



S3UNICA - ACTION PLAN ROMANIA

Produced by each region, the **action plan** is a document providing details on **how** the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be exploited in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within that region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs (if any) and funding sources (if any). If the same policy instrument is addressed by several partners, only one action plan is required.

Part I – General information

Project:	S3UNICA - Smart SpecialiSation UNIvercity CAmpus
Partner organisation:	Alba Local Energy Agency - ALEA
Country:	Romania
Region NUTS2:	RO12 Center
Contact person:	Florin Andronescu
	Email: contact@alea.ro
	Phone Number: 0040258813405

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument**

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

The Regional Operation Programme of Centru Development Region for 2021-2027 (ROP 2021-2027 Centru)

The policy instrument initially addressed namely the "*Regional Operational Programme - Priority Axis 3.1 - Support for energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings and in the housing sector*" has been replaced because after the start of S3UNICA implementation the programme was closed for the application of new

projects and the submitted proposals requested budget represent twice the value of the allocated budget. Unfortunately, among the accepted proposals none addressed the issue of energy sustainability of university campus buildings, which would still have justified pursuing the improvement of the initial ROP at least in the implementation of projects phase.

The successor of ROP 2014-2020 in the Centru Development Region is the Regional Operation Programme of Centru Development Region for 2021-2027 managed directly by the Regional Development Agency Centru (RDA Centru) During S3UNICA implementation *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* has been under elaboration and even though it was expected to be finalised by the end of 2020, at the present moment is still under evaluation by the EU Commission and foreseen to be in implementation by the end of 2022.

ALEA was part in the working group meetings as technical advisory body in the elaboration of the PI participating in the joint assessment meetings with RDA Centru.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION – Creation of an online support tool for university applicants submitting energy efficiency projects within *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*

Type of action: Implementation of new projects

Implementation timeframe: 2022-2023

General context:

The ROP 2021-2027 for Centru Development Region Romania, the successor of the” ROP 2014-2020” is currently under approval by the European Commission and is expected to be launched at the end of 2022. The first submitted energy efficiency (EE) projects are foreseen to be approved by the end of June 2023.

The *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*, has already been improved compared to its predecessor (in which universities were not eligible as applicants for energy efficiency calls) thanks to the important contribution of the S3UNICA project. During the regional STK meetings ALEA together with university representatives put forward the proposal regarding the necessity of the inclusion of universities as eligible applicants for energy efficiency works in public buildings. The proposal was agreed and adopted by the RDA Centru, and the final *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* document sent for EU approval now includes Universities as eligible entities for energy efficiency (EE) works in public buildings.

S3UNICA regional stakeholder meetings in Romania, revealed that universities do not possess the necessary expertise to elaborate and write good quality proposals in ROP given that the ROP 2021-2027 calls represent their first programmes to take part in as applicants with EE projects targeting their own university buildings. The consensus was that this important challenge can be overcome by being able to use support instruments that build their capacity in elaborating good proposals according to the programme requirements.

Moreover, another key point addressed by universities is that they also lack the experience of using proven tools to identify main directions of actions and to prioritise EE measures, prerequisites for a consistent project proposal elaboration in the energy efficiency works domain.

INTERREGIONALITY - Interregional exchange of experience(s) that influenced the Action:

1. S3UNICA Online Exchange of Experience - South Karelia Region

Date: 17.06.2020

Description: The event provided information on South Karelia's development targets; regional best practices were presented illustrating the region's engagement in carbon neutrality.

1.1 The best practice providing inspiration: LUT Green Campus and SRI evaluations presented by LUT University - LUT School of Energy Systems, Department of Sustainability Science

Description of the best practice: The LUT Green Campus targeting carbon neutrality fully integrated the energy infrastructure controlling it by an energy management software product. To establish the directions and especially priorities related to the energy infrastructure investments, the decision-makers used the **self-assessment tool (SAT)** as assessment methodology, which has proven to be efficient.

Best practice direct contribution: The SRI (smart readiness indicator) assessment procedure based on the SAT adoption, which was applied at LUT Green Campus has shown the possibility of applying the SAT on a large scale. Also, it gave insight on how to apply it for complex energy infrastructures with different technologies (photovoltaics, storage capabilities, EV chargers, wind turbines and an energy management system for monitoring and control). The main lesson is that the SAT used to evaluate the energy infrastructure can be applied regardless of the network complexity and that the investment priorities can be established considering the outcomes of the self-assessment procedure using the SAT. Inspired by this best practice Universities in the Centru Region will be supported to apply the SAT (developed by S3UNICA project) to obtain their SRI for assessing complex infrastructures when identifying solutions for which they would submit proposals within the *ROP 2021-2022 Centru*

1.2 The best practice providing inspiration: Greenreality Network - public private partnerships for low-carbon presented by LUT University - LUT School of Energy Systems, Department of Sustainability Science

Description of the best practice: The Greenreality Network (GRN) is a thematic network operating in South Karelia consisting of members from companies, municipalities, and research & development. It also acts as a forum for discussing policy issues with feedback on the actual realities for public officials given by the business

sector. Among the goals one is to improve public practices to better support new business growth within the region. The other main goal is to accelerate the development of new business and products and joint projects. Among the main activities deployed by its members are knowledge transfer, enhancing local demonstrations and piloting, common investment goals.

Best practice direct contribution: The Greenreality Network (GRN) serves as a source of inspiration on how an expert network accelerates the energy development process by offering tailored specialised advice on actual project related issues. Also, it shows that evaluation feedback of an expert panel raises the capacity of an organisation to use the given realities and tailor the development plans according to public practices. This is the case of Centru region Universities who lack the expertise of writing quality energy efficiency project proposals within the regional operational programme.

2. **S3UNICA Online Exchange of Experience** - “Innovative solutions in Friuli Venezia Giulia”

Date: 25.06.2021

Description: In the Italian EE topics related to the achievements of Universities of Trieste and Udine in the field of energy efficiency in their campus buildings among which the successful results in implementing the self-assessment tool.

2.2 **The best practice providing inspiration:** “Smart Readiness Indicator (SRI): case study application and development” presented by The University of Udine

Description of the best practice: University of Udine applied the SRI tool on one of their campus buildings. The deployment of the assessment methodology associated with the UNIUD tool showed the different ranks of weighting that have been planned by Vito Waide. The tool was applied as an action plan evaluation system in the S3UNICA project, and the outcomes will be also used in the future evaluation procedures and project proposals, also by energy managers.

The best practice direct contribution: The implementation of the SRI tool by the University of Udine within their campus buildings has proved to be an efficient self-assessment methodology whose results showed the current state of the energy infrastructure hence the building administrators alongside the decision makers were able to set their investment, related with the energy infrastructure, using the outcome of the above-mentioned tool. This type of analysis is needed also across the universities located in the Centru Development Region of Romania. The Romanian universities must be able to self-assess their energy infrastructure to select technological roadmaps and the most appropriate policies thus reducing their carbon footprint at the same time as improving the quality of teaching and related activities involving their staff and students. The most appropriate energy efficiency solutions selected will help Universities build consistent evaluation system for project proposals to submit within the *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*.

Main functionalities of the online tool

1. Provision of the self-assessment tool (SAT) with support package for university applicants within *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*

Romanian regional stakeholders during RSM stated that applicants need to raise their expertise level in accurately assessing the actual state of the energy infrastructure of their campus buildings in order to set and correctly prioritise investments. The SAT (self-assessment tool) methodology has proven its efficiency in this regard as shown in the S3UNICA EE meetings.

In this perspective, the online support tool will provide the SAT as proven methodology for *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* applicants to conduct a comprehensive analyses of the actual energy efficient status of the targeted buildings for energy efficiency works within their project proposals. Through the SAT the applicants will obtain an accurate SRI (self-readiness indicator) of the targeted buildings and will be able to better influence investment decisions and integrate them in properly substantiated project proposals.

The target group is mainly represented by university applicants, however other local authorities applying for public building energy efficiency works will be able to use the SAT tool.

The online support tool will be set up so as it will provide an integrated package:

- The SAT together with its methodological guidelines
- A database of other documentation related to the smart readiness indicator (SRI).
- FAQ section and advice section on the use of the self-assessment tool to obtain the SRI in the elaboration of the project proposal elaboration
- A database of practice cases involving the use of SAT
- Repository of examples of actual SRIs obtained by Romanian universities by applying the SAT

The use of the online support tool will lead to the identification of possible energy efficiency projects and sets the ground for universities to raise the quality of submitted proposals in *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*.

ALEA will ensure the access of the SAT on the managing authority's online helpdesk services dedicated for *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* applicants. The availability of the SAT tool through the MA support framework for *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* applicants, will ensure the wide adoption of the SAT in elaborating quality proposals for energy efficiency works in buildings in Centru Development Region.

2. Provision of an expert evaluation support

During the RSM meetings, RDA Centru stated that many of the proposals submitted within *ROP 2017-2020* under the specific EE calls failed to properly address the call requirements due to the lack of experience of the staff who elaborated the documentation for the project proposals, weakening the performance of the Programme.

The online support tool's expert evaluation framework will address this issue by directly offering technical advice for the applicants submitting energy efficiency project proposals for university campus buildings and other public buildings located in the Centru Development Region, proposals submitted in the *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*.

The expert evaluation framework will be complementary to the MA support service dedicated for ROP applicants. The core element of the framework will be represented by an expert group, external to the MA (RDA Centru), with whom RDA Centru will closely work with in providing advice for the support of the *ROP 2021-2027 Centru* university applicants, who seek support on energy related issues in the elaboration of their proposals. The cooperation will be deployed based on a collaboration protocol agreed by both the expert representatives of the group and RDA Centru.

The expert group will consist of experts in the energy domain who will provide specialized technical advice to university applicants for the elaboration of project proposals for EE works on public buildings submitted for funding within ROP 2021-2027 of the Centru Development Region. Thus, the consultancy provided by the expert group, covering specific issues related to energy, is complementary to the technical assistance provided by the MA. (the MA's technical assistance refers especially to the compliance to the call guidelines and not to the technical quality level of the energy efficiency proposal)

The expert evaluation framework will be set up deploying the following activities:

- Set up of the expert group obtaining their engagement in providing support. The experts will be selected among representatives from universities, research centre and other organisations specialised in the energy domain. Their support will be specific to the energy related issues that raise difficulties for the elaboration of the proposals.
- Elaboration of the collaborative support protocol between the expert group and the RDA Centru. The protocol will also contain the feedback procedures of the expert group set up within the online support tool.
- Repository consisting of case studies, energy related data, tools that applicants can use for improving the quality of their proposals. The database will be used by the expert group directly linking information with required support.
- Online form used by applicants. The form will be embedded in the online support tool as a means to directly connect the applicant with the expert group based on the issues raised. The data flux will be supervised by ALEA to ensure that proper and timely feedback is given for the applicant

The expert evaluation framework is set up in order to enhance the response capacity of the MA regarding the support service dedicated for the ROP 2021-2027 applicants.

3. Monitorisation of the project proposals submitted by university applicants for energy efficient works in their university campus buildings

The monitorisation activities will be deployed by ALEA in collaboration with the RDA Centru using the capacities of the online support tool. Questionnaires created within the tool will be regularly sent to RDA Centru through which monitoring data will be collected and analysed.

ALEA and RDA Centru will appoint each a representative in charge of the monitoring activities.

A monitoring instrument will be set up within the online support tool with access for both parties. The tool will monitor the main impact indicators which will include:

- the number of universities that have applied within the *ROP 2021-2027 Centru*,
- the number of projects submitted by universities within the energy efficiency calls
- the number of projects successfully evaluated within the energy efficiency calls
- the success rate of the submitted within the energy efficiency calls
- the total amount of financing required in the proposals which were successfully evaluated
- energy saved per investment value in the proposals which were successfully evaluated
- total CO2 emissions reductions in the proposals which were successfully evaluated
- the number of observations on the project proposals issued by the online tool

The results of the monitoring instrument will be processed and sent to the RDA Centru under the form of reports containing useful graphics that can be used in the future by the MA to raise the performance of future calls.

Players involved

- The Universities located in the Region Center: Transilvania University from Brasov, 1 Decembrie 1918 University from Alba-Iulia, Technical University of Cluj Alba-Iulia extension, The “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Târgu Mureş;
- The Regional Development Agency Centru
- Alba Local Energy Agency

Timeframe

June 2022 – July 2023

1. Creation of the online support tool: June – September 2022
2. Provision of the package dedicated to SAT within the online tool: June – October 2022
3. Creation of the expert evaluation framework functionality within the online support tool
October – December 2022

4. Set up of the expert group October 2022
5. Elaboration of the collaborative protocol November 2022
6. Provision of assistance for ROP 2021-2027 Centru applicants through the online support tool' expert group November 2022 – June 2023
7. Monitorisation of the project proposal submissions by universities January-June 2023

Costs

- Staff cost 13.000 eur – 2 staff members working 15% for 12 months
- Online support tool set up – 2000 eur

Funding sources

- ALEA own budget - lump sum dedicated for phase 2 of S3UNICA
- Universities own budget - the universities engaging in elaborating proposals for submission in ROP 2021-2027 assume costs related to their staff for the writing of the proposals

Main impact and result indicators for Action	
Universities involved:	6
Number of successfully elaborated SRI (through the adoption of SAT:	5
Envisaged number of people involved in the expert evaluation panel:	5
Number of submitted projects within ROP2021-2027 EE call:	5
Number of successfully evaluated projects within ROP2021-2027 EE call:	3