



The new Structural Funds 2014-2020 can be the missing key to sustainable energy transition but only if integrated preparation with energy professionals takes place – main findings of the SF Energy Invest project.

SF Energy Invest is a project supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme of the European Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI). Its main objective is to help managing authorities of the Structural Funds as well as potential project promoters to use the EU cohesion policy in order to boost the number and quality of sustainable energy projects. In other words the project aimed at finding ways to reconcile the community of people managing Structural Funds and regional development with the community of people managing energy projects.

To reach this objective, the 10 partners in 12 EU countries (mainly in Eastern Europe) developed several necessary instruments, such as:

- A series of good practices in the energy field, selected on the basis of commonly agreed sustainability criteria
- A manual for each country supporting potential project promoters for the preparation of projects and the search for funding opportunities
- Policy recommendations for managing authorities for the design of operational programmes for 2014-2020
- National events where all this is discussed among energy and structural funds professionals : the Energy Investment Days

The instruments were discussed with a public of national ministries, managing authorities, cities, energy agencies, European and financial institutions during a final project seminar in Brussels. Main conclusion of the debate was: Integrated preparation (using those elements and systematically involving energy agencies) needs to take place now, since member states and regions will have to prepare their programmes throughout 2013 to be ready to start selecting projects on the ground from January 1st 2014. To illustrate this necessity of an integrated preparation, participants were asked to write a virtual operational programme¹ on sustainable energy. Drawing on the needs identified in different countries, 4 priority axis for this virtual “European Operational Programme on Energy” emerged:

- Energy efficiency for deprived areas (in particular to combat fuel poverty)
- Modernisation of the energy networks and support to local energy production
- Support to renewable energy and energy efficiency investments in and by SMEs
- Technical assistance and capacity building for local/regional authorities and project promoters

To implement this programme, improved procedures (in the field of application of state aid rules, fulfilling funding application criteria) and co-financing conditions (in particular in a time of constraint public finance) would be crucial.

ENDS.

Note to the editor :

The full policy recommendations as well as all information about the Energy Investment Days that have taken place in 8 countries can be found on the project website: <http://www.sf-energyinvest.eu/>

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¹ The Operational programmes present the priorities of the country and/or regions for the 2014-2020 programming period of Structural Funds.