



Active climate ambitions in the housing associations of Lighthouse City Sonderborg

Residents from the housing associations GAB, NAB and Danbo participated in "Green Ambassador" training at EUC Syd. Knowledge, strengthened cooperation and motivation must inspire other residents to climate actions and participation.



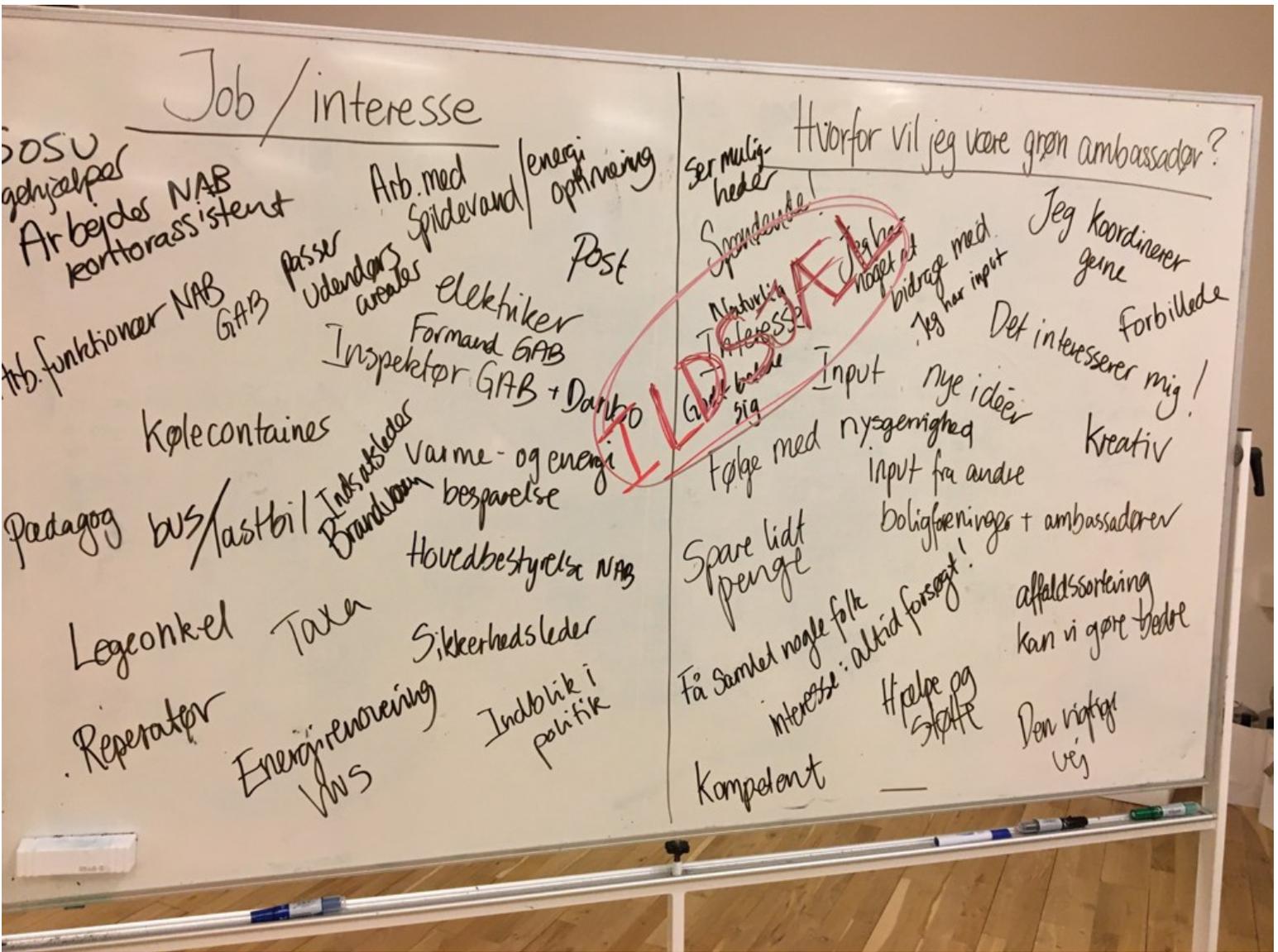
Participants were very active such as Sofie Nissen, Hans Erik Johansen, Birgit Fravsbøl, Morten Thomsen and Kaj Lindblad, all from NAB.

This was the second course in the series of Green Ambassador training for Sønderborg's housing associations. More than 20 residents and employees from the housing associations GAB, NAB and Danbo joined the Green Ambassador course at EUC Syd in Sønderborg. They will become Green Ambassadors for their housing association to promote the city's ZEROcarbon transition. As partners in the EU project "Happi", all 6 housing associations are in the process of energy renovating their buildings in order to secure that Sønderborg achieve its ambitious climate goal for 2029. Three out of six housing associations (SAB, SOBO and B42) are partners in the SmartEnCity project too. Within the SmartEnCity project, these associations have retrofitted their buildings, installed PVs on rooftops and implemented battery storage solutions. This is also contributing to the overall CO2 neutrality goal of Sønderborg and the 2025-milestone goal defined in Sønderborg's Roadmap2025.

Lots of great ideas for future ventures

After almost four hours of training, one goal was clearly on their list of ideas: They want to strengthen cooperation not only in their housing association, but also across the area's housing associations. For example, the participants discussed joint purchases of LED lamps. This saves money and at the same time reduces CO2 emissions, due to less driving, etc. The green ambassadors also want joint sparring via courses / events, such as visits to incinerators or solar plants.

The ambassadors' green agenda also includes the need to transform common areas into habitats for bees and insects. Maybe one can find grant opportunities to promote biodiversity? And when there is a flowering lawn, how about several benches and tables to be able to enjoy the view over a cup of coffee with the neighbours? Some participants suggested an action plan, to maintain motivation.



On the board you could see the participants' background and motivations to sign up as a green ambassador.

How do you influence the behaviour of others?

Participants agree that it is a huge task to motivate fellow residents to a greener behaviour, to save energy and resources; whether it is electricity, heat or water. As an example, they mentioned the waste sorting in the respective departments, which after many years still does not work optimally. It is about offering fellow residents something that "makes sense", maybe the ambassadors could arrange something that makes fellow residents curious about participating in joint activities?

Ambassadors must also know what their tasks are and they need to act as motivators; a huge task, but it can be solved, together with the other green ambassadors and with the administration that helps. This way, the organization, the department boards and the ambassadors are more closely linked. They must also clarify who they want to work with and know what to do.

"Residents need ownership. When the neighbour sees *what I am doing in terms of green transition* it may be easier to follow *my steps*", as mentioned by one participant.



The teacher Tanja Thuesen in dialogue with Kurt Christensen from GAB.

It is the community that can make the difference

To reduce energy consumption, they suggested recycling rainwater, switching to LED lights and setting up solar cells. More meetings are to follow, along with pamphlets that can inform about initiatives that make the world greener.

That idea confirmed statements from Peter Rathje, Director of Sonderborg's ProjectZero: "We need to reduce our carbon-footprint. The Sonderborg climate transition is well on its way, and last year we achieved a 44% reduction in CO2 emissions compared to baseline 2007." Peter Rathje was in no doubt that the Green Ambassadors are going in the same direction, through the community, which he characterizes as crucial element to success.

Vivian Engelbredt, chairman of the main board of the housing association SAB, introduced the participants to the housing associations' energy and sustainability strategies. "No matter what we do, whether we are renovating or building new, green solutions must be thought of first," she said. She is a supporter of biodiversity and encouraged participants to "make sure that there is no waste flowing in your housing association, that no chemicals are used in the garden. You are not alone. There are many initiatives around. Responsibility is accepted and actions are taken."



Peter Rathje and GAB resident Bent Alnor talking about local green initiatives, while Ruth Eriksen looks at a co-created list of ideas.

Develop a strategy for the effort

Finally, Vivian Engelbredt called on the Green Ambassadors to “create a strategy that makes good sense, not only here and now but also in the future. You should not be afraid to try something new”.

The Ambassadors' first task is to secure organizational anchoring: Who should be the team leader, how often should they meet, when and how often may new ambassadors be recruited, how long should one be an ambassador?

It will be an exciting meeting to look forward to: In spring 2021, the Green Ambassadors will be invited to a follow-up session, where they will share their efforts for the benefit of the climate and the environment and address new challenges.

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