%** on average whereas craftsmen as a whole did not experience any growth in their activity². The partnership also led to the **creation of 130 full-time jobs** over the same period³. All in all, 225 craftsmen received training and two-thirds of the partners interviewed said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the benefits of the partnership.

In three years, the municipality of Odense trained **50 local craftsmen**, who benefited from this training. Some doubled their turnover. These are plumbers, carpenters or electricians who have understood the **advantages of communicating and operating in a network** and recommend each other, thereby increasing their customer base.

¹ Energy companies can subsidise energy saving measures. In Denmark, they have the obligation to reduce energy end use annually and the *Green Business Growth* partnership seemed a good way of achieving energy savings.

² Results obtained from the first 85 craftsmen who attended the training.

³ Ditto.

The municipality also learnt a lot from this project. Working with partners from different backgrounds helped share knowledge and know-how. It was also the first time that the municipality worked with stakeholders on climate change action programmes. It was a new and stimulating situation: what are the best strategies to inspire people? How can they be encouraged to participate without imposing a specific measure?

For the municipality and the *Green Business Growth* network the **experience has been positive**: the partnership **has contributed to multiplying the efforts** towards achieving greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and has had an **indirect impact on citizens** by facilitating their access to smart energy solutions.

Difficulties encountered:

- Providing the training proved to be a lengthy process. **Patience is needed**, whilst obstacles are overcome. In Odense, the local branch of the craftsmen association managed to block the project for over a year.
- **Maintaining contact** with the trained craftsmen, to better assess the impacts of the training at the local level.

Training local craftsmen and creating a network of them through the *Green Business Growth* partnership has enabled the municipality of Odense to stimulate the green economy in its territory and to have an indirect impact on consumers. The concept of the *Green Business Growth* partnership is easily adaptable to various local contexts.

For further information

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Useful links and information

Odense: case study analysis: imagine low energy cities. August, 22nd 2014. URL: http://www.energycities.eu/db/Odense_imagine_case_study_analysis_2014_en.pdf

Green Business Growth in Danish Municipalities. ManagEnergy, April 2014. URL: <http://www.managenergy.net/sme/usecases?casestudy=1460>

"Odense's Green Business Growth – Craftsmen as energy ambassadors", *Low-Energy City Policy Handbook*. Imagine, October 2014. URL:

http://www.energycities.eu/db/Odense_involvingstakeholders_craftsmen_2014_en.pdf