

EDITORIAL



2007/2008 saw awareness-raising measures carried out concerning climate change, which became firmly established by the Grenelle (forum) on the environment. It is now time to follow through with action. The challenge is to take effective action to reduce our energy consumption without affecting our standard of living.

This will be possible if measures proposed at the second Grenelle are quickly approved with regard to our sphere of activities: new insulation standards, assistance with renovating buildings, the creation of a real heat fund, support with cogeneration and biomass.

But the most important and difficult issue to resolve concerns fluctuations in the price of oil: they prevent environmental policies being successfully implemented in the long term. At the end of the 1980s, energy saving was not really a consideration, energy costs had fallen so low. All the same, greenhouse gas emissions were increasing.

It is important that a mechanism such as carbon dioxide tax, an improved system of exchanging carbon certificates, a climate energy contribution, or other, are set up as quickly as possible (preferably at a European level) to allow essential investments to be made for energy efficiency. Because reducing emissions must at all costs be our objective. It will be even better received since it will be achieved through local sustainable development approaches, such as Regional Energy Climate Plans (RECP).

The experience of local Agenda 21s shall then be very useful in allowing the creation of RECP on the same basis of close consultation with all parties involved (the population, socioeconomic players, public players...). This will be the best guarantee of their being accepted by the greatest possible number, when the proposals stemming from the RECP concern the daily lives of all.

*Roger Léron,
President of
Rhônalpénergie-Environnement*

DOSSIER

Providing answers to help make the situation clearer in terms of sustainable development!

As it often does during public debates¹ or the day before new elections, Rhônalpénergie-Environnement is contributing to the discussion by trying to answer some of the questions most commonly asked about sustainable development.

Consultation, for what purpose?

Often considered as the 4th cornerstone of sustainable development along with the environment, economic and the social factors, consultation is key to the approach's success. Associations, professional unions, traders, businesses, the educational community, citizens etc. are in fact the first to be affected by the policies implemented. One of the main purposes of consultation is the initial sharing of the project, ideally from its conception up to its implementation. This exercise has many merits, which are very quickly visible in the field in a sustainable development project:

Considerably widening the circle of parties involved in the discussion

A well-known challenge for local authorities is obtaining a representation which is as accurate as possible of its population. For over 10 years, in the Rhône-Alpes region, the increasing number of tools and experience in consultation means that it now has quite a comprehensive and diverse bank of tools to allow it to obtain as wide a representation as possible. When this mobilisation phase is successful, a real unexpected take-up of partners and their desire to be involved in the process is often observed.

Taking the time to know and understand one another

It is a known fact that the population's expectations are now higher in terms of being closer to its elected representatives and having greater involvement in decision-making. Setting up consultation within a sustainable development approach involves taking the time, throughout the development process, to bring together participants, communicate with them, try to explain actions and options, listen to proposals which are a matter of public interest and be capable of incorporating some of them. This period of collaborative work, which is not simple and can take a long time, is also the best guarantee for getting to know one another, beyond theory, via a constructive comparison of very real actions.

¹ *Rapports Souviron (text concerning the renewable energy debate), various project or planning contracts, regional council planning reference documents (relating to environmental problems between now and 2020), the Grenelle on the Environment, various general, regional or municipal elections, etc.*

Explaining the political and technical vision.

By definition, it's the priority of land managers to act in the public interest but this constant desire is not always understood by the population, which is sometimes far removed from the decision level, or which can be faced with complex technical questions that are beyond its comprehension. Consultation is the ideal time for presenting choices (ideally rather pre-choices rather than final decisions...) but also for understanding the population's perception of the issue. The discrepancy that can exist between this perception and reality is well-known, even if the decision is very justified and rational. Undertaking completely transparent consultation on sustainable development also allows the project to be reviewed. It's often the ideal time, for example, to adapt actions and, more globally, a programme.

Making the parties involved the best representatives in terms of the actions selected in order to ensure their success and longevity.

Those involved in consultation about sustainable development are able to very quickly judge the legitimacy of the approach since it follows shared and recognised rules from the start, in complete transparency, with mutual respect and has a schedule and recognised objectives, resulting in concrete actions. In these conditions, the results of consultation will be shared and consensual and whereas the authority would only be able to rely on its internal resources in order to promote its actions afterwards, the consultation process will assist it via participants, involved citizens, community or socioeconomic structures, which will become active supporters of the sustainable development project. The reality of involving participants is an essential stepping stone for guaranteeing the success of the project when it is actually implemented. Indeed, it is necessary to realise that the project only becomes reality when it is actually implemented and that everything really starts when the Agenda 21 is published. It is also advisable to state that communication or information after the event on actions already decided have already shown their limitations.

Allowing national recognition of the approach.

The national recognition reference framework of local Agenda 21 and sustainable development territorial projects of MEEDAT 2 has actually listed consultation as part of its recognition criteria. In this way, nearly fifteen authorities now currently benefit from this recognition by the State in the Rhône-Alpes region.

² *Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Land Use Planning*

IN BRIEF

RHONALPENERGIE-ENVIRONNEMENT, PARTNER FOR NEW EUROPEAN PROJECTS

Developing virtual power systems: the ALPENERGY project

The Alpenergy project, backed by Europe as part of the Interreg Espace Alpin programme and the Rhône-Alpes region, began in July 2008. It concerns a future subject: virtual power systems. The application of this concept is intended to develop electric network intelligent systems allowing energy production and consumption to be integrated, managed, balanced and controlled on the scale of a region integrated into the electricity market. The idea being to minimise the financial and environmental costs of local energy consumption by using economic or technical tools: decentralised production management, storage capacities, controlling demand, pricing indicators... Rhônalpénergie-Environnement works in collaboration with the Electrical Engineering Laboratory (G2Elab) of the Institut Polytechnique de Grenoble (INPG) – Grenoble Polytechnic College. Two regions are involved in this project: the région d'Allevard (ESDB) and Energie SDED (Syndicat Départemental d'Énergie de la Drôme – Drôme County Energy Association). If you are interested in this project, please get in contact with us.

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Promoting renewable fuel

The CO2 NeutrAlp project

It is an "Alpin Space" Interreg European project which brings together 14 partners (Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Austria and France). It has just started (beginning of September 2008) and will run for three years. The objective is to promote renewable fuel, i.e. fuel that does not come from fossil hydrocarbons, for which the resources are limited and the environmental impact significant (greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change). The project will compile a list of local possibilities, on two French sites (Villard de Lans and the Combined community of cities of Pays de Romans), to produce renewable fuel (methane from organic sources for gas-fuelled cars, biofuels, solar power, for example). Once this potential has been identified, a trial will be carried out on the two sites intended to consolidate local and also regional procedures, define the best legal and technical conditions to implement, and decide how to make more private partners or the population itself participants in the financial organisation of these various projects.

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DOSSIER CONTINUED

Did you say "Agenda 21"?

An Agenda 21 is a territorial approach which defines, by consultation, the actions that will be implemented in practical terms (programme budgeting and schedule in hand) with regard to sustainable development, i.e. which aim to take into account at the same time (with interaction and not separately, unlike traditional development plans) the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The term Agenda 21 was really officialised in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit. Since, its proliferation throughout the world has not only popularised the term but also allowed the content and the method to be stated. The MEEDDAT reference framework, available since 2004, is its model for France. It thus states what an Agenda 21 or territorial sustainable development approach entails.

Fortunately, Agenda 21 is not the only means of implementing a global sustainable development approach but this term has become accepted to the extent that it would be a shame not to have this recognition. Of course, there is no contraindication to getting involved in a global sustainable development approach without using this "Agenda 21" term but, then again, if its methods and content comply with what we expect of it why in fact do without it?

In this way, since 2006, a hundred or so French authorities at all levels (regions "Departements", county, inter-municipal structures, municipalities, natural parks) have been able to benefit from national recognition which promotes in the eyes of all the long-term background work undertaken by these regions and participants.

From the global to the sectorial: Which strategy should we take with regard to sustainable development?

The choice of strategy – global or sectorial – will have an effect. Indeed, whilst the sectorial approach allows sustainable development to be implemented very usefully in practical terms, it only involves, by definition, certain topics, regions or sections of regions and participants. The most difficult aspect in a "fragmented" sustainable development policy is justifying actions to critics not concerned by the topic, the region in question or which do not form part of the parties involved. For them, it is always the same parties who profit from budget and priorities and nothing is visible in their daily lives.

In addition, one of the problems with a sectorial sustainable development policy is achieving cohesive inter-linking of actions.

In this way, with this strategy actions can be increased which will all present a real foundation in terms of sustainable development but which may be judged as lacking clarity by everyone or generally not inter-linked since they were conceived by independent decision-makers and not necessarily coordinated.

Conversely, conducting a global policy by taking an interest in all the issues in the region ensures consistency between actions and

at the same time makes actions in the region visible to everyone, excludes nothing and nobody from the debate, supports the authority by pooling resources and ultimately allows the source of problems to be tackled upstream, at a level as relevant as possible, in order to try to resolve them... sustainably.

In reality, that's not going to be easy! The approach is complex, new for the region (the elected representatives, services and population) which is not prepared for it, shakes up decision and work habits and requires an unyielding drive to succeed on the part of the managing elected representative. Nevertheless, the success of this approach, now widely experienced in the world (and with several tens of models in the Rhône-Alpes region alone, which is one of the most advanced in France) depends on its unique ability to radically change internal organisation, decision-making and work methods, bring together populations and socioeconomic players of the region and provide coordinated and effective answers across the board, which tackle causes of problems in a constant quest for optimal use of the human and financial resources available

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EXPERIMENT

Summer comfort in retirement homes: the Cool Region project

The Cool Region project, which started in November 2006, and in which Rhônalpénergie-Environnement is a partner, forms part of the EIE (Energy Intelligent Europe) European request for proposals. It groups together seven European regions (Germany, Holland, Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia and France).

The objective is to examine energy efficiency in terms of air-conditioning new and existing buildings, an area in which we are not yet very aware of the challenges but which is becoming increasingly important, notably from the point of view of climate change. Each partner has worked on a type of commercial building.

A project on retirement homes in the Rhône-Alpes region

We have opted, for the Rhône-Alpes region, to concentrate our action on retirement homes, particularly susceptible in terms of summer comfort. To examine the question, a regional task force made up of county councils, the local department of social services, property developers and builders, project supervisors and users has been set up.

In terms of new buildings, the work undertaken with the Local Employment Development Agency of Grand Lyon and the Terre Eco design office has allowed a management chart to be established,

which the contracting authority uses to monitor the construction of a building. For each of the big project phases, recommendations are given with a recommended quantified final requirement on the opposite page. A new pilot project is being conducted in Neuville sur-Saône and several Pluralis projects in Isère will allow the consistency of objectives of the management chart to be checked and the merits of objectives to be stated. Concerning existing buildings, five audits of establishments have been carried out by the Indiggo technical research department for the Rhône County Council. They have allowed technical specifications to be drawn up and main recommendations to be determined.

Recommendations guide for summer comfort in retirement homes

The main recommendations on new and existing buildings have been brought together in this guide intended for contracting authorities of retirement homes and forwarded, amongst others, to all the establishments in Rhône. Close collaboration with the local department of social services has allowed us to align our regional work with a national recommendations guide on summer comfort in retirement homes, the production of which is managed by the Ministry of Health. We have also collabo-

rated with ARENE Ile-de-France and the Paris School of Mining Engineering. To raise awareness on the subject of summer comfort, various demonstrations have been organised: a training day on earth cooling tubes and underground heat exchangers, a training day on types of glazing, a training day on adiabatic cooling and under floor air-conditioning. A day of exchanging opinions on energy and retirement homes is planned in February 2009 in the Loire.

www.coolregion.fr: energy efficiency and air-conditioning

The guide and all the documents linked to the project are available on this Internet site as well as the work of other partners. The approaches undertaken with several counties suggest concrete and applied results. The final conference of the project will be held on 17 March 2009 in Lyon. It will present all of the project's results as well as the development prospects for developing retirement homes which are energy efficient.

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IN BRIEF

The ALTERMOTIVE project

At the same time, another much more strategic project (financed within the scope of the budget items "Intelligent Power Energie for Europe") sets out to examine, over a period of 30 months, the best French examples (and elsewhere with 13 other partners in Italy, Germany, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Austria) and find out which aspects in policies, technical support or forms of communication have contributed to the success of these operations. The objective of Altermotive is to draw up a list of recommendations to guarantee that new projects using renewable fuels in Europe are as successful as possible and draw up these recommendations with authorities concerned in the Rhône-Alpes region. To successfully complete these two projects, backed by Europe and the Rhône-Alpes region, Rhônalpénergie-Environnement is looking for authorities and partners in the Rhône-Alpes region interested in renewable fuels and wanting to participate in implementing the project, in particular through steering committees set up especially for this purpose.

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Energy saving, renewable energy and green transport in tourism: the SETCOM project

The SETCOM project, backed by Europe as part of the EIE programme (Energy Intelligent Europe) and the Rhône-Alpes region, brings together 11 partners from 10 European countries (Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, France, Latvia, Finland, Greece, Portugal and Slovenia). It started in October 2008 and will run until March 2011. The main objective is to promote efficient use of energy, renewable energy and the reduction of emissions linked to transport in tourist areas. The players involved are tourist businesses (the food service industry, the hotel industry, the accommodation industry, and swimming pools), travel agencies, tourist offices, elected representatives and local authorities, tourism employees and tourists. In the Rhône-Alpes region, SETCOM's main actions will be carried out in a pilot zone, centred around the Gorges de l'Ardèche, in compliance with the Chauvet Cave major renovation project.

Further information: www.setcom-project.eu
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www.biogazhonealpes.org: the methanisation site in the Rhône-Alpes region

Created as part of the European biogas regions project, the objective of which is to develop biogas in Europe, the site aims to bring to the sector of methanisation in the Rhône-Alpes region a sample group of tools and information in order to participate in the development of biogas projects in our regions. The site provides unrestricted access to a mass of resources and, in particular, a guide to administrative processes, fact sheets, lists of players in the sector, reports of visits to existing sites, newsletters, communication tools, technical tools, the list of professionals and their clients, information on national events... This site is intended both for those members of the public who want to know more about the subject and project sponsors and supervisors who want accurate guidelines for managing their projects.

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