

ELCA Newsletter December 2011

News from Europe

The influence of the European Union on everyday working life is increasing. The European Parliament, the European Council, the Council of the European Union and especially the European Commission produce a multitude of documents that impact national systems. But which of these is relevant for the landscape gardening industry? For the businesses interested in this it is difficult to keep abreast of developments and to evaluate these. This is now to be remedied: with our „Newsletter from Europe" we want to inform uncomplicatedly about political plans, strategic actions and not in the least about "miscellaneous" topics in Europe. The point is not to only announce the "latest from Brussels", but to also highlight the relationships and developments with specific connections to the landscape gardening industry.



- The participation in public procurement tenders is still tedious and expensive for businesses. Self declarations of conformity of the bidders are to be permitted and the presentation of original documents only to be demanded from the successful bidder or from the bidders who are put on the shortlist.
- Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) being the engine of the European economy are to be granted easy access to public contracts.
- The stronger subdivision of contracts is to give SMEs a better chance of bidding. It is to be avoided that SMEs who are sub-contractors are subject to worse conditions than the main contractors.
- Increased use of the electronic procurement system is intended.

Reorganisation of the Public Procurement Law



The EU Commission plans to present a draft for a reorganisation of the procurement law by end of

2011. The European Parliament consequently passed a resolution on 25.10. 2011 that defines the key goals of the Commission:

The criteria of the „lowest price" is no longer to be the crucial criteria for awarding public contracts. It is to be replaced with the criteria of the „economically most favourite quote" in regard to the economic, social and ecological advantages, taking into account the complete life cycle costs for the particular goods, services and work.

„EU Year of Air 2013" is being prepared



Mid-2012 the ELCA will participate in a consultation on the revision of the directive [2008/50/EG](#) on air quality and clean

air for Europe because the Commissioner of the Environment Janez Potočnik has declared 2013 to be the „Year of Air". End of 2012 the EU Commission intends to send a draft to the EU Parliament and Council.

The [6. Environment Action Programme](#) has the main target of „achieving an air quality that does not result in unacceptable impacts on or risks to people and the environment." However, the European Union seems a long way from achieving this.

21 directives – among others on air quality, air pollution and industrial emissions – currently regulate European air pollution policies. In addition there are the traffic policy regulations.

Little can be found therein about the effects of vegetation on air pollution. The ELCA will not cease explaining the advantages of green in the city.

However, currently more than 20 member states are not adhering to the EU regulations on air quality and the specific limits and will have to expect legal consequences.



EU wants to reform Value Added Tax

The European Commission has presented a strategy paper for a reform of Value Added Taxes within the EU. Cross border transactions within the EU are to be simplified with a pan-European Value Added Tax system; tax exemptions and reduced tax rates are to be reviewed.

The aim of the Commission, according to their announcement, is above all to make the Value Added Tax system „enterprise and growth friendly“. The paper, however, also contains proposals relevant to environmental policies.

According to the plans of the Commission the Value Added Tax of the country of destination is to be retained (the country in which the customer resides) and the EU Value Added Tax system be developed upon this basis.

There will hardly be any reduced Value Added Tax rates anymore – especially products and services with environmentally hazardous effects shall no longer be subject to reduced Value Added Tax rates.

The reduced Value Added Tax rates proposed by France and Great Britain for especially environmentally friendly products

are obviously not being supported by the Commission, even though the European Parliament had announced their support in a resolution in October.

Green Week 2012

The 12th Green Week congress, the largest annual conference on environmental policy in Europe will be held in Brussels from 22 till 25 May 2012. The next theme is "water". This valuable resource is to be used correctly and sparingly. The ELCA has been represented at the Green Week regularly over the past years. A contribution is also planned for 2012.



The Green Week annually offers a good opportunity for discussions and the exchange of experience and good practices. In the past ten years the conference has established itself as an obligatory date for everybody involved in environmental protection. The 2011 congress attracted approx. 3,160 attendees from politics, commerce and industry, non-governmental organisations, science and media.

Pesticides, Syringe Certification

With a new directive on pesticides the EU has stipulated that all member states have to do regular checks in future.

By 2016 all equipment that is being used in the individual states must have undergone a first check. Many member states have to organise this obligatory country-wide check for the first time.

Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany have more than a decade of experience with obligatory checks and have established a dense network of inspection authorities. Other members, like for example France, Spain, Italy, Hungary or Greece now have to organise hundreds of thousands of checks of pesticide equipment within a comparatively short period.



The obligatory checks of the equipment are seen as part of the strategy for the sustainable use of pesticides. Precise and reliably functioning equipment with new low drift nozzles contribute crucially to the pesticides being dosed exactly and only being sprayed where they are to act.

All member states agree that this is necessary. Only the different technical levels of the technical checks in the member states is making the introduction of obligatory checks difficult.

If the "Syringe Certification" is to be valid Europe-wide for equipment then in the opinion of the ELCA the technical assessment process has to be of a high technical level and comparable for all EU countries. This is the only way to ensure comprehensive compliance.

Varying checking periods as well as different technical assessment levels in the member states definitely distort competitiveness and make the introduction of obligatory checks in Europe more difficult.

Pesticides – Proof of Expertise

Regulations for the obligatory special training to receive a certificate of expertise have been introduced EU-wide with the EU framework directive certificate and now have to be introduced in the member states. The countries will have to set up the organisation and implementation of expertise certificates for pesticides.

The ELCA expects that a number of important questions will be raised regarding the application owners, traders and users of pesticides as well as in regard to the responsible authorities.

The landscape gardening industry has requested that the current process for receiving a certificate upon graduating successfully in landscaping be continued indefinitely. At least for the initial issuing of the expertise certificate after successfully



graduating upon completing vocational training a simplified process without additional applications should be possible.

ELCA Brochure: Green City Europe – for a better life in European cities

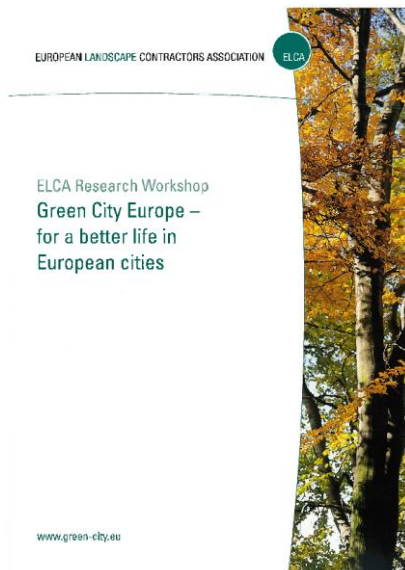
Well-known scientists from all over Europe presented the results of their research on the performance of green in European cities on 24th May 2011 at the ELCA Re-

search Workshop „Green City Europe“ to experts and EU politicians. The focus was on the topics health, green and urban climates as well as biodiversity. The European Landscape Contractors Association (ELCA) had invited everyone to Brussels to the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.



The lectures of the scientists from all over Europe highlighted how diverse the research activities of the universities are on green regarding climate changes, urban development, health and biodiversity in Europe.

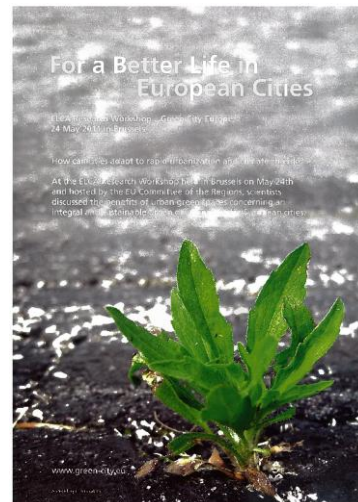
The scientists agree that the time has now come to promote the many examples of successful green projects and their numerous advantages and positive effects far more intensively – and more importantly across the board to reach all decision makers in towns and municipalities and also in business as well.



Here is the [ELCA brochure in English](#) with all papers and additional sources as a PDF file.

A short focussed version of the ELCA Research Workshop was issued by the professional journal TOPOS.

Here is the [TOPOS article on the ELCA Research Workshop in English](#).



The European Commission has indicated in a letter from the Director General for Research and Innovation addressed to the ELCA that they want to give more weight in future to green in the city.

Horizon 2020

To convert research results more efficiently into products and services the EU is providing funds of 80 billion Euros in a new programme. The idea is that research results will be made marketable more quickly, that life will become simpler with innovative products and services and that new business opportunities can be generated.

Apart from strengthening the global competitiveness of Europe and the targeted promotion of key technologies 31.7 billion Euros will be made available for the following fields that concern many Europeans:

- a) Health, demographic change and well-being;
- b) Safe, clean and efficient energy;
- c) Intelligent, environmentally friendly and integrated traffic;
- d) Climate protection, resource and raw material efficiency as well as
- e) Integrative, innovative and safe societies.



These central goals are of special interest to the landscape gardening industry.

For this reason the ELCA is prepared to offer its cooperation. Because constructing with green improves city air, reduces noise and strengthens health and immunity towards psychological and physical afflictions. Green spaces near accommodation reduce the effect of monotonous workplace occupations. The exodus from the cities and the escape into the countryside are slowed down when sufficient green and open spaces are available in cities.

For the EU action areas the ELCA sees the necessity for specific research on the following subjects:

- „Green Lungs in a City“, effect of plants and green on health
- Future requirements for open spaces due to demographic changes
- Extensive claiming of land for sustainable urban development
- Increasing the value of properties with green, the advantages of high quality green
- Investigate the insulation effects of greenery on construction, especially the influence of greenery on roofs and facades on the interiors of buildings.
- „Green building“ with the whole range of green construction and corresponding plant use
- Development of new or not yet fully developed markets, e.g. vertical greenery with plants as living pictures (living walls)
- Investigate trends in the residential industry. Challenges to be faced for adapted maintenance requirements of outdoor facilities
- Use of biological engineering construction methods, preventative flood protection, near-natural water engineering, renaturation, decentralised water retention basins, dyke construction
- Reduction of micro particle pollution through vegetation
- Possibility of de-sealing surfaces
- Expert maintenance of green spaces taking the risk of new plant diseases and pests into account

ELCA: Patronage of 5th European Landscape Congress in Strasbourg

In October 2011 the 5th European Landscape Congress „Assises Européennes du Paysage“ was held under the patronage of the ELCA in the European Council in Strasbourg.



In a three-day programme it was discussed which actions and processes can be the basis for landscapes to become a source of wealth. Numerous mobile workshops investigated this congress motto from all perspectives.

The ELCA presented its new workshop brochure „Green City Europe - for a better life in European cities“ at the congress. ELCA-President Mony also discussed the new activities of the Green City foundation at the congress.

Experience Green Highlights with the ELCA in London

The autumn study trip of the ELCA on the occasion of the 41st International Skills Competition „WorldSkills“ was to the British capital London. For ELCA study trips only a small group of 30 experts from Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Hungary had chosen a busy study trip program.



A visit to and guided tour of Kew Gardens as well as a visit to the Chelsea Physic Garden were on the programme of the first day of the study trip.

In the afternoon the plan was to visit the Olympic Games grounds but this – due to the heavy London traffic – was only possible on the public access paths.



The second day was committed to the International Skills Competition „WorldSkills 2011“.

Like during past International Skills Competitions the work sites of the landscape gardeners proved to be a special public attraction.

Dates

April – October 2012
[Floriade 2012](#) in Venlo (NL)

May 2012
 Green City Meeting in Venlo (NL)

9. May 2012
 Meeting of the Presidium and the Secretaries of the member associations in Venlo (NL)

10. Mai 2012
 VHG Congress in Venlo (NL)

11. – 12. Mai 2012

Study trip of the ELCA-Committee of Firms to [Floriade 2012](#) in Venlo (NL)

12. – 15. September 2012

[GaLaBau 2012](#)

20. International Trade Fair Urban Green and Open Spaces in Nuremberg (DE)

April – October 2013

[IGS – International Garden Show in Hamburg](#) (DE)

30. May 2013

Meeting of the ELCA-Presidium and the ELCA Secretaries of the member associations in Hamburg (DE)

31. May – 2. June 2013

Congress and study trip of the ELCA-Committee of Firms to Hamburg (DE)

50th ELCA-Jubilee

2. – 7. July 2013

[WorldSkills, Leipzig](#) (DE)



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