NEWSLETTER #4

INTENSIFY

Interreg Europe

INTENSIFY innovatively addresses a key challenge for European cities and regions in how to energise citizens and communities to achieve more carbon reduction. The project's objective is to reduce carbon emissions from all sectors by empowering and energising local communities

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An interregional cooperation project for improving low-carbon economy policies.

Project Partners

Local Energy Management Agency of Almada, AGENEAL (PT)
EnergieavantgardeAnhalt e.V. (DE)
Environmental Studies Centre (ES)
Zadar City Council (HR)
Cork City Council (IE)
Province of Treviso (IT)
Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology (ECAT) (LT)
Energap (SI)
Milton Keynes Council (UK)

Low-carbon economy

€ 1.74 M ERDF

Jun 2018 May 2023

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

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WELCOME

to the **Interreg Europe Intensify Project's** fourth newsletter. This newsletter highlights community engagement in the partner regions.

In this issue, we see the success that has been achieved in **Almada** by involving the local community in the decision-making process of the refurbishment of a social housing building; a housing association in **Cork** that is striving for excellent energy efficiency in its houses; how decision makers and citizens are working together to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in **Vitoria-Gasteiz**; how the community group 'Transition Town **Milton Keynes**' are helping the community to take the necessary steps to achieve a low-carbon economy; providing municipalities in the **Province of Treviso** with the information necessary to implement effective energy metering; how making the switch from lignite to a modern gas and steam turbine significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions in **Anhalt**; and how the **City of Zadar** is investing in energy efficient measures in both the public and private sectors.

The Community and Social Housing Building Energy Retrofit

As part of the **HERB (Holistic energy-efficient retrofitting of residential buildings)** project, funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union, Almada refurbished a social housing building, introducing a full energy retrofit and including innovative technologies. Social housing in Portugal is generally characterized by poor build quality, which has severe environment and public health consequences since most dwellers cannot maintain adequate levels of thermal comfort, specially during winter. This is even more problematic since a large proportion of its residents are elderly people and low-income people, who are the most vulnerable sector of the population.

Key to achieving the project's goals is understanding the process on how best to select and integrate various technologies from the many available, in order to optimise performance for different building types, climates and socio-economic conditions. Therefore, a truly holistic approach was required. The selection and integration of the projects measures and technologies could not be done without the involvement of the local community, in particular building's residents. It was fundamental that they would be "on board" with the changes (in a true "bottom-up" approach), but also to provide feedback and valuable input about their needs.

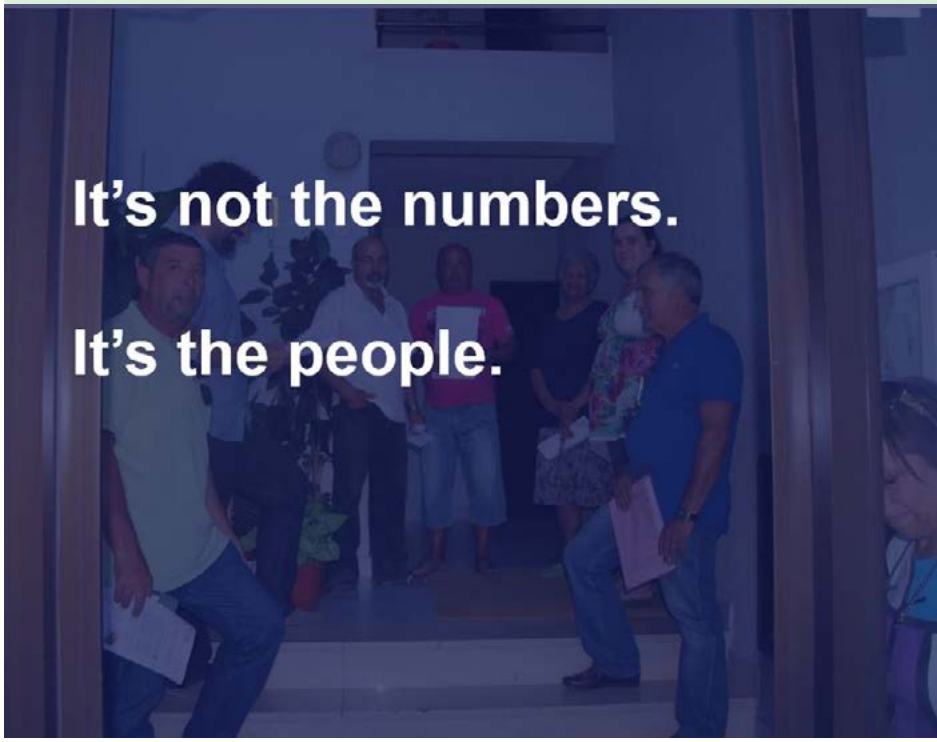
The engagement of the community was a key aspect in selecting and implementing the most adequate solutions. In fact, they were deeply involved in setting up solutions (for instance the installation of water meters and how their energy bill was changed), in sharing and contributing with their own resources by allowing remote management of their energy consumption, in adjusting the ongoing works for maximum comfort (allowing for detailed visits in the apartment and choosing the color temperature of the new LED lights).

The results of the project showcased that the collaboration of Local Authorities and the Communities was a success, as the project allowed for the significant improvement of the quality of life of dwellers, with a 50% increase in comfort perceived and a 90% decrease of discomfort situations.

Finally, even after the end of the project, they have been active participants in showcasing and participating in several dissemination activities of intervention made and allowing all visitors inside their own homes.

They became true ambassadors of the project.

Figure 1 – The residents, the municipality, the local energy agency and experts in one of the several gatherings on location.



Carbery Housing Association is more than just a housing association. It combines the provision of social housing with a desire to ensure that those homes will meet the near zero energy building (NZEB) standard required of all Irish houses by 2050. One significant measure the association has taken to achieve the NZEB standard for all of its properties is the setting up of a Sustainable Energy Community under the Sustainable Energy Authorities of Irelands (SEAI) SEC program in 2016. All of the properties owned and rented by Carbery Housing Association and their tenants are members of the scheme.

Since then, and with funding from the SEAI SEC program, the association has prepared an energy master plan. The energy master plan is an analysis of the current energy rating of each house and a roadmap to improve that rating to ensure the NZEB standard is achieved. The masterplan informs the association of measures that could and should be undertaken under various schemes to improve the energy efficiency of the homes. Both shallow and deep energy efficiency retrofit measures are considered. Targeting suitable properties is key to success. The association's Operations Manager, Ana Ospina, says that "Carbery has multiple priorities that need to be balanced when meeting competing demands particularly when you are a small and growing organisation". Carbery Housing Association's Secretary, Jose Ospina, says that "the association and its tenants are motivated by a strong desire to reduce their personal carbon footprint, improve the quality of the housing stock and improve the quality of life".

Size is not a barrier to reducing carbon emissions

Jose further states that "publicity is very important in order to make the public aware of the work the association does". For that reason, the association is an active participant in sustainable energy projects and European funded projects. Ana says that being a significant stakeholder in the Interreg Europe INTENSIFY project has "improved the visibility of the association and has also enabled it to build relationships at both national and European level".

Jose also believes that "continued engagement with the community in terms of its own tenants and the external environment will be key to Carbery Housing Association's success in the future, both in terms of growing the business and reducing its carbon footprint".

Since its foundation in 2001, Carbery's successes include:

a. Housing stock of 13 houses
b. 27 houses under conveyancing for purchase
c. Lead Partner in the EU Funded RENEASE (Renewable Energy Against Social Exclusion) Project (ALTENER 2003)
d. Setting up of an SEC and completion of an Energy Master Plan (2019)
e. Participation in 2 SEAI Better Energy Community Schemes (2019 and 2020)
f. Participation in the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme (3 properties) (2019 and 2020)
g. Setting up a pilot scheme for monitoring energy use in 5 homes with Electric Ireland (2019)
h. Carrying out a survey of energy poverty in CHA tenets and prospective tenants with UCC's Clean Production Promotion Unit (2019)
i. Partner in the Interreg NWE Project RedWoLF to install solar panels, storage and smart meters in 5 pilot properties.

CHA is a small community association with big expectations, a focus on engaging communities, contributing to preventing homelessness and combating climate change. CHA provides a sustainable social enterprise through which concerned individuals in the local community can be proactive in tackling these key social and environmental problems.

Small is beautiful.

Vitoria-Gasteiz

Vitoria-Gasteiz decision makers and citizens together on the road to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

"Citizens committed to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions need to feel supported by decision makers and be confident that the actions taken by all of us, each in its own role, are directed towards the same common objective."

The words recently spoken by the Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz during the signing of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, promoted by the European Commission and the Covenant of Mayors Office, illustrate this commitment. ¨ We have a long road ahead of us that we are convinced must be carried out. Our city has taken important steps towards becoming carbon neutral. The reduction of emissions in buildings and the commitment to a more sustainable model of mobility are key to this task that we are carrying out in a way that is coordinated. In addition, we have a clear agenda set by our Green Deal to move from the green city to the green economy. The Vitoria-Gasteiz Green Deal will guide the initiatives we develop to achieve this. It is a question of gathering solutions that are proposed at a global level to face the challenges that the planet has and that could play a role in our city¨

By signing the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Sustainable Energy, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council commits to produce a baseline inventory of GHG emissions and an assessment of vulnerability and risks to climate change; to develop an Action Plan for Climate and Sustainable Energy integrating mitigation and adaptation aspects within two years of accession; and to produce a progress report every two years after the delivery of the Action Plan on the initiative's platform.

For our city, participating in the INTENSIFY project will contribute in a very important way to the achievement of these commitments and, in particular, will serve to increase the commitment and motivation of citizens in the common objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Milton Keynes Community creating low carbon future

Transition Town taking practical steps

Jeremy Draper and Christine Ballard from Milton Keynes Council (a partner in the Intensify project) have been speaking with Michael Sheppard the chairman of Transition town Milton Keynes.

We at Transition Town Milton Keynes ("TTMK") are a community group focused on helping the community take practical steps to create a low carbon future across the city and beyond.

Some of our projects include:

1. **Planting Up** – our flagship (permaculture) project to create a series of community gardens across the city. Helping communities to grow food together as well as giving people the skills and confidence to grow their own produce at home.

2. **Educating the community** – we have regular articles on all sustainable living published in a number of local magazines across the city. Our articles are published monthly and they reach an audience of more than 100,000. We also put on periodic film nights focusing on the environment in particular.

3. **Sustainable Future MK** - we are talking to businesses and other organisations across MK to encourage them to reduce their reliance on carbon and to be much more sustainable. We are asking organisations to align with the climate goals set by MK Council at the start of 2019. Sustainable future MK is directly managed by a member of the core team at TTMK.

4. **Environmental improvement** – we are looking to engage with other partners in community tree planting across the city as well as supporting the community, town, parish and the city councils in their sustainability actions to make MK carbon neutral by 2030.

Our action supporting localised, 'grass-roots' communities is an organised approach to living more sustainably. This is part of the much bigger Transition Town movement which was created back in 2004. This movement is now global, having originated in response to recognising the major challenges of environmental destruction and human induced climate change.

The Transition Town response is to take action as communities, starting at a local level, to make the changes needed to rise to the challenges of resource depletion, climate disruption and the inevitable economic instability of these impacts on the climate crisis. In practice, this means our community projects are based on our visions of a future model that will make our city a better place to live in a more sustainable and sharing economy.

We currently have a new website in development, but for more information, visit: ***transitionmk.blogspot.com***

You can also follow Transition Town Milton Keynes on **Facebook** and **Twitter** or contact us to join our volunteer group by emailing: **transitionmkinfo@gmail.com**

Transition Town Milton Keynes
local action for low-carbon communities

An advisor on GHG issues

By Antonio Zonta | INTENSIFY Advisor on energy efficiency for the Province of Treviso

Energy efficiency has been a strategic issue at the Province of Treviso for the last 10 years. In 2011, the Province's department in charge of operation and maintenance of school buildings started a renovation programme based on the so called "EPIC" model, an Energy Performance Contract between the Province and a private-sector contractor, in which technological improvements were integrated (hence the addition of an "I" to the more commonly used acronym "EPC") with behavioural and social activities, aiming at the involvement of users, mainly students and teachers, in energy saving actions.

At the same time, the Province started a process of transferring good practices on energy efficiency to small and medium-sized municipalities. This process led the Province to join the Covenant of Mayors as a "Covenant Coordinator", and the first municipalities joined the CoM and adopted their SEAPs in 2014 later followed by others, for a total, at present, of 26.

Both activities were positively influenced, since the beginning, by participating in different EU funded projects, mainly in the INTERREG Programmes, and now INTENSIFY represents the last milestone in this pathway towards energy efficiency, and a further opportunity for a good practice transfer to municipalities.

In this regard, some of the municipalities of the CoM group coordinated by the Province of Treviso raised a question about the possibility of implementing in their building stock a contractual model along the lines of the EPIC. Considering also the exemplary role played by public buildings in the field of energy efficiency, the diffusion of this model could also be assumed by private sector owners to trigger a more widespread energy renovation programme.

An EPC - or EPIC - experience needs to be based on a sound knowledge about previous energy consumption.

The INTENSIFY action plan of the Province of Treviso is therefore aiming to provide the participating municipalities with the know-how needed to implement an effective and reliable energy metering and accountability system for their building stock.

Energieavantgarde Anhalt

Farewell to Lignite

In spring 2019, the Dessau municipal utility, a founding member of the Anhalt Energy Avantgarde, initiated the end of an era: by switching from lignite to a modern gas and steam turbine. The new and highly efficient cogeneration plant "An der Fine" produces both electricity and heat, thereby significantly reducing the use of primary energy and greenhouse gas emissions. With the switch from lignite to gas, the latter fell by a remarkable 30,000 tons per year.

The new heat storage system at the city of Dessau-Roßlau.

These reductions are in line with the climate goals of the city of Dessau-Roßlau, but they also make economic sense.

In a next step, the municipal utility plans to enhance the flexibility and economic performance of the district heating network by adding heat storage to the system.

Wind power requires new regulations:
However, energy market regulations have so far prevented an even better use of locally available and climate-friendly resources. Up to now, the Dessau municipal utility company has not been able to use wind power at times of excess production in the region to stabilize the heat supply. Energieavantgarde calls upon the State of Saxony-Anhalt to support flexible solutions in the framework of its Climate and Energy Concept. Only then can faster and more CO_2 reductions be achieved in the short term.

Together with the partners in the EU INTENSIFY project, the Energy Avantgarde Anhalt showcases and promotes concepts and solutions to ensure that the pioneering savings of 30,000 tons of CO_2 will inspire further reductions in the region.

City of Zadar

City of Zadar recognised energy efficiency as crucial in targeting sustainable development and is making big efforts in motivating citizens for the implementation of energy efficiency measures.

City of Zadar continuously provides financial instruments for investments in both: public and private sector - family houses and buildings. Regarding the public sector, the biggest investments were: the installation of a solar system for water heating in a swimming pool, the reconstruction of the boiler room of a sport center for use of natural gas, energy efficient public lights, energy audits in public buildings, the introduction of natural gas in the headquarter ''Petrići'', energy efficiency reconstruction of a primary school. Regarding the private sector, City of Zadar co-financed thermal insulation, installation of energy efficient windows, stove on wood biomass and solar systems for water heating. Some of these projects have been implemented in a leadership of City of Zadar itself and some have been implemented in a frame of national or EU projects.

With the aim of improving community engagement and citizens' motivation, a number of activities were carried out;

- EE information office has been opened in which citizens can get information and free consultation, promotion materials, see models of various EE products, info gallery with a theme of energy savings and energy efficient construction;
- In the City Library, a special shelf called 'Green Library of Energy Efficiency' was opened with different professional publications and brochures;
- A fair of energy efficiency and renewable energy was held several times, where manufacturers and companies could present their products and services;
- A number of promotional activities were held for citizens, professionals, preschool and primary school children and all other interested members of the public in a form of meetings, round tables, workshops, campaigns, energy consultations in households, competition in energy saving in households etc.
- Promotion of all activities through the media, partner or project websites and social platforms.

As a result of all activities, City of Zadar has achieved a reduction of 19% in CO_2 emissions by 2020.

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