

**EDITORIAL**

## Communities Improving Local Governance Models for Low Carbon Development Process

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Many of Europe's local/regional actors struggle with developing targeted, implementation oriented policies addressing low carbon challenges. This holds particularly for energy wasting buildings irrespective of their ownership (natural persons, business, public) or their use (private, business, and community). Since buildings are responsible for 40% of energy consumption and 36% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the EU this is a highly relevant issue in the European context. The implementation of new solutions is not targeted enough, related measures are often incidental and fragmented thus results lag behind expectations (e.g. in terms of the amount of involved buildings or the measured energy savings). "Resource efficient Europe", 1 of the 7 flagship initiatives of the EU2020 strategy aims inter alia at 20% increase in the share of renewable energy sources in EU's final energy consumption and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. However, according to the Energy Efficiency Communication from the Commission (July 2014) the EU will not be able to achieve this goal.

What's more, one third of the forecasted 18-19% energy savings will be due to the lower than expected growth during the financial crisis. In such a European scene, extra efforts are needed to reach the Europe2020 targets. It is acknowledged that bottom up initiatives have key importance in formulating regional/national energy policies and demand side actors play a crucial role in this process since they are able to give place based responses to the challenges. This approach is

supported by the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy adopted by the European Council, in which the importance of demand side management and ensuring security for households and communities is emphasised. Innovative stakeholder involvement measures are emerging, but they are not yet taken up at a significant scale. Specifically, local and regional authorities embark to find their role in these processes, such as coordination, planning, service provision, monitoring and feedback to policy making but in this respect, there is huge room for development.

This was the reasonable background for LOCARBO (Novel roles of regional and LOcal authorities in supporting energy consumers' behaviour change towards a low CARBOn economy) project start. LOCARBO, supported by INTERREG Europe Program aims to improve policy instruments targeting demand-driven initiatives to increase energy efficiency and the use of renewables in buildings, through innovative ways of supporting energy consumers' behaviour change.

LOCARBO is unique in focusing its activities on bottom up initiatives and mainly because of the approach to handle 3 thematic pillars (services, organizational structures and technological solutions) in a fully integrated way. This will be achieved through an intense local stakeholder group involvement and extensive networking activities, oriented to sharing good practices and innovative experiences of the 7 partners from Rumania, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and the UK.

The main idea of the LOCARBO project is to improve the Policy Instruments in such way, that it would reflect the real need of the energy consumers. This is to be achieved by finding innovative ways for regional/local authorities to support energy consumers' behaviour change. The challenge to involve and motivate stakeholders (especially energy consumers) is perceived broadly as a major problem for public authorities. Motivation and awareness of consumers are of high significance to influence their behaviour and support more conscious energy decisions. During the project activities the methodological scheme of the involvement of the stakeholders and communities was designed to comply with widely acknowledged international methodology and is based on the following steps: Identify (find all relevant stakeholders); Sort (classify them regarding their level of interest and power to affect the project); Plan (create action plans for each to handle them accordingly); Do (execute action plans for stakeholders involvement and engagement;

Follow up (monitor the process throughout the entire project period). Using this methodology the initial research and case study on stakeholder involvement was performed. The results showed that stakeholder involvement is promising, as it leads to the development of the corresponding targets for each of the stakeholders and inclusion of the to the process of Action Plan. It is recommended that the methodologies of stakeholder involvement would be used at the stage of Action Plan creation, or in the process of planning for its implementation. As it is addressed in LOCARBO project, stakeholders are essential for the project, as most of the time national and regional policy makers (as a main stakeholder group) have the means to implement project results, thus their involvement is essential for long term success and result sustainability. According to those preliminary results and recommendations, the LOCARBO experience will be traced as good practices on applied sustainability in energy efficiency policy domain.

For more information:

<http://www.interregeurope.eu/locarbo/>



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