

FOCUS ON PLANNING FOR CARBON NEUTRALITY

EDITO



Florin Andronescu

“We are acting today to make the EU the world’s first climate neutral continent by 2050”, said Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. This statement clearly sets the path for Member States, driving their engagement to meet the EU’s commitment to global climate action, urging them to start planning now for the future.

Energy is a key sector that has major direct effects on greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, to successfully fight climate change, we should primarily focus on the transition of this sector through efficient and comprehensive planning including energy efficiency, integration of renewable energy sources, CO2 reduction, climate change adaptation and innovation.

Several valuable initiatives exist to translate EU objectives into regional and local ones, such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (CoM) which now comprises more than 10.000 signatories, exceeding the boundaries of the EU. The CoM is an excellent example of how regions can pursue a common global goal while acting in accordance with local conditions.

To plan energy in a credible manner in the long run, local authorities need to conduct very accurate analyses of their initial statuses and possible evolutions. Based on these, successful energy planning also implies the involvement of stakeholders, identification of strategic objectives

as well as setting adequate and concrete actions to achieve these objectives. All these require a good deal of innovative thinking and motivation.

Long term planning poses important difficulties for local authorities. The most common ones are the access to credible data, involvement of key stakeholders, and more importantly, the identification of appropriate funding sources. Implementation of these plans is another challenging phase. Yet, as the experience of Sustainable Energy (and Climate) Action Plans (SEAPs/SECAPs) have shown, a careful monitoring of implementation steps ensures the achievement of the planning objectives through appropriate corrective measures.

In addition, it is important to have in mind that long term energy planning leads to best results when harmonized and thought together with other sectors such as mobility, environment and spatial planning.

Finally, energy planning, be it short or long term, should place the citizens in its center and consider that ultimately, the measures are deployed for the their wellbeing, as real beneficiaries, in the context of fighting climate change.

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INTERVIEW VINCENT CHAUVET

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS



Vincent Chauvet

Vincent Chauvet is the mayor of Autun (FR). As such he is ENVE Coordinator of the Renew Europe Group in the European Committee of the Regions and the Rapporteur on stepping up the 2030 climate ambitions in Europe.

Local and regional authorities are on the frontlines of the response to the COVID-19 crisis and are struggling to maintain the good functioning of their services. How can they ensure that addressing the immediate priorities also contributes to their long-term energy and climate objectives?

It is a decisive moment for this and it is not the most popular to ask for. A concrete example, as a mayor I am currently under fierce lobbying to allow external heaters to be installed in restaurants and bars, as the weather conditions don't help the economic recovery at the moment. It involves a lot of dialogue and awareness raising. The changes and the investments that we make now, including the recovery, have to be sustainable. As Vice-President Timmermans liked to say – "Every euro we invest must flow into a new economy rather than old structures". Green recovery is possible, but we as mayors need to stand the ground and not look for short-term solutions.

One of the main challenges for effective long-term climate and energy planning and reaching carbon neutrality is the consistency between plans at different levels (EU, national, regional, local). How is the Committee of the Regions contributing to strengthening this consistency?

My current opinion is continuing the battle for local and regional contributions to be fully developed and included in the European and global path towards climate neutrality (CDR 5068/2020 - Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition towards COP26). I strongly believe that local and regional authorities have an active role to play, as they are not only source of information but also promoters of climate ambition. There is another element though – most cities and regions do not even know their current and

past levels of CO2 emissions, which makes drawing up any plans towards climate neutrality very abstract, if not absurd. And there we already have a tool that could help us out of this labyrinth, which is called the Common Reporting Framework and is promoted by the Global Covenant of Mayors.

Because they are the closest levels of administration, local and regional authorities are also the best suited to implement a series of measures to decrease CO2 emissions. According to you, what are the most essential areas cities and regions have to work on by 2030?

To be completely honest, all of them. This is also one of the challenges we are confronted with, many local and regional leaders, but also businesses and citizens are not fully aware of the transformation need ahead. We need to change the way we produce, travel, build, heat, eat and manage our waste. As many public contracts are running for a decade or longer, CO2 emission reductions need to be introduced already today to have a chance of seeing an effect by 2030. But we should also avoid creating a negative, doomsday atmosphere surrounding the transition – the COVID-19 pandemic showed us how change is possible, now we just need to make sure we learn from the last year, set the correct starting position for innovation, education and jobs. This will guarantee us to reap the fruits of today's efforts in a longer term – the day after tomorrow. But which sector to tackle first, should be left to the different local and regional communities – they are most aware of where change might take longer and where low hanging fruits can be reaped already tomorrow.

ABOUT FEDARENE

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF AGENCIES AND REGIONS FOR ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT



FEDARENE is the premier European network of agencies and regions at regional and local levels. It was established in 1990 to represent and promote the local and regional dimensions to the European institutions. FEDARENE organises exchanges of experience and partnerships between its members. It now has more than 80 members in 23 countries in the European Union.

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MOBILITY PROJECTS IN **BAIA MARE**



Baia Mare is the capital of Maramures County. Located in the north west of Romania, the area is famous not only for its underground mineral resources, but also for its beautiful mountain landscapes. In 2020, the population was 144,996 inhabitants. The municipality, signatory of Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, is committed to becoming a greener city and reduce the town's carbon footprint, in order to provide a better living environment for its citizens.

In this respect, Baia Mare municipality is currently implementing 3 large infrastructure projects financed through the Regional Operational Programme. The goal of these projects is to make the local urban mobility more sustainable by: modernising and creating dedicated lanes for public transport; constructing cyclist lanes and pedestrian routes; installing traffic management systems; and planting trees and

vegetation lines. The traffic management system will include traffic lights, information panels, ticket vending machines, Wi-Fi modems, video cameras installed at the bus stops. Sidewalks will be marked for blind persons. Two of the projects will be finalised in the first semester of 2022, and the third one is to be completed in 2023.

The main objective of the projects is to reduce carbon emissions in Baia mare by investing in sustainable mobility corridors, which will increase the efficiency of public transportation while providing alternatives for cycling and walking thus reducing private car use.

The cumulated results are:

- Annual reduction of CO2 emissions by 2028: 1668 t CO2/yr
- Public transport stops created/modernised: 25
- Length of dedicated public transport lanes: 11 km
- Length of road infrastructure overlapped by public transport lanes: 14,5 km
- Length of cycling lanes and pedestrian routes: 17 km
- Length of pedestrian routes: 17 km
- Overall traffic management system: 1
- Lines of planted trees and vegetation: 10,5 km

The total budget is 50 million Euro, of which 36 million come from EU funds.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANNING IN **ASTURIAS**

The Regional Energy Agency of Asturias, the Asturian Energy Foundation (FAEN), has been collaborating for more than 20 years with Asturian city councils and this work has been accentuated within the CTRACK50 project. 10 Sustainable Climate and Energy Action Plans (SECAPs) have been drawn up and, based on this work, some of the planned measures began to come into practice. Thanks to the high level of national financial aid currently provided to Spanish municipalities for improving outdoor lighting, which reaches 80% of the investment needed, this measure has been the most developed in the different municipalities. This type of measure is also very important to implement as more than 50% of the electricity consumption of Asturian municipalities comes from public lighting.

The Asturias municipalities that have participated in this initiative within the C-Track 50 project are small and medium size ones, lacking in terms of technical, personal and material resources to carry out these works. For this reason, FAEN assumed a central role, both in the preparation of the SECAPs and in the individual projects.

To do this, FAEN worked on the inventory of the existing facilities, the dimensions of LED luminaires, but also on the regulation and control equipment to improve the energy performance of the lighting system. After this phase, all the necessary technical documentation was prepared to proceed with the public tender for the replacement of the current luminaires by more efficient LED lamps. FAEN also participated in the selection of the winning companies and in the execution of the works.



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With this action, it has been possible to achieve, in average values, savings of over 65% in terms of electricity consumption and 70% in terms of financial costs borne by city councils. The investment required was around 17 million euros. It is also possible to reduce the maintenance costs of the facilities and improve visual and lighting comfort. In addition, the project has allowed to generate economic activity and employment both at the local and regional level.

C-Track 50 aims to mobilise and guide public authorities at a local and regional level, in order to achieve climate resilience and carbon neutrality by 2050. As the project is now in its third year of existence and close to end, it is time to highlight the work done and partners' achievements in the 11 project regions.

As regional and local energy planning are equally important, project partners have been focusing on developing Integrated Sustainable Energy and Climate Policy Plans for 2050 at a local level, as well as informing/developing regional energy planning based on formulated priorities. In total, 107 municipalities and 11 regions have been supported, resulting in 16,500 GWh in energy savings and renewable energy production and 14,500 kt of CO₂ emissions saved by 2050. Measures foreseen mostly relate to building renovation and street lighting retrofitting, but also increasing renewables, adaptation to climate change, sustainable mobility, waste management, awareness raising, and much more.

Project partners have not only supported municipalities in conceiving and updating climate & energy plans, they are also helping them with implementation and financing by developing investment concepts for the foreseen projects. In total, 50 million euros of investments on energy efficiency and sustainable energy have already been approved, with more on the way.

C-Track 50 had the opportunity to highlight these major achievements during the project's final events. For the occasion, FEDARENE invited 10 like-minded EU projects and initiatives - including the Covenant of Mayors Europe - to join the programme. Entitled "GET READY FOR 2050", the event series attracted more than 200 participants. Find out more about the events here: fedarene.org/more-than-200-local-regional-stakeholders-are-getting-ready-for-2050

For more information, visit the website: c-track50.eu

COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE & ENERGY EUROPE STEPPING UP ACTION FOR A FAIRER, CLIMATE-NEUTRAL EUROPE

The Covenant of Mayors is the world leading initiative on climate and energy addressed to local and regional authorities and non-profit organizations. It counts nowadays more than 10.000 members all over the world (+ 9.700 from the EU member states).

The CoM - Europe translates the EU policies and related targets into a clear, long-term roadmap that local authorities can follow, creating a bridge between the different levels of governance. The EU and international energy and climate frameworks are translated into the CoM-Europe areas: renovation wave, sustainable mobility, circular economy, just transition, food system sustainability, nature-based solutions and adaptation and climate neutrality.

On the 21st of April 2021, the Covenant of Mayors – Europe (CoM-Europe) launched its new ambitions: Covenant members commit to step up their climate ambitions and deliver action in a joint effort to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C. In

particular, local authorities **COMMIT** to reduce their GHG by at least the 80% by 2050, to increase their resilience to climate change and to tackle energy poverty, while including social just transition considerations as a core, cross-cutting principle of their energy plans.

With the launch of the renewed commitments the Covenant - Europe shifts the focus away from targets and processes, towards the implementation of concrete **ACT**ions on the ground. In particular, Covenant Europe members are invited to further **ENGAGE** local stakeholders in both the development and implementation of their action plan, and encouraged to further **NETWORK** with their peers.



Covenant of Mayors
for Climate & Energy
EUROPE

Visit the website: eumayors.eu

ENERGY EFFICIENCY WATCH THE MISSING "WHY" FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY



The EU project Energy Efficiency Watch (EEW) has published the results of its new EU-wide experts survey "The missing "WHY" for energy efficiency". The survey results compile the opinions and insights of 1,270 energy efficiency experts in all Member States and provides valuable information that can help put the EU on the path to climate neutrality.

The survey presents how energy experts see the "real-life" progress of energy efficiency policies in their own country. It was also designed to contribute to a deeper understanding of what constitutes a successful narrative for energy efficiency and the current positioning of energy efficiency in the public debate.

The study establishes that the perceived energy efficiency progress remains too slow across the EU27 and new dynamics are lacking. Policy ambition seems more strongly maintained, despite political changes, in the countries or regions where a consensus has been reached on "WHY" it should be done. This emphasises how effective and strong narratives are needed to drive the energy transition and achieve Europe's climate neutrality goal. The survey results provide interesting new insights for this process on EU level and in each country.

Read the full survey report on EEW4's website: energy-efficiency-watch.org