IN-PLAN

Empowering local and regional authorities in developing and implementing integrated energy, climate, and spatial planning in their territories

FINAL REPORT

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#LifeINPLAN

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IN-PLAN AT A GLANCE

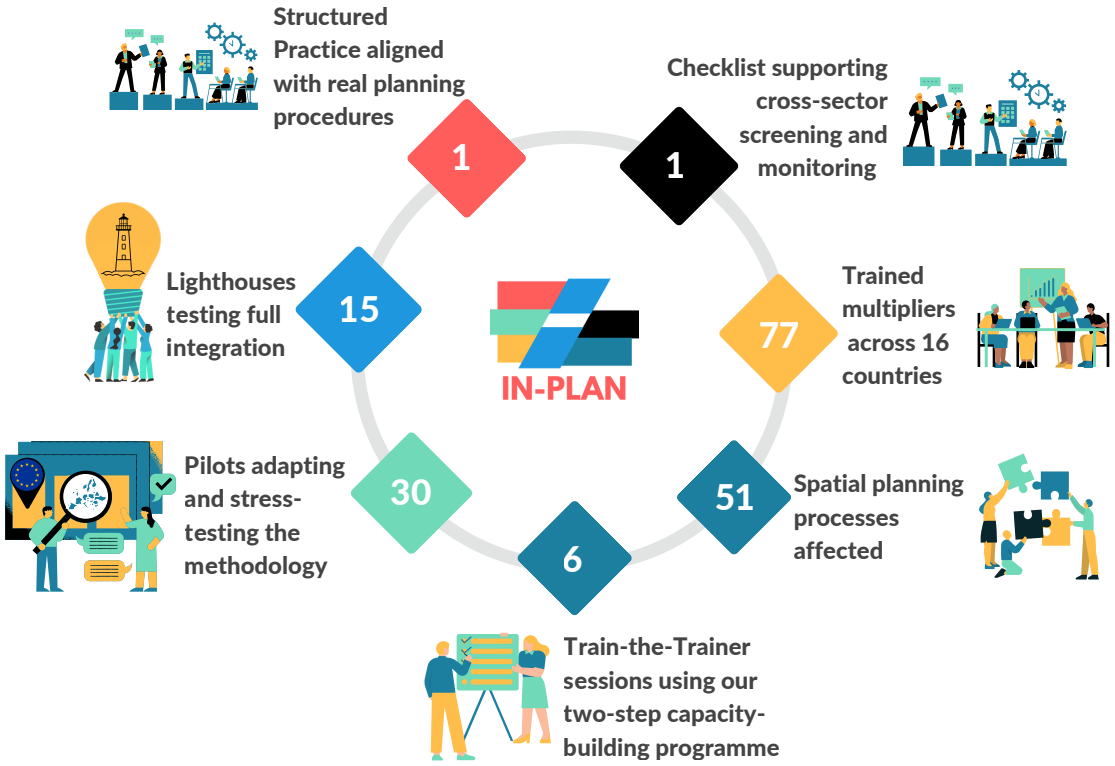
Local and regional authorities across Europe are at the forefront for delivering the climate and energy transition. While ambitious targets are set at EU and national levels, implementation ultimately depends on territorial decisions: land use, infrastructure location, building standards, mobility systems and investment frameworks.

However, energy and climate measures are often developed separately from spatial planning instruments. Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs), adaptation strategies and mobility plans frequently lack direct translation into legally binding spatial provisions. As a result, climate ambition risks remaining strategic rather than enforceable. This structural disconnection between energy and climate policy and spatial regulation limits the effectiveness, coherence, and long-term durability of the green transition; IN-PLAN addressed this gap by developing, testing and operationalising an integrated energy, climate and spatial planning practice.

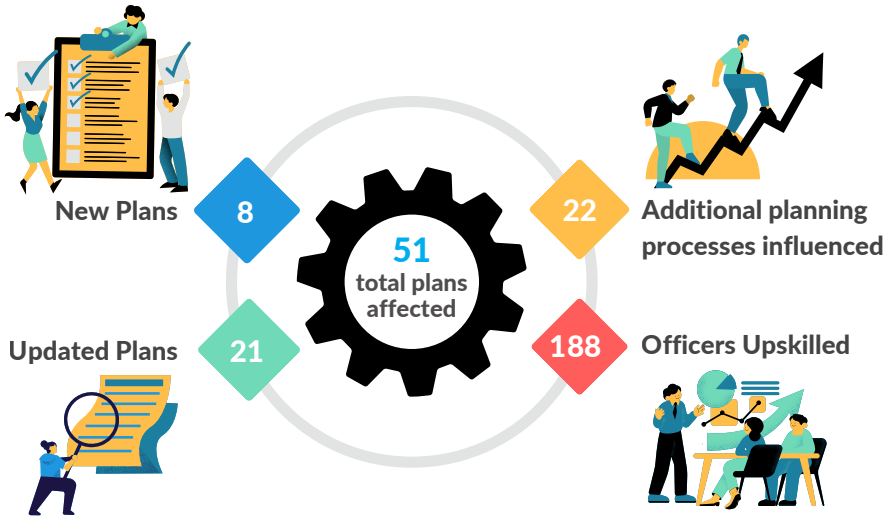
Rather than creating a new planning instrument, IN-PLAN strengthens existing spatial planning systems and embeds climate and energy objectives directly into them. Through a structured five-phase integration framework and a practical Checklist tool, the project enables authorities to:

- Align energy, climate and spatial plans
- Strengthen cross-departmental governance
- Link planning decisions with implementation and budget considerations
- Translate strategic targets into enforceable spatial provisions

By combining methodology, tools and capacity building, IN-PLAN transformed integration from a conceptual ambition into a practical workflow embedded in real planning cycles. IN-PLAN established a European support structure for integrated planning composed of:



The project moved from framework development to concrete territorial implementation, ensuring that tools were tested under diverse legal and administrative contexts. IN-PLAN achieved measurable territorial and institutional impact:



IN-PLAN demonstrates that spatial planning can function as a powerful delivery mechansm for Europe's climate and energy transition. By embedding climate objectives into statutory land-use systems, improving governance coordination and strengthening institutional capacity, the project provides a replicable pathway for moving from climate ambition to territorial execution. In contexts where institutionalisation pathways emerged - including national-level policy reflection in Croatia - IN-PLAN also showed how integrated planning can evolve from project practice to systemic governance approach. As Europe advances towards climate neutrality, the key challenge is not defining targets but ensuring their spatial implementation.IN-PLAN offers a tested and scalable solution for exactly that.

INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

Europe's climate and energy transition is no longer a question of ambition - it is a question of implementation. While strategic frameworks such as National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) provide direction, their success ultimately depends on how effectively objectives are translated into legally binding, place-based decisions. This is where spatial planning becomes decisive.

The IN-PLAN project was built on a simple but powerful premise: **climate neutrality cannot be achieved without integrating energy and climate objectives directly into spatial planning systems.**

Why integrated planning matters

Spatial planning plays a central role in shaping long-term territorial development. It determines land use patterns, infrastructure corridors, density levels, mobility systems and the allocation of public and private investments. As a legally binding framework, spatial planning does not merely guide development - it authorises, restricts and structures it [1].

Yet, across Europe, climate, energy and mobility strategies are often developed separately from spatial planning instruments. This fragmentation weakens implementation. Energy and climate plans may define ambitious decarbonisation targets, but if these are not reflected in zoning rules, urban design standards or development conditions, they risk remaining aspirational rather than operational [2]. Integrated planning addresses this structural gap.

Spatial planning is inherently complex. Multiple sectoral demands - renewable energy infrastructure, mobility systems, climate adaptation measures, housing and economic activities - materialise in the same physical space. When these interactions are not anticipated, conflicts of land use, inefficiencies and long-term lock-in effects occur [3].

At the same time, space offers opportunities for synergy. Coordinated interventions can simultaneously reduce emissions, improve mobility behaviour, enhance climate resilience and strengthen quality of life. Integrated planning does not eliminate complexity; rather, it provides a structured framework to make trade-offs transparent and deliberately leverage co-benefits.

A key insight from the IN-PLAN Practice is that climate protection must function as a cross-cutting mandate, not as a separate policy field. Achieving climate neutrality requires aligning spatial planning, mobility planning, renewable energy deployment and adaptation measures under a shared strategic orientation.

Without such alignment:

- **Sectoral objectives may contradict each other;**
- **Investments may be inefficient or disruptive;**
- **Climate and energy targets may lack enforceability.**

With integration, however, spatial planning becomes a powerful delivery mechanism. It enables local and regional authorities to embed energy efficiency standards, renewable energy requirements, sustainable mobility provisions and climate adaptation measures directly into legally binding planning documents.

Importantly, integrated planning is not about creating additional strategies. It is about modifying and aligning existing instruments so that climate and energy objectives are structurally anchored in spatial decisions.

Policy relevance

IN-PLAN operates at the intersection of European climate policy and territorial governance. At the EU level, the European Green Deal and the "Fit for 55" package established the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 and reinforced the need for cross-sectoral integration. However, while EU directives set targets, implementation relies on Member States and their local and regional authorities. The transposition process is often lengthy and lacks direct enforcement at the local level [4].

Integrated spatial planning provides a practical solution to this governance gap. By embedding climate and energy objectives into spatial plans - which are legally binding instruments - local authorities gain an enforcement mechanism that SECAPs and other voluntary strategies often lack [5].

In this way, IN-PLAN directly supports:

- **National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)** by enabling local implementation pathways;
- **Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs)** by strengthening their enforceability through spatial planning;

- **EU Green Deal objectives** by operationalising sectoral integration at territorial level;
- **LIFE Clean Energy Transition priorities** by developing and testing replicable support structures.

Furthermore, IN-PLAN contributes to the strengthening of multilevel governance, in line with Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, which calls for enhanced coordination across governance levels. By connecting local planning processes with EU-level objectives and national frameworks, IN-PLAN demonstrates how climate policy can move from strategic ambition to territorial execution.

Project overview

The overarching objective of IN-PLAN was to **develop, test and roll out the IN-PLAN Practice - a long-lasting support structure enabling local and regional authorities to effectively integrate energy and climate objectives into spatial planning systems.**

IN-PLAN was implemented by a European consortium of energy agencies and partner organisations working closely with local and regional authorities across five participating countries: Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Romania and Sweden.

The project's core components include:

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Development of practical tools such as the **IN-PLAN Checklist** and supporting guidance materials.

Testing and refinement of the Practice in **Lighthouse and Pilot** territories

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Development of the **IN-PLAN Practice**, structured around five integrated planning phases (initial analysis, vision and goals, feasibility assessment, formal planning, implementation and monitoring)

A structured **capacity-building programme**, including Train-the-Trainers activities

Establishment of **EU and national coalition groups** to explore institutionalisation pathways

Rather than proposing a new planning instrument, IN-PLAN focused on enabling authorities to better use existing spatial planning systems as vehicles for energy and climate implementation. The project thereby moved beyond strategic declarations and provides a structured pathway from design to legally binding implementation.

Across Europe, local and regional authorities are increasingly committed to climate neutrality. Strategic frameworks exist. Targets are defined. Action plans are drafted. Yet a persistent structural gap remains: **energy and climate objectives are often not systematically embedded in spatial planning systems.**

IN-PLAN addressed this gap by transforming integrated planning from a policy ambition into a structured, practical and replicable methodology. Instead of creating additional planning layers, the IN-PLAN Approach strengthened existing spatial planning systems and turned them into effective delivery mechanisms for climate and energy objectives.

A Structured Integration Framework

At the core of IN-PLAN lies a structured five-phase planning logic that mirrors real-world spatial planning cycles while ensuring that energy and climate integration is embedded from the very beginning of the process - not added retrospectively.

01

SET UP INTEGRATED PLANNING PROCESS

Integration starts with governance. Authorities establish political commitment, define clear roles and responsibilities, and design a transparent process structure with a realistic timeline. A stakeholder engagement plan is developed to ensure cross-sector participation, and an overall risk assessment is conducted to anticipate institutional, legal or financial barriers. This phase lays the institutional foundation for credible and durable integration.

02

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

This phase focuses on understanding the territorial starting point. Existing planning documents and legal frameworks are reviewed, relevant standards and good practice examples are examined, and necessary data is collected and managed. A status quo analysis and forward-looking forecast are conducted to identify structural gaps, spatial constraints and strategic opportunities. This analytical grounding ensures that integration is evidence-based rather than aspirational.

03

COMMON VISION AND GOALS

Building on the baseline, authorities agree on a shared long-term vision and translate climate neutrality ambitions into spatially explicit goals. Broad commitment from relevant stakeholders is secured, and alignment with overarching strategies — including national and EU climate and energy frameworks — is ensured. This phase transforms political ambition into a territorially grounded development direction.

04

PLANNING PHASE

Integration becomes operational during the formal planning phase. Potential measures are identified, and different scenarios are modelled and simulated to assess spatial, technical and financial implications. A draft plan is prepared and subjected to a final feasibility and spatial impact check before the formal spatial plan is adopted. During this phase, the IN-PLAN Checklist plays a central role as a screening and alignment tool, helping authorities identify cross-sector synergies, detect blind spots and ensure consistency across energy, mobility, adaptation and land-use considerations.

05

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The final phase ensures that integration continues beyond plan adoption. A monitoring system is established, meaningful indicators are defined, and implementation progress is tracked. Monitoring results are communicated transparently and used to refine future planning cycles. This reinforces the iterative nature of integrated planning and ensures that climate and energy objectives remain embedded over time.

By structuring integration across all five phases, IN-PLAN prevents energy and climate objectives from being diluted between analysis, drafting and approval. Crucially, the Practice recognises that planning is iterative. Feedback loops between phases allow authorities to adjust measures, respond to regulatory changes and refine priorities based on monitoring outcomes [6].

Making Integration Operational: The IN-PLAN Checklist and Tools

While the five-phase framework provides structure, IN-PLAN's innovation lies in making integration operational through practical tools.

A central instrument developed under the project is the IN-PLAN Online Checklist, designed to help municipalities systematically apply integrated planning principles across four core sectors:

The Checklist does not prescribe specific measures. Instead, it is built around planning principles – guiding ideas that define what should be considered or achieved in an integrated planning process. Each principle is cross-sectoral. Colour-coded tags indicate how it contributes to multiple domains, making interdependencies visible at a glance. This simple design feature reinforces the core idea of IN-PLAN: integration is not sectoral addition, but structured alignment.

For each principle, municipalities can:

- Assess its relevance to their local context;
- Explore supporting measures illustrating how the principle could be implemented;
- Select measures applicable to their territory.

By working through the Checklist, authorities can:

- Screen existing plans and projects;
- Identify blind spots or inconsistencies;
- Discover synergies across sectors;
- Structure internal discussions between departments.

Importantly, the tool is **non-exhaustive and non-prescriptive.** It is designed as a reflection and alignment instrument, supporting informed decision-making rather than replacing professional judgement.

Once completed, the Checklist generates a PDF summary of selected principles and measures, allowing municipalities to document their integration logic and use it:

- As a goal-setting framework for new planning processes;
- As a diagnostic tool to assess the current status of existing plans;
- As a monitoring template to track progress over time.

The Online Checklist and its Excel-based version follow the same structure, ensuring flexibility depending on working style and institutional capacity. By combining a structured framework with an accessible digital tool, IN-PLAN moves integration from abstract discussion to practical workflow support.

What Makes IN-PLAN Different?

IN-PLAN methodology distinguishes itself from conventional planning support initiatives in several decisive ways.

1. It **works within existing legal spatial planning systems**. It does not introduce a new standalone "integrated plan" but strengthens instruments that already have regulatory force. This increases feasibility and long-term sustainability.

2. It focuses on **enforceability.** Climate and energy objectives are translated into spatial provisions and development conditions. This shifts them from voluntary commitments to legally anchored requirements.

3. It **combines methodology and tools**. The five-phase framework provides structure; the Checklist operationalises integration; governance mechanisms support coordination. Together, they form a coherent system rather than isolated guidance materials.

4. It **links planning to implementation**. By explicitly connecting spatial decisions with feasibility analysis, programming documents and monitoring cycles, IN-PLAN reduces the risk of ambitious but non-delivered plans.

In this way, IN-PLAN represents more than a planning guide. It demonstrates how spatial planning can broaden its purpose to systematically and proactively address Europe's climate and energy objectives.

IMPLEMENTING IN-PLAN ACROSS EUROPE: ROLES, PROCESSES AND SCALE

The IN-PLAN Approach was not designed as a theoretical framework, but as a system to be tested, refined and embedded in real territorial planning contexts. To achieve this, the project was structured around a multi-layered implementation combining frontrunner territories, testing environments and a broader capacity-building network. This structure ensured that the Practice was simultaneously applied, challenged and disseminated.

Lighthouses – Frontrunners of Integration

Lighthouses played a central role in the project's implementation. They were not passive recipients of guidance, but frontrunner territories embedding the IN-PLAN Practice into ongoing or upcoming spatial planning processes.

Their ambition was twofold:

- To apply the full structured integration framework within real planning procedures;
- To demonstrate how energy and climate objectives can be translated into legally binding spatial provisions.

In these territories, integration moved beyond conceptual discussion. Climate neutrality objectives were aligned with zoning logic, land-use regulations, infrastructure planning and development conditions.

Lighthouses functioned as demonstration cases, showing how spatial planning systems can evolve into delivery mechanisms for climate and energy objectives. Their experiences also fed back into the refinement of the Practice, ensuring that the methodology remained grounded in practical constraints and legal realities.

Rather than applying a fixed blueprint, Lighthouses adapted the IN-PLAN framework to national legal systems and institutional structures. This adaptability proved critical for ensuring replicability across diverse governance contexts.

Pilots – Testing and Adapting the Practice

While Lighthouses applied the methodology comprehensively, Pilot territories tested selected components of the IN-PLAN Practice in different planning contexts.
Pilots focused on:

- Applying specific phases of the structured framework;
- Testing the feasibility of integration in smaller-scale or more constrained settings;
- Identifying barriers related to governance, capacity or regulatory environments.

Through these targeted applications, Pilots played a crucial role in stress-testing the methodology. They highlighted:

- Where integration could be implemented rapidly;
- Where institutional or legal constraints required adaptation;
- Which tools were most useful in early-stage integration.

Together, Lighthouses and Pilots created a feedback ecosystem in which methodological refinement and territorial experimentation evolved in parallel.

Support Structure: Multipliers, Training and Tools

Beyond direct territorial implementation in Lighthouses and Pilots, IN-PLAN established a broader support structure designed to ensure long-term uptake.

Capacity-Building Approach

The project introduced a two-step capacity-building model. First, the Lighthouses applied and tested the Practice. Second, energy and climate agencies (multipliers) were trained through a structured Train-the-Trainers programme, enabling them to support additional municipalities beyond the initial project circle.

Role of Multipliers

Multipliers - typically regional energy or development agencies - were trained to:

- Understand the five-phase integration framework;
- Apply the IN-PLAN Checklist in advisory work;
- Facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue within municipalities;
- Support authorities in embedding integration requirements into spatial planning processes.

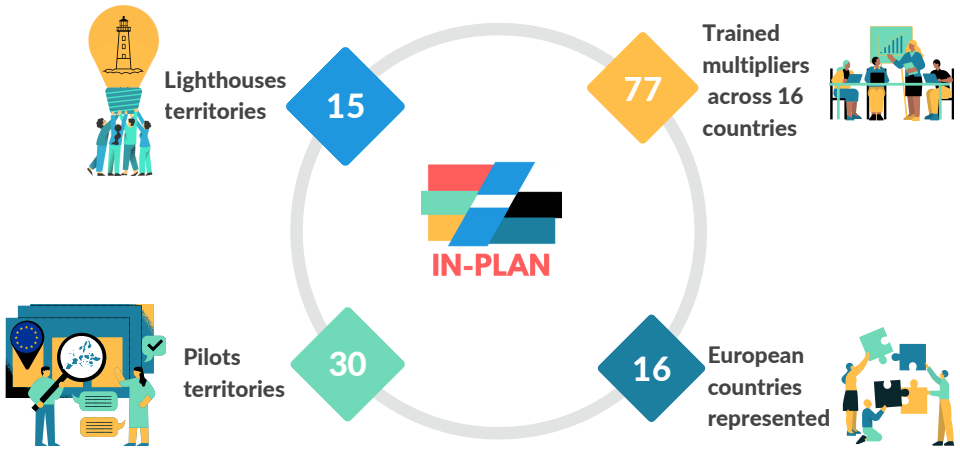
By empowering intermediaries rather than working solely with individual municipalities, IN-PLAN expanded its reach and increased the sutainability of its outcomes.
Capacity-building was delivered through:

- Structured training sessions;
- Webinars and thematic workshops;
- Practical guidance materials;
- The IN-PLAN Practice and Online Checklist.

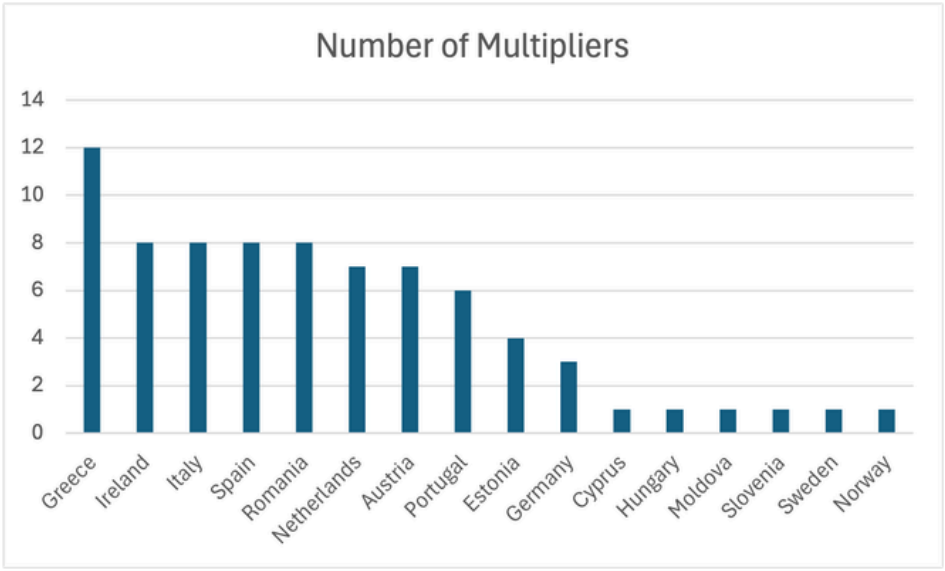
The training model combined conceptual understanding with hands-on application, enabling participants to apply the methodology within their own territorial contexts.

Scale of implementation

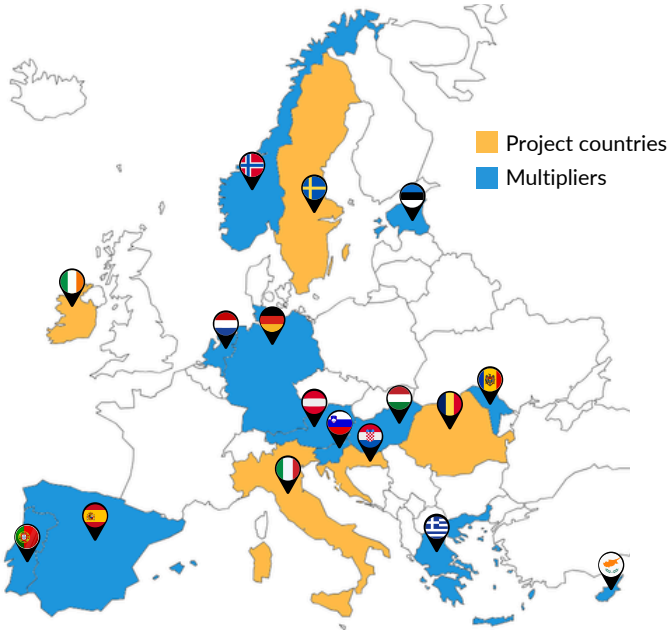
The IN-PLAN implementation achieved wide geographic coverage across Europe. The project engaged:



Through the Train-the-Trainer model - comprising four online and two in-person sessions (Vienna and Bolzano) - IN-PLAN established a distributed European network of professionals capable of transferring integrated planning methodologies beyond the initial project consortium. Multipliers were trained from the following countries:

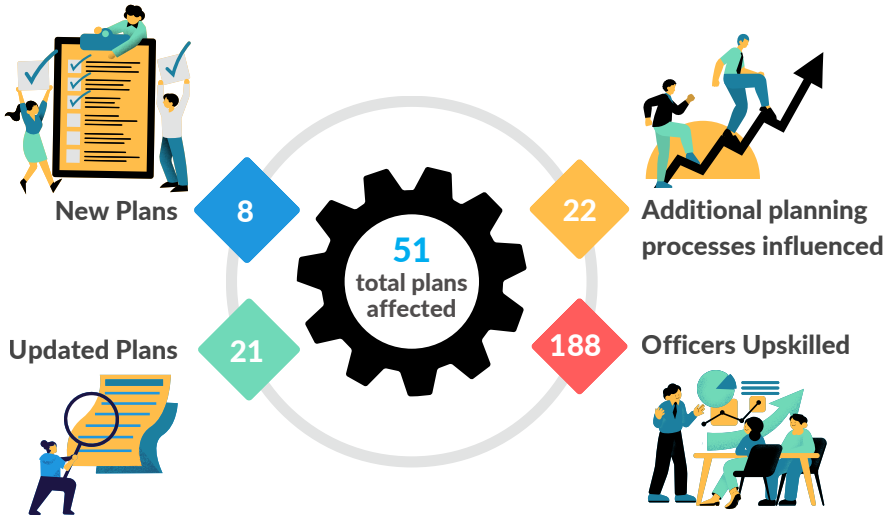


The strongest representation came from Greece (12), Ireland (8), Italy (8), Spain (8) and Romania (8), followed by the Netherlands (7), Austria (7) and Portugal (6). Additional representation from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe further demonstrates the geographic adaptability of the methodology.



By combining direct territorial implementation (45 core territories) with a structured multiplier network spanning 16 countries, IN-PLAN established a scalable foundation for continued uptake of integrated spatial planning approaches beyond the project lifetime.
Across Europe, IN-PLAN did not simply contribute to individual planning documents. It altered how planning processes are structured, how departments cooperate, and how climate ambition is translated into enforceable spatial provisions.

Through structured implementation in Lighthouses and Pilots, the project achieved measurable territorial impact:



The following sections illustrate how IN-PLAN translated integration from concept into structural transformation.

From Climate Strategy to Binding Spatial Regulation in Croatia

In many European municipalities, Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) articulate ambitious decarbonisation goals. However, these objectives often remain detached from legally binding spatial instruments. IN-PLAN directly addressed this disconnect.

In **Karlovac, Croatia**, the **revision of the General Urban Plan** became a turning point. Through the structured application of the IN-PLAN Practice and Checklist, climate objectives were translated into enforceable spatial provisions. The updated plan introduced restrictions on the expansion of natural gas infrastructure and strengthened requirements for renewable energy and district heating in new developments.

Similarly, in the **City of Zagreb**, the preparation of a revised General Urban Plan allowed for systematic integration of energy efficiency, renewable energy and green infrastructure considerations into zoning logic and development conditions.

Beyond the municipal level, **IN-PLAN also contributed to national-level policy dialogue in Croatia**. REGEA initiated cooperation with relevant ministries and embedded IN-PLAN principles into broader governance discussions, notably through synergies with the NECPlatform Climate and Energy Dialogues. This approach ensured continuity despite political and administrative changes.

Most importantly, elements of the **IN-PLAN methodology** have been reflected in the proposal for the new **Croatian Spatial Planning Act.** This marks a significant step towards formal institutionalisation at national level and signals that integrated planning is increasingly recognised as a structural governance approach rather than a project-based initiative.

Change Achieved

- Climate and energy objectives were embedded into revised General Urban Plans in Karlovac and Zagreb.
- Fossil-based infrastructure expansion was limited through spatial provisions.
- Renewable energy and climate adaptation measures were incorporated into zoning and development conditions.
- Cross-sector cooperation between spatial planners and energy experts became part of the formal planning procedure.

Why it matters

These cases demonstrate that spatial planning can act as a climate enforcement instrument. Integration becomes durable when embedded within legally binding frameworks rather than remaining voluntary or advisory.

Embedding Climate Planning Across Departments and Governance Levels in Ireland and Sweden

Integrated planning is not only about regulatory text. It requires institutional alignment. In **Tipperary, Ireland,** IN-PLAN supported the alignment between local climate action planning and statutory development planning, reinforcing the operationalisation of decarbonisation zones within spatial frameworks.

In **Mölndal, Sweden,** the methodology strengthened coordination between energy planning and spatial planning departments. The result was not only improved document coherence, but clearer procedural pathways linking long-term climate targets to land-use decisions.

Across several Lighthouses and Pilots, IN-PLAN facilitated cross-sector dialogue between planning, mobility, environmental protection and energy departments.

Change Achieved

- Stronger vertical alignment between EU, national and local objectives
- Institutionalised cross-departmental cooperation
- Clearer operational translation of climate targets into spatial processes

Why it matters

Integrated planning becomes sustainable when governance structures change. By improving coordination mechanisms, IN-PLAN strengthened the capacity of municipalities to sustain climate integration beyond the project lifetime.

Leveraging Planning to Influence Tender Development in Romania and Measures Prioritisation in Italy

IN-PLAN demonstrated that spatial planning influences not only land use, but investment and procurement decisions. In **Alba Iulia, Romania**, the methodology supported the integration of energy performance considerations into development documentation and tender processes. This ensured that climate objectives influenced not only policy text, but project-level implementation conditions.

In **Italian municipalities** such as **Cappella Maggiore and San Vito al Tagliamento**, the application of the IN-PLAN Checklist enabled structured identification of integration gaps across renewable energy, mobility and adaptation sectors. The tool supported prioritisation of measures and clearer monitoring pathways, with the active involvement of the policy level, the municipal departments and the external planning experts in a Joint Working Group, building the basis for the adoption of a permanent framework for integrated planning.

Change Achieved

- Integration of climate and energy considerations into spatial development procedures, including improved alignment between planning documents and implementation frameworks (Romania case).
- Structured identification of cross-sector synergies across renewable energy, mobility and adaptation sectors through the application of the IN-PLAN Checklist (Italy case).
- Clearer prioritisation of integrated measures under financial and administrative constraints, strengthening strategic coherence across planning instruments.

Why it matters

These cases demonstrate that integrated planning is not only about regulatory alignment, but about improving the strategic use of limited public resources. In contexts where financial constraints often delay plan updates or implementation, the identification of integrated measures allows municipalities to achieve multiple benefits through single intervention. Climate mitigation, mobility improvement, spatial efficiency and adaptation objectives can be addressed simultaneously, increasing economic efficiency and reducing duplication of efforts. By strengthening cross-sector coordination and prioritisation logic, IN-PLAN supports municipalities in making more coherent, cost-effective and strategically aligned planning decisions - even in financially constrained environments.

Institutionalising Integration Through the IN-PLAN Checklist

A recurring challenge in integrated planning is maintaining coherence across sectors over time. The IN-PLAN Checklist provided municipalities with a structured reflection and monitoring tool across four sectors: Spatial Planning, Climate Adaptation & Biodiversity, Sustainable Mobility and Renewable Energy.

Across Lighthouses and Pilots, the Checklist was used to:

- Screen draft plans and identify blind spots
- Compare sectoral priorities and detect conflicts
- Align planning principles across departments
- Document progress for monitoring purposes

The tool's design - based on planning principles rather than prescriptive measures - allowed adaptation to different legal and institutional contexts.

Change Achieved

- Systematic integration thinking embedded in planning workflows
- Increased awareness of cross-sector interdependencies
- Improved administrative capacity among 188 public officers

Why it matters

Integration is sustained not only through regulatory changes but through institutional learning. By strengthening professional capacity and providing a structured analytical tool, IN-PLAN ensured that integration becomes part of everyday planning practice.

KEY RESULTS AND IMPACT

Types of Impact

On Planning

IN-PLAN enabled the integration of energy, climate adaptation and mobility objectives into formal spatial planning procedures.

Instead of remaining strategic ambitions in SECAPs or climate strategies, measures were translated into:

- zoning provisions
- land-use regulations
- heating planning frameworks
- renewable energy designation areas
- mobility and street reorganisation rules

This shift represents the transition from voluntary policy alignment to legally enforceable planning integration.

On Governance and Capacity

Through structured capacity building and multiplier training, IN-PLAN strengthened institutional ability to manage integrated planning processes.

Authorities reported:

- Improved cross-departmental coordination
- Earlier involvement of energy experts in spatial planning
- Stronger political awareness of spatial-energy linkages
- More structured monitoring logic within planning cycles

On Policy and Strategy

IN-PLAN contributed to alignment between local planning practice and:

- National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)
- EU Green Deal objectives
- LIFE Clean Energy Transition Priorities

In Croatia, elements of the IN-PLAN methodology were incorporated into the proposal for the new Spatial Planning Act, marking a step toward formal institutionalisation at the national level.

IN-PLAN, therefore, moved from project experimentation to policy mainstreaming, also thanks to the establishment of an EU Coalition Group and of National Coalition Groups in the five involved countries.

Replicability, Sustainability and Legacy

Replicability

The IN-PLAN Practice was deliberately designed to function across diverse European planning systems. It does not create a new instrument; it operates within existing legal frameworks - any authority revising or drafting a spatial plan can apply the Practice.

Its replicability is ensured through:

- A five-phase structured planning logic
- Cross-sector integration principles
- The IN-PLAN Checklist tool
- Adaptability to centralised, decentralised and cooperative planning systems

Sustainability Beyond Project End

Sustainability is ensured through:

- Continued use of the IN-PLAN Practice and Checklist (online & Excel versions)
- Trained Multipliers embedded in agencies across Europe
- Integration of the methodology into ongoing planning processes
- Synergies with platforms such as NECPlatform dialogues

Additionally, spatial plans adopted or revised during the project will shape territorial development for years to come.

Long-Term Legacy

IN-PLAN's legacy lies in repositioning spatial planning as a core delivery mechanism for climate neutrality.

It demonstrated that:

- Climate targets must be spatially grounded
- Energy transition requires territorial logic

By embedding integration into planning law and procedures, IN-PLAN contributes to systemic governance change rather than isolated pilot innovation.

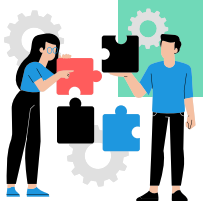
Lessons Learned and Recommendations

What Worked Well

Working within existing legal frameworks increased feasibility and political acceptance.

Hands-on case study training (Vienna & Bolzano) strengthened practical understanding.

The multiplier model enabled scalable knowledge transfer.

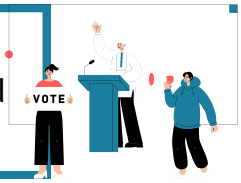


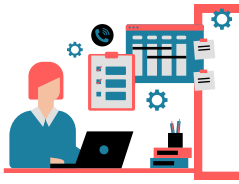
The IN-PLAN checklist helped identify blind spots and structure discussions.

Linking planning and budgeting discussions improved the realism of measures.

What Was Challenging

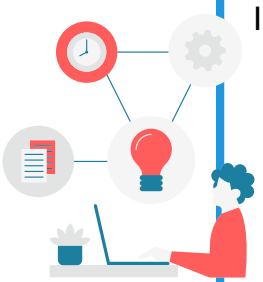
Political timing strongly influenced the duration and pace of the integration process. Legislative revision windows, electoral cycles and institutional restructuring affected continuity in several territories.





Administrative silos remain a structural barrier in many planning systems. Cross-departmental cooperation often requires deliberate facilitation and formal coordination mechanisms.

Data availability and accessibility, particularly for heating planning and spatial energy mapping, varies significantly across regions, limiting analytical depth in some contexts.

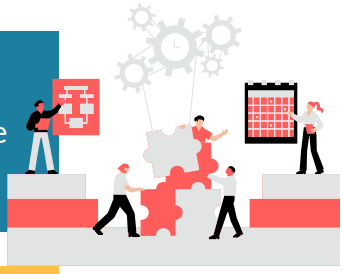


Integrated planning requires an **initial additional effort in coordination and time investment,** particularly during the set-up and alignment phases. However, experience across regions shows that this early investment reduces duplication, improves interdepartmental communication and streamlines future planning cycles. Over time, integration leads to greater efficiency, clearer responsibilities and reduced administrative workload.

Recommendations for Future Initiatives

Align integrated planning support with national legislative reform windows.

Invest early in political commitment and resource allocation.



Strengthen links between spatial planning and financial planning instruments

Maintain strong peer-learning formats and real case-based training.

Continue developing simple screening tools that help planners operationalise integration.

IN-PLAN confirmed that integrated planning is achievable - but it requires structured support and institutional commitment.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

IN-PLAN has demonstrated that integrated energy, climate and spatial planning is not only conceptually desirable - it is operationally feasible.

Across diverse legal systems, administrative cultures and planning traditions, the project proved that climate and energy objectives can be systematically embedded into statutory spatial planning processes. By working within existing planning frameworks rather than creating parallel instruments, IN-PLAN ensured feasibility, political acceptability and long-term durability.

The project confirms a fundamental insight: climate neutrality will not be delivered through strategies alone. It will be delivered through territorial decisions.

Land-use regulations, zoning provisions, infrastructure designation, development conditions and investment frameworks shape long-term emissions, resilience and energy demand patterns. When these instruments are aligned with climate objectives, spatial planning becomes a central implementation tool rather than a passive regulatory function.
IN-PLAN leaves behind three structural assets:

- A tested and adaptable integrated planning methodology
- A practical Checklist tool supporting implementation and monitoring
- A trained European network capable of replication and further dissemination

Perhaps most importantly, the project demonstrated pathways toward institutionalisation. In contexts where national-level reflection was triggered, integrated planning moved beyond project experimentation and entered broader policy and legislative discussion. This signals that integrated planning is increasingly recognised as a governance approach, not merely a technical exercise.

Looking ahead, the challenge for European authorities is not whether integration is necessary, but how quickly it can be mainstreamed. As Europe accelerates towards climate neutrality, the challenge is no longer defining targets. The challenge is embedding them into territorial reality. IN-PLAN provides a replicable pathway for doing exactly that.

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SOURCES

IN-PLAN Project Deliverables and Tools

1. IN-PLAN Consortium (2026), IN-PLAN Practice
2. IN-PLAN Consortium (2026), IN-PLAN Checklist
3. IN-PLAN Consortium (2026), D3.2 Capacity Building Implementation and Evaluation Report
4. IN-PLAN Consortium (2024), D3.1 Capacity Building Plan
5. IN-PLAN Consortium (2026), D4.1 Lighthouse and Pilot Implementation Summary Report
6. IN-PLAN Consortium (2024–2026). IN-PLAN Policy Brief Series

Web Resources

1. FEDARENE (2025). Learning, Connecting, and Planning for Change: The IN-PLAN Train-the-Trainer in Vienna. Available at: https://fedarene.org/learning-connecting-and-planning-for-change-the-in-plan-train-the-trainer-in-vienna/
2. IEECP (2026). IN-PLAN Practice Online Platform. Available at: https://ieecp.org/inplanpractice/
3. IEECP (2026). IN-PLAN Checklist Online at: https://ieecp.org/inplanpractice/focus-topics-for-climate-action/in-plan-checklist/

IN-PLAN Partners

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