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REDIRECTING URBAN AREAS DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ENERGY "RUSE" - AN EXAMPLE FOR THE USE OF STRUCTURAL FUNDS FROM THE EU IN CO-OPE- RATION WITH CEE COUNTRIES AIMED AT RES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

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1. INTRODUCTION

From 1st January 2004, the Structural Funds (SF) are available in the New Member States (NMS). One of the main challenges we are facing is to use this new opportunity in the most sustainable way, especially regarding energy issues which are a full component of regional and urban development. Experience has already been gained in the current European Union. Sometimes this has been a bad one, for instance when the SF have not been used in the best way by promoting infrastructure projects without taking into account their impact on natural resources or climate issues.

On other occasions it has been a good experience, for example when energy issues have been considered from the point of view of energy demand and the promotion of local renewable resources rather than simply from that of the supply side via investment in grids and transnational networks.

This experience must be used by NMS to avoid the same mistakes and to integrate these aspects in the preparation of the projects, as requested by the rules of ERDF.

Considering the Partnership, RUSE Project brings together: municipalities (and local energy agencies) some of which having an experience in SF related projects; specialist networks of municipalities interested in energy issues; a region; national agencies which have a responsibility in the implementation of SF and/or an experience in supporting local energy initiatives. The development of links between the local and national levels is very

often a guarantee of the actual integration of energy issues.

All the legislative initiatives of the European Commission and decisions of the EU, must be taken into account: the Directives improving the energy performance of buildings, promoting cogeneration, **increasing the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption**, will be at the core of the project.

This presentation offers a useful example of how Structural Funds can be used and how projects aiming RES development should be implemented in many countries of the CEE. The importance of supporting this development becomes obvious, taken into account the potential and possibilities of increasing the use of renewable energy sources **and also of geothermal energy**. The resources that many of the CEE countries have concerning geothermal energy often exceed the ones that are available to EU countries.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to improve the use of Structural Funds (and other financial sources) in the urban development projects of New Member States and Third countries, progressing towards a better integration of sustainable energy issues in their projects.

Sub-objectives are as follows:

- 1- Making municipalities and related bodies in NMS + Third countries more aware of existing experience in European countries, in particular related

to SF, through disseminating information, promoting good practice and exchange of experience.

2 - Improving capacity building on energy issues in individual bodies (municipalities) and collective structures (city networks, agencies).

3 - Preparing municipalities so that they can design projects dealing with their powers and responsibilities in a sustainable manner so enabling them to submit successful proposals under ERDF programmes (incl. INTERREG IIIA, URBAN). In this manner they can **integrate the concept of sustainable energy and geothermal energy in urban plans and put hem into practice.**

4 - Simultaneously, **influencing national decision makers regarding the integration of energy issues** in their programmes from the point of view of energy demand and the promotion of renewable **energy**, both of which are good methods for promoting local development.

The operational objectives are as follows:

- a) The dissemination of good practice through the most suitable means and directed towards the right people and bodies.
- b) Exchange of experience and knowledge by organising workshops, hosting staff and organising study tours.
- c) Creation of a network of expertise, especially based on highly experienced municipalities and agencies.
- d) Creation of information services through "help desks" in the different NMS.

3. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The different elements of the operation are organized and sequenced as follows:

1) As a networking project, RUSE gives great emphasis to exchange of experience and transfer of know how. This experience is gained from existing documents, guides and good practice case studies, including some concerning the use of the SF, and also from a network of expertise formed from all the partners, including experienced EU municipalities and national energy agencies, and obviously the networks themselves.

2) The information to be disseminated is composed of official information which we need to translate into an understandable language, good practice case studies and the methods of implementing projects with the support of the SF. We will augment the existing stock of case studies with new ones from the NMS and third countries in order to disseminate their good practice as well.

3) The means of dissemination in each of the NMS are: web site, newsletters, exhibition materials for conference, PPoint presentation, leaflet, all produced in the relevant national languages.

Two methods of dissemination must be used in meetings:

- presentation in conferences/meetings organised by somebody else and focused on the targeted audience we are trying to reach,

- presentation in specially organised workshops, with a limited number of participants (municipalities, public bodies, private companies in the field of action concerned, etc.), and well focused on one or two themes (rational use of energy in public buildings, street lighting, housing or district heating, use of biomass for heating, use of geothermal energy, etc.)

4) As far as methods of organising action at local level, and preparing and managing projects at local level, there is nothing better than direct exchange with local stakeholders in both municipalities, networks, associations: this is the goal of the hosting of staff and study tours

5) However, we need to go further in providing information and advice to municipalities through a "help desk". This should stimulate and support their initiatives in preparing projects. Our intention is to be able to take some ideas and methods through to practical implementation during the development of the operation in order to focus attention on final results and not only on the direct outputs of networking activities.

6) This approach and combination of activities ensures the achievement of

- a) Outputs: direct outputs are clearly defined and can be monitored easily;
- b) Results: one major objective of the project is to build capacity building in intermediate bodies and involve them directly by developing a stronger link between sustainable energy issues and urban development;
- c) Impacts: it is foreseen that the project will enable a better use to be made of SF at both local and national levels.

4. LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES

In terms of final implementation, **the activities will essentially be located in the new member states** (NMS) involved in the operation: web sites, national versions of newsletters, help desks, etc. It is also in these countries that workshops will take place in order to offer the opportunity to the maximum of participants to attend. The location of activities in the NMS is justified in particular, seen that 4 out of 20 participating countries are from the NMS. In terms of the **main beneficiaries**, the following countries are concerned: **Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Lithuania**. Third countries, like **Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia are involved, but no event is planned in these countries**.

In terms of offer of EU expertise, **8 countries are concerned: France, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Germany**.

The main impacts are essentially expected in the NMS although exchanges of experience activities have a double benefit and everybody has so-

mething to gain. Concerning the management of the project and all the co-ordination tasks, joint means of communication, promotion at European level, etc., the Besançon office of Energie-Cités will be the main focal point. Study tours and hosting of staff will take place essentially in municipalities from the current EU.

The target groups are:

- urban municipalities whatever the size and more generally local and regional authorities
- regional and national associations of municipalities ;
- departments of state responsible for spatial planning, urban transport, SF;
- professional associations,
- energy companies,
- consultants active in the urban development field,
- private companies and banks working with local authorities.

As far as the promotion of the operation at political levels is concerned, the targets are:

- MEPs,
- members of the Committee of the Regions,
- officers in DGs of the European Commission, as well as in the member states who will be addressed via various means of communication.

5. ACTIVITIES

Component 1: Administrative and financial tasks:

Component 2: Dissemination of information and promotion:

Component 3: Exchanges of experience between partners and relevant bodies:

Component 4: Preparation of good practice cases studies:

Component 5: Information and advice to municipalities and relevant bodies at national scale:

Component 1: Administrative and financial tasks: co-ordination of the project

Preparing, monitoring and up-dating the whole time schedule of the project, controlling the actual implementation of the activities in which the partners are committed

Component 2: Dissemination of information and promotion:

A web site, a promotion leaflet, six newsletters (4 pages), A P.Point presentations, guidelines for recommendations, a data base of contacts (focused on urban municipalities and national, regional and local bodies interested in the RUSe issue, the officer responsible from administrations, journalists, etc. and a poster exhibition) in a common design will be prepared in English and 4 in the languages of the NMS partners.

These will be focused on the sustainable use of SF in dealing with energy issues.

Component 3 Exchanges of experience between partners and relevant bodies

As a "networking operation" this component relating to exchange of experience is important. This component will be the largest, all the partners (EU municipalities and municipal energy agencies, EU national energy agencies, NMS and Third countries partners, networks, etc.) will be involved. Organisation of 6 joint seminars targeted on strategic and practical issues related to the operation for all partners, municipalities and municipal energy agencies being involved on account of their own experience regarding the domains discussed. Organisation of 3 study tours (12 to 20 participants) in municipalities which have specific experience and/or have participated in SF funded projects. Hosting staff of partners from NMS in offices of the current EU partners and in those of NMS partners about one week; at least 5 people from each NMS (inc. municipalities) will be hosted. The "visitors" will have the opportunity to gain information from the organisation, the management, the duties of officers, and also visit practical projects. A call will be launched to the partners in order to find the best relationship between offer and demand, priority being also given to existing twinned cities or bodies. An information network service will be organised and co-ordinated by the Leader, through the web site, in order to ask the partners about questions concerning the projects, new ideas, implementation of actions, etc., and to stimulate a pro-active participation of all the people involved in the operation.

Component 4 Preparation of good practice cases studies:

Good practice case studies may be considered as the raw material of the project. Their dissemination is a major part of the operation. A large spectrum of good practice case studies is available. More than 400 descriptions of urban areas have been prepared by Energie-Cités, sometimes in cooperation with partners. These are available and form a major input to the RUSe project. The following actions may be considered:

- a) Existing descriptions: a selection will be made of 20 good practice case studies from the stock available covering the main fields of the operation (ie. municipal buildings, biomass, public lighting, public transport, cycling, sustainable districts, district heating, housing, development, urban planning, regeneration, geothermal energy, etc.). The SG is responsible for this selection according to the interests of the partners in the NMS countries. These case studies will be translated into the 4 languages by the NMS partners involved and will be downloadable from the website. New descriptions: The exchange of experience is not only an action between current EU members and new or future ones. The actions and projects achieved in candi-

date and accession countries are very helpful to current members of the Union and the NMS themselves. This is the reason for preparing 20 + 8 new descriptions on urban areas in NMS (involved or not), covering the spectrum of the project.

The themes will be chosen by the SG, in accordance with the priorities of the operation. Each partner from the NMS will be responsible for 5 of them, and for translation in its own language; Energie-Cites for the preparation of 8 from non involved NMS.

Component 5:

The operation will involve networking and at the same time intends to go further than exchange of experience and good practice towards more practical activities. This is the raison d'être of this component.

a) Creation of "Help desks" (Partners from NMS)

Each body in the New Member States will organise such a "help desk", choosing an organisation and form most adapted to the context of the respective countries. It will be a kind of "pro-active information centre", aiming at providing information (good practice, guidelines, national and European programmes of support, etc.) with a special focus on programmes supported by Structural funds like INTERREG IIIA, B, URBAN, ERDF, etc., providing advice, encouraging and helping them to prepare applications focused on the integration of sustainable energy issues in projects on request.

If the main target are urban municipalities and their national and regional associations, the success of such processes, is the direct result of strong links between all the levels of administration (national, regional, local). A collateral target will be formed by departments of ministries, regions and regional administration, regional development agencies, etc.). Tasks of the help desks will be, for instance: information (incl. individualised), monitoring of process in some municipalities, stimulating them in preparing projects, analysing the feed-back of these activities, and also activities which are described below.

Contribution in Conferences:

Conferences, or similar events like General meeting of national association of municipalities, information meetings on Structural Funds, etc. are regularly organised by different bodies.

Organisation of targeted workshops

They aimed at informing and discussing in details municipalities interested in integrating sustainable energy issues in urban development. That is an opportunity to provide information on a series of subjects: good practice, opportunities offered to municipalities by procedures open to New Member States, practical aspects of the dossiers, etc.

6. EXPECTED OUTPUTS, RESULTS AND IMPACTS

a) Outputs:

- 1) Communication products:
 - Promotion leaflet / presentation of the project (1);
 - Poster material for exhibition (1);
 - Point presentations (1 common + 1 by new member state involved) ;
 - Newsletters (6) ;
 - Guidelines for recommendations; web site; data bases on contacts and good practice.
- 2) Meetings:
 - Joint seminars (6);
 - Targeted workshops (2-3/country);
 - Presentation in Conferences according to opportunities (2 by country + 2-3 at European level for promotion).
- 3) Publication off good practice case studies: from NMS and third countries (about 20);
 - translation of existing EU case studies (selection of 20);
 - database on good practice (from the Penelope/Bacchus project).
- 4) Study tours (3)
- 5) Hosting staff (at least 3 people from NMS)
- 6) Help desk (one per NMS).

The documents mentioned will be available in English + the languages of the NMS involved

b) Results:

- 1) Transfer of good practice and methods from the EU (incl. NMS) and Third countries (number, towards which categories of target);
- 2) Improving the capacity of generalist and specialist energy networks associations of municipalities, regions, and agencies;
- 3) Strengthening the activities of the partners towards cities and urban stakeholders.
- 4) Practically involvement of urban areas / cities in SF projects (number of cities involved) -

c) Impacts:

- 1) Linking urban development and sustainable energy issues more strongly by making the positive role of energy issues more visible.
- 2) Influencing better use of SF at national, regional and local levels by promoting action on sustainability issues, especially energy related.
- 3) Creating and stimulating reflexes in the different bodies at various levels, incl. in the generalist association of municipalities and in cities to be as active as possible in the integration of energy issues in urban development.
- 1) Preparation of a collaboration contract between partners, defining all the administrative and financial procedures between the Leader and the Partners, including those concerned with payment for tasks planned in the project

- 2) Preparing a special procedure in order to solve potential disagreements or disputes, the JTS being asked to give its opinion
- 3) Providing clear information to the Partners on the financial rules used by INTERREG
- 4) Setting up separate accounts for the project within in the umbrella of the accounts of Energie-Cités
- 5) Preparation of all internal forms which will be necessary to give support in the preparation of the documents requested for administrative and financial reports, and for collecting this information
- 6) Recruiting independent auditors, who will check the financial reports prepared by the partners and leaders
- 7) Paying the partners on the basis of their respective reports
- 8) Preparing a financial report to the JTS every six months
- 9) Preparing the final financial report at the end of the project
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