

Position Paper

Thematic Pole

Low Carbon Communities



Working on transport, energy and the efficient use of resources represents the roadmap for action until 2050 that could enable the EU to deliver greenhouse gas reductions in line with the 80 to 95% target agreed upon. This ambitious effort requires not only the mobilization of a wide range of stakeholders, policies, investments and changes; but could also provide numerous opportunities for new patterns of growth in different sectors. To support this, Europe as a whole must contribute. The local level has a key role to play for two reasons: (1) cities are the largest resource consumers and (2) the proximity between institutions and citizens is necessary for change. The communities of Southeast Europe have undergone a period of radical changes. Nevertheless, they hold a common perception of being members of a community formed through increased collaboration and common objectives. In particular, the strong relations between water, natural resources, and the population present an opportunity to design a new development paradigm for.

Due to these conditions, the number of resilient and smart communities is increasing. Local communities are becoming more receptive to low carbon economies. Here, an approach involving the energy sector, the construction industry, industries related to transport and mobility, and the agricultural sector is required. Launching such change requires a transnational approach, which would allow for different points of view about opportunities and constraints to be shared. Change will be driven through creating common understanding and better coordination among institutions, local authorities, and other stakeholders. Knowledge sharing can provide services and, at the same time, can identify winning models and experiences that will lead to the introduction of new policy tools. Transnational cooperation represents a gateway to the introduction of innovative ideas.



Piero Pelizzaro, Kyoto Club

Introduction

The Capitalization Initiative of the South- East Europe (SEE) Programme was launched in the spring of 2013 with the aim of strengthening synergies between projects that are similar in character (Thematic Poles) and raising visibility at both the project and Programme levels.

In the framework of this process, the Thematic Pole Low Carbon Communities gathers projects that seek to improve the performance of local authorities in terms of energy and resource efficiency, with the strategic objective of making the cities and regions of Europe actual low carbon communities. The Pole is coordinated and administrated by RE-SEETies (4th call SEE Project, lead by the Municipality of 18th district of Budapest, Hungary).

Resource efficiency is a top priority reflected in Europe 2020 strategy and in the Southeast Europe area agenda, especially in light of excessive energy consumption and the lack of efficient coordination measures regarding how to use resources more consciously. Our Thematic Pole believes that a city's leadership has a major role to play at local and regional levels in order to boost resource efficiency.

We view the capitalization process as a unique opportunity to reconsider and evaluate the results of the SEE Programme. We feel that the development of new knowledge that builds on existing experiences coming not only from SEE, but also from other similar or complementary European projects (our fellow projects), can play a key role in the establishment of the upcoming programming period of 2014-2020. This can contribute to future transnational cooperation and related programmes in the EU.

In an attempt to influence Europe's future, this Position Paper, which was written and is endorsed by a series of SEE and other projects, suggests a path forward that seeks to maximize contributions to upcoming funding programmes. This is particularly the case for the Danube and Adriatic Ionian Programme areas, which promote a future of cities and regions with low carbon economies. The aim of this document is to set out basic findings and solutions for adjustments to future measures based on the experiences and evidence gathered during the implementation of different projects.

The findings of this Position Paper are based on the results of discussions held by 7 SEE projects and 4 other projects funded by Intelligent Energy or the IPA Adriatic Cross-Border Cooperation Programme at the "Green Development in South-East Europe in the function of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation conference," which was held in Fojnica (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in August 2013. Representatives of the projects present at this conference participated in an intensive "barrier brainstorming," during which they presented the major gaps and barriers encountered in the implementation of their specific projects. Additionally, participants presented the main results achieved during their projects' implementation and discussed possibilities for transferring the solutions and tools identified over the course of their projects to both one another and other regions.

Main Findings

Through the process of "barrier brainstorming," participants identified a lack of capacity, a lack of tools, and the need for general legislative and regulatory frameworks as common challenges. Several projects have made use of testing valuable methods in order to address these challenges. Using such methods may allow for changes to the present situation and overcoming barriers. The conference results are to be transferred within the framework of the capitalization process, as well as to upcoming projects planned for implementation between 2014 and 2020 in the SEE area and beyond. Participants agreed that these key obstacles do not allow local communities to move forward quickly on their paths toward low carbon economies. At this stage of the common work, three main arguments are presented:

1. Capacity building for national/local institutions and local communities can support change.
2. Institutional tools such as tendering, modelling, and planning can help make change operational.
3. The creation of options for the improvement of legislative and regulatory conditions can support change.

#1 Capacity Building for National/Local Institutions and Local Communities Supports Change

Opinion

The introduction of policy inspired by the low carbon economy requires broad participation among all of the main stakeholders. At the local level, the following barriers do not facilitate the identification and application of new local policies that can lead to real change:

- Lack of capacity within local authorities;
- Lack of capacity on the part of the main stakeholders (professionals, local companies and interest groups, the public at large) and weakness of information flow;
- Delay of availability of adequate tools/information for educational providers.

The challenges listed above have been identified for the different typologies of role players given below:

- Political decision makers within municipalities;
- Employees of local authorities (especially within municipalities);
- Other stakeholders such as consultants, engineers, architects, agronomists, installers (of efficient/renewable technologies), heads of companies, etc.;
- Citizens or the public at large.

Within **Municipalities and Local Authorities**, the individuals or office clearly responsible for sustainable energy and other environmental issues is not always identified but would be necessary for the promotion of the low carbon economy. Spoiling systems that tend to insert political aspects into the scope of activities often lead to diminished results. Furthermore, the capacity building process may be further damaged due to lack of awareness from the bottom-up, i.e. from citizens and stakeholder groups. Personnel employed by local and regional authorities (LRAs) tend to be adverse to change. Their conservative or closed approach may stem from lack of motivation and the failure to identify appropriate interests. Other **stakeholders** are facing a similar situation in terms of lack of information and capacities. The absence of specific and necessary knowledge reduces the capacity of local companies and professionals to provide advice and influence decision makers. This reinforces reluctance towards change. Given that the **public at large** has little information about responsible approaches to low carbon economies, they are frequently unable to provide adequate contributions supporting this through various forums, such as public discussions. In such a context, the **flow of information** between all relevant actors in this field is paralyzed. Institutional and group interests remain unrealistic and actors are unable to form coherent visions concerning real opportunities in terms of EE and RES investment due to **lack of information and misinformation**. It is extremely difficult for stakeholders – particularly those at the political level – to reach a consensus in favour of combating climate change due to the lack of a **coordination mechanism**.

The **educational/vocational sector** has a key role to play as source of valuable information.

However, topics related to low carbon economies (water management, energy efficiency, climate change, resource efficiency, etc.) are relatively new. Thus, actors in a position to provide valuable information and education still find themselves in a phase of self-organization/self- training. They are not (yet) able to respond to demands. This is particularly true considering that education should be provided in a continuous and comprehensive manner.

Providing Support

Over the course of the programming period, several projects have been able to support the reinforcement of capacities and, as such, have been able to overcome some barriers in the following ways:

- Trainings/capacity-building workshops targeting municipal staff/their advisors in the field of EE, RES tackling different aspects (ENERSUPPLY, CitySEC, EFFECT, EnVision 2020);

- Dissemination of educational and informational materials (ENERSUPPLY);
- Targeted information campaigns including stakeholder political forums, dedicated public debates, etc. (LOCSEE, RE-SEETies);
- Awareness raising events targeting the public at large (citizens) and stakeholders, especially representatives of non- governmental organizations and district committees (RE-SEETies);
- Capacity building and stakeholder consultation workshops and materials for enhanced planning of aggregates supply for all levels of authorities from different sectors, experts, industry and local communities (SNAP-SEE and SARMa).

Considerations of Transferability and Improvement of Results (Capitalization)

In order to promote transferability, several conditions were identified as necessary for proper and effective implementation:

- Creation or identification of a dedicated structure within municipalities for EE (including Energy Management) and RES

It is often the case that municipalities lack a clearly designated office responsible for energy issues. As such, energy competences are fragmented among a number of offices and it is difficult to identify responsible personnel. In these types of situations, trainings and capacity reinforcement fail to produce complete effects due to the lack of clear target groups. Identifying temporarily responsible personnel is not an adequate solution as continuous training and support are necessary for effective planning.

- Sensitising the political level

Decision makers are often far removed from innovative topics such as EE, RES and resource efficiency. However, low carbon economies could represent important opportunities for communities, as well as the emergence of interest groups. Political decision makers need to be well informed in this field to be able to drive the creation of consensus. Here, the main challenge is motivating decision makers so that they can identify their own interests in this process. It is critical to involve local populations from the outset, which is a process in which key actors can provide assistance. Pre-existing local investments can also enhance sensitisation.

- Supporting the educational sector

Reinforcing the educational framework in this field throughout Southeast Europe is necessary. This should include:

- o The clear identification of qualifications, certification, and skills;
- o The standardization and recognition of competencies throughout the region - setting minimum standards;
- o The introduction of specific and common VET and LLL diplomas.

#2 Institutional Tools Providing Practical Contributions towards Change

Opinion

Policy making actors are currently introducing innovative regulations and comprehensive, evidenced-based local strategies to foster the application of EE measures and RES investments and taking into account efficient use of available resources. The realization of low carbon economies requires that the public sector possesses, and is able to apply **adequate tools** in terms of planning, monitoring, risk assessment and evaluation. The application of these new systems requires more time than what is available for the introduction of these innovative models in order to reach the goals set by, for example, EU2020 and 2050. In order to catch up with these goals the positive results of regional cooperation should be shared with local policy makers.

Providing support

During the programming period, several projects were/have been able to provide and adapt innovative tools, for example:

- The RE-SEETies toolkit, supporting decision makers' policy making and strategic planning competences by collecting the best available technologies, criteria for assessment of the taken measures, policy making tools, awareness raising, best practices and tools for data collection, energy consumption and waste production forecasting.
- The methodologies and tools offered by SEE Hydropower can help public bodies to make decisions about the planning and management of water and hydropower concessions, as well as consider all multi-purposes uses.
- Tendering documentation about Energy Efficient Public Procurement (EFFECT) can help Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) to procure and purchase energy efficient products.
- ENERSUPPLY offers geothermal, wind, hydro, and biomass Energy Potential RES Maps and Energy Management Guidelines.
- GeoSEE provides tools for the economic modelling of the sustainable utilization of low temperature geothermal energy.
- SNAP-SEE has developed Aggregates Planning Toolbox, containing Handbook on Capacity Building and Stakeholder Involvement in Aggregates Planning, Handbook on Data and Methodologies and SEE Vision on Planning Aggregates Supply.

Considerations and conditions of the transferability of outputs and further improvement of results achieved (capitalization)

The tools and models developed during project implementation and discussed via the brainstorming exercise are viewed by the project representatives as valuable responses to barriers. Several transferability conditions were identified as necessary for the proper and effective implementation of these tools and models:

- Establish a procedure to collect and update the data for feeding model(s) and appoint an IT expert
Models provide information to support decisions and are based on structured data sets. Their correct utilization requires continuous data collection and sufficient data management (the identification of new data, verification of information, data mining, updating, and elaboration). Such conditions typically lead to the appointment of an IT and energy expert.
- Verify compliance with the tendering documentation
Applying the criteria for green tendering during the selection of best offers and in line with procurement procedures requires full harmony with national and EU tendering regulations, market circumstances - private and public sector, and especially respect for competition and transparency.
- Develop pre-feasibility studies
Pre-feasibility studies, which include detailed cost breakdowns, are necessary for the development of renewable energy maps of selected territories. These represent a pre-condition for further analysis.

#3 Improvement of Legislative and Regulatory Conditions to Support Change

Opinion

Recommendations should be embedded in a broad and consistent climate **policy roadmap** for policymakers in their respective countries, and in line with EU legislative frameworks. The roadmaps outline long-term economic and strategic opportunities in different countries, make use of different technologies, and propose timeframes for implementation. These special roadmaps contain "market pull" goals that can be reached through awareness raising actions that highlight the benefits of RES, EE and resource efficiency. On the other hand, they also incorporate "technology push" elements. The identification of new technologies may require further R&D efforts, production, and marketing in order to meet demand. A roadmap generally includes a point of departure, for example, a current framework, a destination (the vision or overall objectives), and pathway(s) towards the desired destination. A roadmap should serve as a guide, enabling policy makers to recognize and act on events when changes in direction are required. Finally, roadmaps also generally include a visualization of plans and relationships between different plan elements.

Proposed actions should specify concrete, time-specific, and necessary steps that need to be taken. These may include options for the improvement of regional, economic, and/or local normative frameworks in the participating countries or regions. Such steps can pave the

way towards new legislative and financing measures supporting the introduction of Ground Source Heat Pumps (GCHP) investments (such as pricing or enabling taxation) in the relevant regions. They could also address legislation in support of GCHP-friendly patterns, with specific reference to permissions and licensing procedures.

Providing support

- LOCSEE is developing policy papers for project countries that provide comprehensive policy and modelling results. As governments are involved in the LOCSEE project, short- and long-term recommendations have been developed that have a good chance of being implemented. These policy papers could be used by other projects seeking input in the development of recommendations, modelling results, and operative tolls options, all of which will help to overcome barriers.
- LEGEND seeks to improve regional and/or local normative frameworks in the project's participating regions. It is hoped that this will pave the way towards new legislative and financing measures that support the introduction of GCHP investments, and legislation leading to GCHP-friendly patterns. Here, specific references are made to permission and licensing procedures.
- SNAP-SEE is developing National/Regional Guidance papers for improving planning aggregates supply, providing concrete steps to be taken by policy makers in SEE countries and region towards better resource efficiency.

Considerations and conditions for the transferability of outputs and further improvement of results achieved (capitalization)

The full utilisation of policy papers will require an environment that is both accepting and approving. The framework of the LOCSEE project represents an opportunity to improve effective endorsement of the policy papers. Disseminating these papers and ensuring that key players have access to the information they contain is a critical step. Thus, it is up to competent institutions to dedicate their human resources and ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of information presented in the papers.

Conclusion

Local communities in Southeast Europe can make meaningful contributions towards fulfilling the European Commission's 'Roadmap for Moving to a Low Carbon Economy in 2050' and the initiative for a resource-efficient Europe under the Europe 2020 strategy. All of the EU's major economies will need to make significant emissions reductions by the middle of this century. Reaching this long-term objective is not possible without the efforts and actions of local communities (e.g. living in cities with less air pollution, use more locally produced energy, etc.). For these communities transnational cooperation represents a key opportunity to create and transfer winning models for the introduction of low carbon economies. Via the experiences of 12 transnational cooperation projects (of which 8 were funded by the SEE Programme), several important elements have been identified related to the reinforcement of capacities and the support for institutional frameworks. Specifically, these include **training courses, targeted information campaigns, planning methodologies, and tools that support decision-making**. Many of the project results provide solutions for challenges such as lack of capacity and low levels of awareness within institutions or stakeholder groups. Utilizing these valuable solutions is paving the way towards the ambitious objectives of the 2050 Roadmap. However, to effectively use the results, the further consolidation and reinforcement of the transferability conditions are required. If this were to happen, true consistency of efforts made up until this point would be visible. Cooperation and enhancing capacities requires an attitude of looking beyond short- term actions and to aspire to long-term, tangible impacts. The upcoming European Territorial Cooperation programmes should take this into account and build upon already existing results.



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