

RES-e Regions

Analysis of the RES-e in municipalities in Västra Götaland, Sweden

Introduction

The region of Västra Götaland is constituted by 49 municipalities. In this report, representatives from the municipalities of Alingsås, Borås, Falköping, Kungälv, Lidköping, Mariestad, Mark, Skövde, Strömstad, Trollhättan, Uddevalla and Ulricehamn are interviewed concerning their view on RES-e in the municipality. The conclusions of these interviews are presented here.

The 12 municipalities are different in size, number of inhabitants, level of economic development and location in the region (see table 1 and map below).

The interviewed representatives in each municipality have somewhat different functions in the organization, but all has energy issues and energy planning as main or substantial tasks in their work.

Table 1. Description of the interviewed municipalities

Municipality	No. of inhabitants	Level of economic development*	Characterised as**:
Alingsås	35 761	188	Commuter community
Borås	98 886	225	Industrial, university
Falköping	31 148	184	Agricultural, SME
Kungälv	38 257	182	Commuter community
Lidköping	37 241	218	Agricultural, SME
Mariestad	23 897	192	Industrial
Mark	33 356	160	Agricultural, SME
Skövde	49 856	376	Industrial, university
Strömstad	11 371	224	Agricultural, SME
Trollhättan	53 154	300	Industrial, university
Uddevalla	50 068	207	Industrial
Ulricehamn	22 342	172	Agricultural, SME

* GRP per capita in 1000 SEK, 2002 (1€ = 9.3 SEK)

** The characterisation should only been judged as a way of describing discrepancies between the municipalities. Of coarse each municipality has it owns structure and individuality based on traditions, geographic conditions and business sector etc.

Some of the interviewed municipalities can be characterised as industrial communities with a tradition of larger industries in one or two sectors. Some of them have today universities and most of the municipalities have a larger GRP/capita than average due to the large production within the industries. The municipalities within this category are: Borås, Mariestad, Skövde, Trollhättan and Uddevalla.

Some of the municipalities can be characterised as an agricultural (farming, service and industry) and a SME-based industrial sector and in many cases a well developed service and trade sector. These municipalities are: Falköping, Lidköping, Mark, Strömstad and Ulricehamn.

Two of the municipalities are situated nearby the main city of Gothenburg which in many cases can be seen upon as a "commuter community" although they have a well developed service and trade sector as well as industries within the municipalities. These are Kungälv and Alingsås.

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Map of the Västra Götaland region with the interviewed municipalities marked.



Analysis of the situation

Interest in energy in the municipality

Generally, there is a great interest in the municipalities for energy in general, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. The great majority of the municipalities in the survey state that they are very interested in energy-related questions. Many actions have been taken but these have mainly been focused on RES-HEAT such as biomass district heating and energy efficiency and the transport sector. However, many also point out that the interest in many cases is depending on a small group of persons or local champions. It is also important that the local politicians have a will and a commitment concerning energy topics.

Most of the municipalities have assessed the energy situation in their local energy plan or strategy.

Need of support

Several municipalities say they find it difficult to get proper statistics for the local energy consumption from the central statistical bureau (SCB), especially in the transport area. Some municipalities also state they need special competence/external help to evaluate the present energy situation and what to invest in onwards.

Being able to discuss energy topics with other municipalities to exchange knowledge and experiences, is a suggestion from one municipality to simplify the process of grasping what can be a sustainable energy development. This idea is in practice within some of the municipalities (Borås and Ulricehamn) through their participation in the Sustainable Municipality Programme operated by the Swedish Energy Agency (STEM).

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Return of experience with RES-e projects

Purchasing green electricity

Green electricity is not especially widespread - only one third of the municipalities do purchase green electricity today. Those who don't states it's because the municipality simply purchase the cheapest electricity and haven't considered other options. However, several state they will bring this matter up when existing electricity contracts end.

RES-e projects in the municipalities

Most of the municipalities have implemented one or several RES-e projects, and several are planning new projects ahead. Several of the municipalities have a combined power and heating plant, based on biomass and/or municipal household waste, or is planning to build one in the near future (Borås, Mark, Mariestad, Kungälv, Skövde, Trollhättan, Lidköping, Uddevalla). Several also have small-scale hydro plants, private wind power plants and some have municipality-owned wind plants. Two municipalities are about to implement PV-installations.

Generally, however, most of the RES projects carried out in the municipalities are targeting heat production such as district heating, wood pellets, grain and other RES for heat. Some of the municipalities have also carried out actions to implement alternative fuels for vehicle such as a biogas production plant and filling stations or purchasing of flexi-fuel vehicles which can be run on ethanol.

Difficulties compared to conventional energy

The municipalities experience several difficulties and barriers when planning and realizing RES-e projects. Investment problems and financial matters is a great problem for many of the municipalities. Even if there is a will among employees and politicians new RES-e projects are not a budget priority even if it might pay off in the long run. Sometimes poor municipal economy is certainly a barrier. Getting the energy company of the municipality to invest in new projects is also considered quite difficult.

Another difficulty that many municipalities mention is the public resistance to wind power plant establishments. This is considered a great problem, since even if the municipality and private enterprises plan for wind power plants the resistance often is so great no establishment is carried through. However, some of the interviewees point out that the way the proposal for a wind power plant is carried out it is important for the public reception. It is important with a good communication and dialogue with all involved parties.

A general lack of interest, with politicians, private investors and the public, in RES-e questions is another barrier stated by the municipalities.

Useful support

The municipalities suggest several different types of support that would be useful for them in order to implement RES-e projects. Lacks of money often being an issue, consequently many say that financial support would be helpful. Several municipalities have earlier applied for, and received, the so called LIP support (governmental support for local sustainable development projects 1998-2002) for different energy investments. This support is now replaced by KLIMP (support for local climate investments) which however many of the municipalities find to complicated and resource demanding to apply for. Simplified applying processes for KLIMP and other support systems would therefore be appreciated.

Cooperation with other municipalities for transfer of knowledge and good examples is considered helpful. Cooperation with private enterprises is also desired, mainly for investments.

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Some municipalities request clear demands and requirements for renewable energy/green electricity for new constructions and making sure purchasers and architects have the proper knowledge about possibilities for renewable energy when planning new constructions.

Planning

Energy plan or strategy

Most municipalities have an energy plan or strategy. Several update the plan continuously. However, many of them also express the need of updating the plan within short and some state this need but also a lack of resources to do so.

The Sustainable Municipality Programme, in which some municipalities participate, is considered a good complement to the energy planning and sometimes even more useful than the energy plan itself.

Targets for renewable energy

Several of the municipalities have targets for renewable energy in general in their energy plans, such as increasing the use of renewable energy in different areas. Not all targets are quantified; some are more general such as "increasing the use of renewable energy". Some municipalities have specific goals for renewable energy, such as building a combined power and heating plant.

Few municipalities have specific targets for RES-e in their energy plan or strategy. Many are however thinking of implementing RES-e goals into the energy plan when updating this the next time. Those with RES-e targets today have related those to specific projects or technologies such as wind power establishments.

Need of support for RES-e targets or guidelines

There are some ideas on what kind of support that could be useful for setting RES-e targets. Some municipalities, however, say that it's difficult to specify what kind of support that they need.

The need of more resources within the organisation to set RES-e targets is expressed by several municipalities. Support and knowledge transfer from other municipalities and the Swedish Energy Agency (STEM) is also appreciated. Economic support to the municipality, enterprises and private persons is also considered helpful by some of the municipalities.

Some of the municipalities find that guidelines - realistic forecasts on what kind of RES-e to invest in - would be helpful.

Conclusions

- The interest for energy topics is good in the municipalities, but local champions and committed politicians are also very important.
- Lack of resources within the municipalities is a problem, both in terms of personnel whereas there isn't enough people working with energy issues and economical whereas there isn't money to invest in RES-e projects due to other priorities and/or poor municipality economy.
- Most municipalities have focused on RES-heat production, energy efficiency and alternative vehicle fuels instead of RES-e. However, combined power and heating plants are also quite common as well as private initiatives such as small-scale hydro or wind power plants.
- Public resistance to wind power plants is a great barrier.
- Financial support and simplified processes for applying for financial support is stated as appreciated types of support for increasing the RES-e investments.