

The two-year long RE-SEETies project has now come to an end, but the lasting results will undoubtedly help in catalyzing “towards resource efficient urban communities in South-East Europe” – as we have turned the project slogan into action.

The project aimed to address resource efficiency in the SEE region, as many municipalities face challenges in addressing this issue. The RE-SEETies project aimed to equip and inspire 8 SEE cities with enhanced policy-making and strategic planning competencies in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and waste valorization. Several professional expert institutions also played a key role in coordinating and providing relevant expertise to the cities. Overall, despite the differences between the participating cities, cooperation and knowledge exchange was a valuable tool to help achieving results in each participating municipality.

Ending on a Good Note: A Successful Project, and Final Conference

The Final Event of the RE-SEETies project was organized in Zagreb, on 9th September, 2014. The conference brought together interdisciplinary researchers developing strategies and solution concepts for efficient resource utilization. Over 100 participants have discussed how Europe must move from its current linear economic model towards a more circular one.

FEDARENE and REGEA managing director Dr Julije Domac opened the conference with the statement: "Europe's competitiveness will be determined by its ability to use resources efficiently. Therefore we must explore our existing potential to turn waste into valuable resources. Although there is no single solution for solving global climate change, cities have the ability, capacity, and will to lead. Projects like RE-SEETies have proven that cities can create an effective forum where they can collaborate, share knowledge and create integrated solutions and tools for tackling excessive energy consumption and uncontrolled waste production”.

Due to complex social and political circumstances, municipalities of the SEE region often face challenges when it comes to resource efficiency, as most cities are not well-prepared to tackle this issue in an integrated manner. “RE-SEETies project has helped in this regard by developing tools and methodologies for resource consumption forecasting and resource efficiency measures. Based on the project’s experience, a valuable methodological toolkit has been developed which can provide strategic guidance for all municipalities in the SEE region, and beyond, to improve resource efficiency and smarter city planning”, explained Dr Monica Salvia from the National Research Council of Italy, Institute of Methodologies for Environmental Analysis.

Behavioural change is also of central importance in bringing about significant reductions in energy end use and reduction of waste, and the RE-SEETies project has recognized this. “To implement energy and waste measures successfully, first and foremost it is necessary to understand your consumer target groups. The RE-SEETies project tried to educate and inspire a wide range of stakeholders: from local decision makers to average citizens in order to facilitate the change of consumer habits” - said István Hunyadi, Lead Partner of the RE-SEETies project from Budapest’s 18th District.

Diversity is a crucial element for local authorities and regions, which needs to be recognised at the European level. However, what European societies need most is to work in fair partnerships to ensure a sustainable resource future.

Transferring Our Experiences: Recommendations for European Decision-makers

A very intense stakeholder engagement process has taken place in the eight participating countries of the RE-SEETies project, in order to evaluate and compare enabling policy conditions with local practice of resource efficiency in urban communities. The local stakeholder process, with more than 40 meetings and 700 participating governmental representatives, as well as actors from the business sector, academia and civil society, was complemented by exchanges with European expert perspectives.

The result is a comprehensive package of policy recommendations that addresses the inter-linkage of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of resource efficiency. The document highlights the most effective and important policy instruments identified in RE-SEETies’ stakeholder meetings and complemented by good practice found throughout the EU. The report provides a summarised overview of policy recommendations on resource efficiency relevant to political and technical decision-makers of all governmental levels – local, regional, national and European.

The EU-level Policy Recommendations on Resource Efficiency is available in the ‘Document center’ of the RE-SEETies website.

Big Thinking, Local Action

The development of local strategies and action plans was a complex process that took into account many of the deliverables from the RE-SEETies project. The quality control function of the project's expert partners was crucial in the process, having provided remote support for each city with concrete recommendations, related to foresight on resource consumption, peer review, and finalization of the local strategies.

The recommendations resulted in a report created by the Assessment and Support Group of the RE-SEETies project – professional organizations responsible for expert support for the cities in the strategy building process. Members of the group were: MACEF, REGEA, CNR-IMAA, CRES and ENERGIACLUB.

The key documents created during the implementation of the project, have been incorporated in the final strategies. The resource consumption forecast enabled identification of the demands of each city in terms of primary resources, as well as overall GHG emissions based on existing surveys and methodologies for alternative future scenarios. At the end of this activity, each city gained a set of forecasts for energy consumption, and possible local energy production and waste production under alternative management schemes.

During the peer review process every city created a case study profile in which the city defined their aims and focus. This served as the basis for the strategy building. Because of the importance of the case studies in the strategy building process, every city organized peer reviews in order to improve the quality of the case studies through involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

Each participating city's local strategy and action plan was complemented by a RES feasibility study on the optimal future utilization of local and regional RES potential. The feasibility studies reflect on the applicability of chosen technological solutions.

Common conclusions and lessons learnt from the strategy building process:

- Data quality plays an important role in a good strategy. Estimated data and data gained from uncertain sources can result in significant mistakes and problems during the implementation of the strategy
- An essential step is the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The strategy cannot be realized without the help of key stakeholders, therefore they need to be included in every step of the strategy building: development, adoption, implementation and monitoring.
- Using common tools can be significant in the creation of a good strategy. These kinds of tools are proven over time and used by many policy makers, and can assure the

implementer of the strategy towards its correctness and impact. That is one of the major reasons why the RE-SEETies project was trying to build common tools, and test them in practice during the process of strategy development.

All the local strategies as well as the expert recommendations can be downloaded from the 'Document center' of the RE-SEETies website.

Raising Awareness and Changing Behaviour: Towards Resource Efficiency

Behaviour change is of central importance in bringing about significant reductions in energy use and reduction of waste. Although in most cases this issue is often treated separately and secondary to technological development, this was certainly not the case in the RE-SEETies project. Partner cities developed a set of behavior-changing instruments within their Local Strategies and Action Plans, and also conducted intensive local awareness raising campaigns covering the project's main themes: energy efficiency, renewable energy and waste.

The awareness raising campaigns were performed between April and September 2014 in all of the eight RE-SEETies cities. The campaigns were directed at a wide range of stakeholders, including: citizens, local governments, public utility companies, small and medium enterprises and scholars of all ages.

The campaigns were carried out using common visual tools and images which could be used in various formats and for different purposes, such as: posters, T-shirts, advertisements, Facebook covers, stickers, roll-ups etc. The activities organized by the project partners were also manifold: exhibitions, school competitions, local energy days, and conferences were held. All cities took advantage of the local media, having had several TV interviews, articles, and advertisements.

The campaigns have proven to be a great success, reaching more than 650 thousand people in the South East European region, educating local communities and citizens on resource efficiency, and surpassing the modest initial targets of 12 thousand people.

The common methodology of the campaigns was developed through Energiaklub, the partner organization responsible for communication activities of the project.

Helping Municipalities: A Step-by-step Guide

The 'Integrated Methodological Toolkit for Resource Efficiency' represents the core transnational output of the RE-SEETies project. The Toolkit aims to provide strategic guidance for municipalities on how to improve resource efficiency in urban planning. The Toolkit consists of two parts: methodological guidance, and a set of criteria for the evaluation of the developed strategy and its impact.

The toolkit starts from an overview of the policy making context (Chapter 1), summarizing some of the best practices and technologies available in different sectors (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 focuses on the key issue of changing behavior of selected target groups. More technical aspects are under consideration in Chapter 4, focusing on the main data gathered by city partners and the proposed tools (software) selected by the experts and utilized at the urban level to support the development of resource efficient strategies. Chapter 5 describes the overall set of initial criteria for assessment which can be customized by cities in order to measure, monitor and report their pathways towards resource efficiency.

The development of the methodology was an iterative process: the first version was tested by the RE-SEETies partner cities; it was then revised, taking into consideration conclusions and the lessons learnt from the cities. The guide was developed by the expert partners of the project: CRES, REGEA, ENERGIACLUB, MACEF and CNR-IMAA.

The 'Final SEE Methodological Toolkit, and criteria for assessment' can be downloaded from the 'Document center' of the RE-SEETies website.