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Final report: Peer review on SECAP coordination & implementation

8- 9 MAY 2019

PARLIAMENT OF THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY, EUPEN, BELGIUM



1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The Covenant of Mayors is the world's largest movement for local climate and energy actions. The initiative now gathers 7,000+ local and regional authorities across 57 countries drawing on the strengths of a worldwide multi-stakeholder movement and the technical and methodological support offered by dedicated offices. Signatories endorse a shared vision for 2050: accelerating the decarbonisation of their territories, strengthening their capacity to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts, and allowing their citizens to access secure, sustainable and affordable energy. In 2017, the 9 German-speaking municipalities of Belgium decided to join the covenant of mayors with the goal to reduce their CO₂-emissions by 40% till 2030 and to tackle mitigation and climate change. Because of their small size they preferred the approach of joint SECAP elaboration, this process was coordinated by the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. In the beginning of 2019, the elaboration of this document has been finished and approved by all municipalities. To this day, the German-speaking Community has no political competences in the fields of energy and mobility. From 2020 on, a partial transfer of the energy competences from the Walloon region to the German-speaking community is foreseen. These competences include:

- subsidies for households regarding Energy Efficiency (insulation, replacement of windows,...)
- subsidies for socially deprived households
- subsidies for the energetic refurbishment of buildings managed by public administrations
- subsidies for local authorities for the development of local energy policies
- the management of an energy advice center. This center already exists and is located in Eupen. The current aim is to offer citizens advice on energy issues and energy subsidies from the Walloon Region regarding Energy Efficiency/ renovation



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Since the German-speaking Community has no experience with joint SECAP implementation and the role of the future energy competences is not totally clear yet because of new freedom of design, some questions came up during the SECAP elaboration phase with focus on:

- Management structures regarding the follow-up and implementation of SECAP actions
- Financing SECAP implementation actions
- Techniques/tools to simplify data collection, monitoring and reporting
- Policy development in the frame of SECAP implementation

To guarantee efficient SECAP implementation, clarify the role of different stakeholders and provide support to municipalities, the German-speaking Community benefits from an exchange with more experienced joint SECAP coordinators. In this frame the organization of a peer review by the [Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform](#) seemed the perfect opportunity to develop a strategy to tackle the abovementioned issues.

2. PARTICIPANTS PEER REVIEW

After approval of the project call and drafting a background paper, Interreg Europe made a selection of peers from Belgium, Finland, Italy and Germany with interesting experience in SECAP implementation or similar Energy/Climate action plans. The German-speaking Community also invited the members of the steering group who followed the elaboration of the joint SECAP to participate in the Peer Review and deliver input for strategy development.

List of participants:

Team Interreg Europe:		
Astrid Severin	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform	Thematic Expert Low-Carbon Economy
Katharina Krell	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform	Thematic Expert Low-Carbon Economy
Thorsten Kohlisch	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform	Project Manager
Peers:		
Andrea Carosi	SVIM - Sviluppo Marche S.r.l., Italy	Project Manager
Dr. Bernd Lämmlin	Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany	Koordinator des Regionalbüros Süd, Stv. Abteilungsleiter
Johanna Punkari	South Ostrobothnia Energy Agency Thermopolis Oy, Finland	Project Manager
Nathalie Garré	Department Environment, nature, climate and energy, WVI (West-Vlaamse Intercommunale), Belgium	Environmental Expert
Stakeholders German-speaking Community:		
Achim Langer	Courant d'Air	Manager



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Anna Quadflieg	Ministry of the German-speaking Community	External relations and regional development, Head of department
Benoît Pesch	Eupen	Environmental service
Christian Reuter	Burg Reuland	Responsible for rural development
Daniel Hilligsmann	Government of the German-speaking Community	Advisor to the Minister-President of the German-speaking Community
Edgar Brodel	Bütgenbach	Administrative staff
Emilie Van de Weyer	Ministry of the German-speaking Community	Project officer for Energy and Mobility
Jerome Gennen	Agra-Ost	Director
Marcel Goffinet	Sankt Vith	Alderman
Michel Johanns	Energieberatung	Energy Consultant
Renate Toussaint	Fahrmit	Project Manager

After the first conversations with the peers it became clear very fast, that the struggles in the different regions are comparable. This helped during the peer review since there was a great understanding for the issues we tried to tackle. The peers themselves could also gain some interesting insights in the way of working of other regions.

Due to the involvement of several East-Belgian stakeholders we tried to get some insight in the structural challenges from their point of view. Their input had an important contribution to the development of strategies for SECAP implementation. At the same time, we were pleased to receive the following conclusions and recommendations from the team of thematic experts and our European group of peers:

3. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STARTING POINT FOR JOINT SECAP IMPLEMENTATION (AS PRESENTED BY THE TEAM OF EXPERTS OF THE POLICY LEARNING PLATFORM):

- Strong overall commitment in the region deserving respect
- Comprehensive and cross-cutting SECAP offering flexibility for the partners
- Timely, active, transparent and inclusive stakeholder involvement
- Readiness to seek for advice and ideas from outside



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3.1. The implementation of governance structures for SECAP implementation

STEERING GROUP

Members of the steering group

- Political-administrative bodies (9 municipalities + 1 DG)
- Political representative (aldermen) or other designated + civil servant responsible for the theme tackled by the meeting
- Other Stakeholders

Role:

- Overall coordination and strategic decisions
- Progress reporting and monitoring
- Manage shared tools
- Joint actions towards the outside
- Support and initiate applications for joint funding/ projects
- Initiate working groups
- Campaign identity + external communication

Set-up and leadership:

- Chairmanship as Covenant of Mayors Coordinator = Ministry of the DG
- Shared responsibilities and tasks

Meetings:

- First year – up to 4 meetings
- Following years: 2 meetings/year
- Study visits – showing good practices

WORKING GROUPS

Members of the working groups

- Political representative: optional
- Civil servant: yes
- Stakeholders: yes
- Consultants: optional

Role of the working groups?

- Plan and implement specific actions
- Report to SC

Set-up and leadership?

- Flexible, depending on the municipal targets + interests
- Chair: rotating among WG members
- DG: agenda + invitations + minutes (only main points/ follow-ups)

Meetings?

- As needed and decided by each WG
- Approx. 3 meetings/ year

MUNICIPAL LEVEL

- Appointment of „Mr. or Ms. SECAP“
- Ensure that the SECAP does not end up as a sub-topic of environment
- Raise awareness within the municipal administration



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- Give recognition and formal role to „Mr. or Ms. SECAP“
- Role to train colleagues, et al.
- SECAP Teams within municipal structures

3.2. Scope & support tools for Local Authorities

Support from the German-speaking Community:

- Information (Info sessions, contacts to external partners, study trips, ...)
- Shared tools [Funding opportunities (use existing structures such as regional antennas and online tools)]
- Expertise (Technical and financial guidance; use existing expertise, good practices elsewhere and work jointly; joint projects (EU-funded, national-funded))
- Energy Agency (Wallon Region): “One-stop-shop“ for building EE renovation

3.3. Monitoring, data and reporting

- PRAGMATIC approach to data collection and monitoring:
- Not too complicated – stay focused on actions and impact!
- Examine usefulness of existing tools (experience of peer regions)
- Transfer existing tools into the DG

Need:

- Understand the status quo, track progress and detect „anomalities“
- Consolidate data
- Communicate to the outside
- Annual public reports
- Three topics/ dimensions:
Public buildings/ CO2 emissions/ Climate adaption
- Three groups of indicators:
Process-based/ Vulnerability indicators/ Impact indicators
- Examine usefulness of existing tools

3.4. Financing SECAP measures

- HR to implement SECAP-related tasks
- Subsidies for citizens (Limit to vulnerable citizens? To all citizens?)
- Project funding (EUR for hardware)
- Expertise [(Technical and financial guidance; Use existing expertise, good practices elsewhere and work jointly (EMR, GR,...)); joint projects (EU-funded, national-funded)]

Sources: All levels!

TO-DO's:

- Use the programming window for structural funds (ROP Wallonia, Interreg)
- Express your needs and lobby the region, establish cross-border collaborations
- Align your SECAP priorities with the priorities of future programmes
- Learn about existing opportunities
- Seek cooperation and partners outside
- Hire expert consultants to write proposals until DG has more HR + expertise in this area
- Build your networks



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4. FOLLOW UP

The German-speaking Community will send out the results of the peer review to all municipalities and stakeholders which have been involved during the elaboration phase of the SECAP. These results will also be presented during the next Steering group meeting, where also the governance structures will be discussed.

The German-speaking Community will also analyze the tools mentioned by the peers to see if they are applicable for the region or if they can be used as an inspiration for further tool development (For the moment a general project management tool is developed to improve collaboration between municipalities and the German-speaking Community, this tool is also applicable for non-Energy projects).

Further, the German-speaking Community would like to stay in touch with the peers to exchange on more concrete topics and ideas we gained from their approaches. We are also open for collaboration in future projects as a project partner or share our experience on other topics the peers are interested in. In the long-term we would like to develop best practices that are specific for our region and can serve as an inspiration for other regions.

5. CONCLUSION

We would like to thank the Interreg team and the peers for their time and their willingness to share their experience with us. The peer review gave us the opportunity to gain new insights and made a contribution to our further strategic development for SECAP implementation. It was nice to see what other regions with the same goal already have achieved and that they can be an inspiration for us. We would be happy to deliver a contribution to further collaboration.

