



LOCAL ACTION – LOCAL SOLUTIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE SESSIONS

Bali, Indonesia, 10-11 December 2007

ICLEI
Local
Governments
for Sustainability



Parallel event to the United Nations Climate Change Conference
(UNFCCC COP 13, CMP 3)

Sustainfo Launch

Date: 11.12.2007

Time: 11:30 - 12:30

In cooperation with: Sustainfo Consortium

REPORT

Vanessa Foo, GHK Consulting, London, England & Ewa Ciuk, ICLEI Toronto Canada went more into detail of validation, abstracts, Susta-Info search. The live demonstration was handicapped by the lack of adequate internet facilities.

The Power Point Presentation is available on the website, and some of the details follow here:

Themes for Sustainable Cities

Susta-Info addresses 9 themes:

- Building sustainable cities
- Transport and mobility
- Urban governance
- Water management and sanitation
- Waste management
- Air Quality
- Energy
- Poverty reduction
- Culture

The content of the Susta-Info knowledge base

The Susta-Info knowledge base contains abstracts, categorization and validation information and the full electronic copies of over 600 documents related to sustainable urban development. The main sources of content are:

- UN-Habitat best practices database;
- UN-Habitat publications related to sustainable urban development;
- EU projects funded through the EU 5th Framework Programme, Key Action 4, Cities of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage;
- EU projects related to sustainable urban development funded through the EU 6th Framework Programme.

The added value of Susta-Info

Susta-info has a number of features that make it stand out from existing information services on sustainable urban development. At the same time it is co-operating closely with existing systems and is open to any new co-operations. The main points of added value are:

- Susta-Info has a global coverage and contains documents from both UN-HABITAT and EU sources
- The content is focused on sustainable urban development and the actors on local level form the main target group
- All content has gone through a selection, abstraction and categorization procedure to ensure that it is relevant for actors on local level
- The categorization and abstract sheets provide quick information for the individual user to assess whether a document is relevant to a specific local context
- The best-practice case studies within Susta-Info are validated on the different dimensions of sustainability. A graphic tool provides a quick insight on the level of sustainability.
- A specific thesaurus on sustainable urban development and the use of Collexis technology greatly enhance the quality of the searches in the database
- Users not only find documents and project websites but also experts related to a topic.

How to search

Susta-Info offers two methods of searching:

- Pre-defined search
- Refined Search

The **Pre-defined** search can be accessed through the themes on the home page of the website. All nine themes will generate relevant documents, to give you an idea of what the database offers. For general information purposes this will very often suffice.

Refined search in the knowledge base is possible by entering **your query** in the search box. You can do that in English, French, German and Spanish. You can enter words or sentences in the search box or copy/paste to it **entire documents** that you are already working with.

You are provided with the **most relevant** documents in the database. Then you will be given the opportunity to **refine** the search result, by giving stronger or lighter 'weight' to certain elements in your search. This will reorganize the order in your query, or alter the documents involved. It is also possible to search within an already done search.

Why is Susta-Info different from other search engines?

- An important difference from normal search engines is that Susta-Info uses a thesaurus – a structured list of terms (or *concepts*) that are relevant for the subject area – to do a search, as well as a standard text search. The specific thesaurus for sustainable urban development is being developed in co-operation with EUKN.
- The term "*Fingerprint*" is used to indicate a relevance-ordered list of concepts from the thesaurus that have been recognised in a text. Fingerprints provide a very efficient way to find out what a document is about.
- By using the thesaurus and the fingerprints, the Susta-Info search is able to provide more comprehensive results to match your queries.

How do you start a search?

- Searching starts by typing one or more words in the text field, or by copying and pasting a longer text fragment into it. For example, you can paste in a text from a Word document or a website.
- To start the search, press the "Search" button on the screen or hit the Enter key on your keyboard.
- It is possible to filter by category by clicking the "Set filter(s)" button next to the "Search" button.

How do we interpret the results of a search?

- After hitting the Enter key or clicking the search button, search results appear in four tabs, called 'Susta-Info', 'Susta-Info experts', 'EUKN' and 'EUKN experts'. Clicking on the titles of found items will open a new window.
- Links from the 'Susta-Info' tab open a window with a detailed description of the item that includes a summary of the document, different classifications to determine the relevance to cities and links to documents and websites.
- For practices, a more elaborate validation has been developed by the Susta-Info team. The results of this validation are displayed in a colored bar, consisting of different shades of brown. Learn more about the validation methodology in the 'Susta-Info Methodology' section of the Susta-Info site.

Susta-Info experts' results link to a window with contact information and to a list of documents produced by the expert. The information provided for the 'EUKN' and 'EUKN experts' tabs are similar. Susta-Info has established a partnership with EUKN that consists of joint technology development and the possibility to search in each other's databases. The top 5 concepts: these are the five most relevant concepts from the thesaurus found in the selected document. A more complete overview of relevant concepts from the thesaurus can be seen by clicking on "show fingerprint". The overview of concepts provides you with a quick glance of the relevance of a certain document.

How do you refine your search?

The Susta-Info site offers different ways to refine your search:

- Add proposed thesaurus concepts to your search
- Search with fingerprints of found documents
- Modify the weights of concepts within a fingerprint
- Select new concepts by searching the thesaurus

Adding proposed concepts to your search

To the left of the search results is a section called "Concepts". This section will show concepts from the thesaurus if any have been recognised in the text entered in the search field. If no concept is recognised, this section will be empty. Below the Concepts section is the "Proposed concepts" section. It contains a list of concepts found in the combined search results. You can add one or more of the concepts to your search and start a new query.

Searching with fingerprints of found documents The concepts in a fingerprint of a found document can be used to start a new search. Starting a search with the concepts of just one document can be done by clicking on "use for search". Using multiple document fingerprints to search is done by selecting multiple search results by clicking their check boxes and clicking on the "Search with selected" button, located at the top of the list.

Modify the weights of concepts within a fingerprint It is also possible to modify the fingerprint used to perform a search. Next to every concept in the "Concepts" section at the left, is a 'slider' indicating the relative importance of the concept when searching with it. Clicking on the scale more towards the left of it will move the brown globe to that position and reduce the concept's importance; clicking more to the right will increase it. Dragging the brown globe

across the scale is also possible. Clicking the circle to the left of the scale means the concept will not appear in the search results, and similarly clicking the circle to the right of it makes the concept a required one.

It is also possible to remove a concept from the search fingerprint by clicking the checkbox to the left of it and on the "Delete selected concepts" button. Adding concepts from the proposed concepts is possible by clicking checkboxes next to these and clicking on "Add Selected". When the search fingerprint is ready, a new search can be started by clicking on "Search with this fingerprint".

Select more concepts by searching the thesaurus

Concepts not displayed in "Proposed concepts" can be added by switching to the "Search thesaurus" section, available in the brown menu bar at the top of the page. The current search fingerprint will be visible at the left of the page. Entering text in the search box and clicking on "Search for concept" will show concepts from the thesaurus that match the search query. Checking the boxes next to them and clicking on "Add concepts" will add selected concepts to the search fingerprint. Clicking "Explore" next to a concept will go up one level in the thesaurus hierarchy, so related concepts can be found by browsing. Clicking on a concept next to "Parent" will go up another level in the hierarchy. When a concept is selected here, and "Add concepts recursively" is clicked, all concepts below the selected concept will be added to the search fingerprint as well. Once the search fingerprint is complete, a search can be started by clicking the "Search" button at the upper left.

Susta-Info Methodology

Susta-Info Validation - How does it work?

This methodology, developed by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven) in Belgium, with ICLEI as designated 'reference group' of the Susta-Info Consortium, is used for two major purposes:

1. The validation and selection of exemplary and outstanding practices from the UN-HABITAT Best Practices database, relevant for local authorities worldwide and for the EU 6th Framework Programme
2. The selection of relevant UN-HABITAT publications and research documents

The validation is based on 2 different sets of criteria. One set defines the Susta-Info focus and the relevance of the practice or publication, and the other set assesses the level of sustainability of the practice.

Selection of Outstanding Practices

In order to select Outstanding Practices from the large pool of UN-HABITAT Best Practices, Susta-Info has developed the following procedure:

1. **Inclusion of only the UN-HABITAT practices** that are qualified as Promising Practices, Good Practices, Best Practices, or Award Winners .
2. **Composition of a rough list** of pre-selected practices, based on general Susta-Info relevance and experience.
3. **Narrowing down of the list** using 4 basic selection criteria for each practice:
 - ★ evidence of well-defined role of local authorities
 - ★ indication of sustainable land use (land/space as a resource) (FP6 EU research topic global change and eco-systems)
 - ★ cross-sectoral partnerships & community support, and
 - ★ clear presence of capacity building activities
4. **Systematic and thorough assessment** of the practices using 6 major validation criteria:
 - i. Strategic / Sustainable
 - ii. Participatory/ Cooperative
 - iii. Replicable/ Transferable
 - iv. Contextual/ Localised
 - v. Inclusive/ Alleviating urban poverty/ improving accessibility
 - vi. Capacity Building/ providing training

Each criterion obtains a 'score' or a 'degree of fulfillment', the minimum score being 0 and maximum 5. The score depends on the extent to which each of the 5 sub-criteria is fulfilled (full assessment form showing sub-criteria can be downloaded from the Susta-Info website). The differences between the intended and the actual achievements and results (impact) of the project are taken into account For each practice, this score is translated into a shade of brown, which illustrates to what extent each of the criteria is fulfilled. A darker shade of brown corresponds to a higher score. The practices that are considered to be 'outstanding' are labeled with a 'Susta-Info Outstanding Practice' stamp*. The

brown bar below shows the extent to which each of the criteria is met, providing a comparison of the 'scores' allocated to each Practice.

** Outstanding; needs to be interpreted in several ways; as really exceptionally good, as very interesting (considering e.g. methodology, relevance on some selected aspects, etc.), or even as controversial but with interesting lessons to be learned.*

Selection of EU FP5 and FP6 documents

Not all of the FP5 and FP6 projects were necessarily relevant to Susta-Info. In order to select which of these projects were most relevant for Susta-Info, GHK applied several criteria:

- Projects must have an explicit 'urban' dimension
- Projects must not be too technical, e.g. 'hybrid geophysical technology'
- Projects must not be concerned solely with dissemination/exchange of experience and must not be events such as one-off conferences, or courses
- Projects must not be very theoretical in nature, i.e. should have a practical application of some sort.

Using these criteria, a list of FP5 and FP6 projects considered most relevant to sustainable urban development was generated, which was then reviewed, amended and finalised by POLIS, a Susta-Info partner and designated 'reference group', forming a final list of EU projects to be abstracted and validated for Susta-Info.

Selection of UN HABITAT publications

The selection of publications and research documents is based on the above-mentioned 4 criteria for the **Susta-Info relevance**, as well as their electronic access and availability.

A video on the need for easily accessible knowledge, produced by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium) was aired.