Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Energy Efficiency

The Challenge

In Western Balkan countries energy continues to be wasted on large scale and this is harming the region’s economic competitiveness, social stability, and environment. Aiming to join the EU, the countries are responsible for incorporating the corresponding elements of the EU acquis into their own legislation. Furthermore, as signatories of the Energy Community Treaty, South-East European countries are responsible for the implementation of the energy chapter of the EU acquis and reduction of energy consumption in energy-related sectors. This process poses many challenges for the region. These are further exacerbated by the responsibilities arising under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) regarding greenhouse gases emission reduction, which almost all western Balkans countries declared as part of the Paris Agreement implementation. Therefore, all Western Balkan countries face same or similar challenges in meeting the climate and sustainable use of energy objectives.

Our Approach

The Open Regional Fund for South–East Europe – Energy Efficiency (ORF–EE) promotes regional cooperation among stakeholders with the capacity to drive the process of reform in the energy and climate protection sector, thereby contributing to achieving the national energy efficiency and climate protection targets in Western Balkan countries. The project focuses on using the potentials arising from the similarities South–East European nations have in common, culturally, structurally, and development challenges wise, which offers great potential for building and sharing relevant expertise in and through regional networks.
Goal

The goal of the ORF–EE is to support energy and climate relevant political and civil society actors, through networks in South–East Europe, in implementing required EU regulations. Regional networks supported by the ORF–EE share their experiences on implementation of energy efficiency and climate protection measures independently, and are empowered to address issues of common interest. In doing so they contribute towards a more effective implementation of these topics in their respective countries.

Impact – achievements to date

The ORF–EE helped the establishment of the Network of Energy–Efficient Capital Cities in South–Eastern Europe as comprised of the capital cities of Zagreb, Sarajevo, Podgorica, Skopje and Tirana, which is supported by the German model city of Freiburg im Breisgau. It supports partner cities in joining the European Covenant of Mayors initiative, establishes energy management structures and supports the development of Sustainable Energy Action Plans. Furthermore, through the Initiative for Public Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Use of Energy in SEE, the Network of Schools of Political Studies in South–East Europe, supported by the ORF–EE, helped strengthen the political will in the region pursuing reform processes in the energy sector in Montenegro, Macedonia (FYR), Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. As a result of these efforts public hearings of parliamentary committees responsible for energy efficiency were held for the first time in the countries.

The project also supported the development and implementation monitoring process of partner countries’ National Energy Efficiency Action Plans, which are mandatory across the EU. This process was further strengthened through the introduction of a monitoring system that enables effective creation of national energy efficiency policies and support programs that allow a more precise assessment of policy’s direct energy saving impacts and their effectiveness. The support provided is complemented by a software program – Monitoring and Verification Platform (MVP) for calculations of energy savings and CO₂ reductions, achieved through energy efficiency measures. The system has been provided to Western Balkan partner countries. Croatia integrated it as a compulsory instrument in its national regulations. The ORF–EE furthermore aims to strengthen the capacities of ministries and agencies in the region, responsible for energy efficiency and climate protection, including the municipal level and civil society organizations, in establishing regulatory and institutional conditions for implementation of climate-relevant EU directives and regulations. At the same time SEE parliamentarians act in securing the necessary political will for sector reforms.

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