



Innovative Financial Instruments for industry low carbon energy transition in Central Europe

Ongoing Activities:

FIRECE FINAL EVENT - GREENER SMES FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD

The Final Online Event of FIRECE project on 16th September 2020 was a great success!

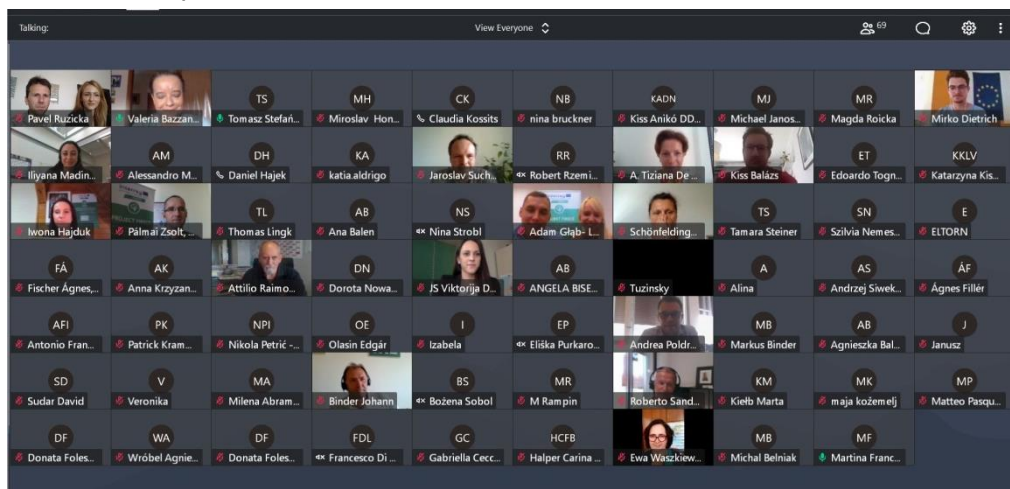


More than 130 participants from all the countries of Central Europe Area registered to the event, which was attended by an average of 90 participants.

The audience included, among others, public local institutions, banks, universities and research organizations connecting from Austria, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia and also Belgium and Netherlands.

Relevant results achieved by the partnership were presented, focusing in particular on Guidelines to implement financial instruments, the tool to assess public investments addressed to support industries, examples of innovative financial instruments, the results of the assessment of local public investments and a promotional video.

In addition, Joint secretariat representative presented the INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 opportunities for cooperation.





Emilia Romagna Region:

The results of PA1 leads to the development of (Innovative) Financial Instrument for Emilia - Romagna Region. The proposed Financial Instrument aims to reduce the energy impact of SMEs through the analysis and evolution of the Instrument activated in the previous programming period, the "Energy 2.0 Fund". More specifically, the FI intends to exploit the combination of a Loan Instrument and a Guarantee Instrument, together with a technical assistance to be financed by the fund, in order to help beneficiaries to better design their project. The added value is that it can attract public and private resources in different forms, the revolving element is a plus and contributes to the long term sustainability of programs, the grant element can preserve interest of beneficiaries in the success of the projects while the technical assistance can help enterprises to present project of higher quality.

Last but not least, RER will undersign a Memorandum of Understanding and a FIRECE Consortium Agreement to capitalise the good results achieved. In addition, RER has contributed to realization some video pills, underlining that Energy as a cross cutting issue that the Industry cannot ignore, a crucial element in Innovative Investment Strategies.

Lubelskie Voivodeship:

PA1 - Lubelskie Voivodeship was best assessed in the audit of ex-ante analysis reports. The first question when considering transferability is the assessment of the applied methodology. Desktop research processed strategic documentation regarding FIs, Program, competition and design documentation plus reporting documentation on the implementation of financial instruments. Findings of CSO studies on energy efficiency of SMEs and renewable energy are also incorporated in the report. The applied qualitative methodology enriches the results of secondary research. Interviews with the representatives of Managing authorities, of Department of the Environment and Natural Resources, of financial intermediaries and scientific experts from Lublin University of Technology. Also an expert panel took place with similar participants. The quantitative research provides the mathematical and statistical background of generalization. In case of Lubelskie Voivodeship the partner conducted a research with a representative sample of small and medium enterprises from the region.

In order to transfer the results of the FIRECE project LV organized a local workshop and presented the project outcomes at the MIK-21 Online International Conference Innovation and Competitiveness and at the Virtual Science Days. Furthermore LV published a monograph entitled: "Market context for the implementation of blended financial instruments under the FIRECE project". The publication is available in printed and electronic versions (free of charge) on the website of Wydawnictwo PL (<http://biblioteka.pollub.pl/wydawnictwa/>).





RDA ARLEG:

The testing phase of the project level tool has been completed. The results from pilot actions carried out in Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland and Czech Republic have been summarized and the main conclusion will be included in the evaluation report prepared by ARLEG as a Task Leader of Activity A.T2.5. In each of the partner countries participating in the assessment, 8 projects implemented by SMEs that aimed at reducing energy consumption, have been evaluated using the IT Tool. The total number of SMEs analysed reached 208 (32 SME's + set of data of in total 176 SME's projects) and stakeholders involved in the pilot action activities included regional authorities and Financial and Business Intermediaries. The energy efficiency measures applied in the partner countries have shown that the photovoltaic system was the most popular measure chosen by SMEs. The investment projects were supported by public funding in a form of grants and loans under ERDF Operational Programmes 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, supplemented by own resources.

The main conclusions of the implementation of pilot action 2 are as follows: All analysed projects have the ability to generate energy and GHG savings, and so to contribute to the goals of national/region energy plans. However, to make the projects also economically viable, a certain level of a subsidy component seems to be necessary to be involved into the financing schemes. The use of the IT tool developed in the project has enabled its users to compare how the funds were spent in different countries and to assess the impact and effectiveness of the financial instruments implemented at national level in regards to the environmental effects. Each of the partners participating in the pilot action considered the tool as user-friendly and declared that it can be used at national level after further local adaptation.

In order to promote and spread the results of FIRECE project RDA ARLEG planned different dissemination activities after the PA1 and PA2 finalisation in order to transfer their outcomes.

STRIA:

In September STRIA focused on the local workshops to promote FIRECE project and introduce the activities carried out in the last months. The first local workshop with a communication focus was organized on the 9th September 2020 in Szekszárd with 10 participants, mostly SMEs represented themselves.

The second one was on 14th September 2020 in Pécs with 7 attendees. The topic was the transferability of the PA1 and the tool to access public investment. The event's participants were the staff members of the Baranya County Development Agency, the Municipality of Baranya and the Cultural Innovation Competence Centre Association took part. The video pill (<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/FIRECE-HU-video-pill.mp4>) introducing the Hungarian Innovative Financial Instrument was showcased at both events.

Until the end of September STRIA will organize two virtual public dissemination events to reach a wider audience, and promote FIRECE results. They will take place on 17th and 24th September. We invited the Ministry of Finance to our event in hope that we could cooperate with them during the planning of the 2021-2027 programming period.





Forschung Burgenland:

In order to make the IFIs and the calculation tool better known and also to apply them, numerous local thematic workshops and dissemination events were held in all European FIRECE partner countries.

Forschung Burgenland conducted 2 Local thematic Workshops: One was held by Marion Schönfeldinger on the 21.09.2020 for the ERSTE BANK in Oberwart and the second took place on the 22.9.2020 in Eisenstadt for the Provincial Holding Burgenland (Landesholding Burgenland), guided by Johann Binder.

Both informed about the general goals of FIRECE and about an IFI-Innovative Financial Instrument-Tool, which was developed in the project FIRECE. The tool's launch in Burgenland should take place in autumn, offering the opportunity to support investment measures, especially in the field of renewable energy (mainly photovoltaics), which are supported by funding from the Province of Burgenland.

The support for the IFI tool was very much welcoming and it is now to be used by both the Landesholding Burgenland and ERSTE Bank to support investments and subsidies. The ERSTE Bank Director from Burgenland, Michael Jeserschek, finds the tool particularly helpful in corporate investment advising and would like it to be introduced in all ERSTE Bank branches in Burgenland before the end of 2020 for a regular use.

Furthermore, Forschung Burgenland produced a Video Pill (<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/FIRECE-AT-video-pill.mp4>), which deals with the development and implementation of an innovative support programme in Burgenland. The aim of this programme is to support municipalities which contribute to the achievement of the goals of the current "Climate & Energy Strategy" of Burgenland.

Also, a Memorandum of Understanding and a FIRECE Consortium Agreement will be signed in order to capitalise the FIRECE Results.





Enviros:

An important activity that ENVIROS focused on in the last months of the project duration was fine tuning and promotion of the developed on-line training course (<http://firece.-enviros.cz>). Up to now, 93 users (excluding project partners) from all partner countries have taken part in the course, which focuses on energy planning and use of financial instruments that support implementation of projects on energy efficient and renewable energy sources in companies. Potential users can learn more from our video pill (<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/FIRECE-2020-CZ-small.mp4>).

ENVIROS finished pilot testing of the Project level tool within the Pilot action 2. Eight projects representing investments into energy saving measures and introduction of renewable energy sources were included into the testing. For each project, different financing options were calculated and evaluated with the objective to find the most appropriate alternative.

All project outputs and results were promoted during a series of dissemination activities that were organized in August and September. The project was presented at the international conference Sustainable Accounting and Reporting 2020 and two regional workshops were held as side-events. With regard to the current pandemic situation, another dissemination event was organized in a form of webinar. By the end of the project, a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed with the Ministry of Industry and Trade in order to make use of the FIRECE outputs after the project end.



IRENA:

As the project was reaching its official end, IRENA staff members in the last period were mainly focused on the finalization of the project activities, especially the one about the transferability and sustainability of the project results. On the 18th of September, IRENA organised two events with the aim to present main project achievements, outputs and plan on how to capitalise the achievements in the upcoming period. Since one of the main project results for the IRENA team was the development of the Ex-Ante assessment analysis for the implementation of innovative financial instruments (IFI) in Croatia, representatives of IRENA have had several meetings in September with the representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds and the Istrian County regarding the implementation of the IFI in the programming period 2021-2027. The proposed financing model, as an innovative, hybrid model that consists of a grant and loan element was acclaimed during the analysis as the most effective way to enhance investments, motivate SMEs and reach the targets set in the Energy plans. Finally, the representatives of IRENA have participated in one of the last activities in the project, filming the video about the project achievements and having had organised a press conference where media representatives gained all the needed information about the project FIRECE and its results.



NEU e.V.:

As non-profit cluster organization, NEU e.V. has direct linkages to the regional network of SMEs and was in charge of the implementation of Pilot Action 2 for improving energy efficiency in the regional industry sector in Leipzig. In cooperation with the regional partner of Fraunhofer Center for International Management and Knowledge Economy IMW, several disseminations and promoting events were organized. During these events, the project level tool was introduced to regional and local representatives of public authorities, business support organizations, research institutions and many SMEs. It started a discussion of benefits and the general importance of the tool for SME's plans of investing in energy efficiency measures. Technically, the tool provides companies with an opportunity to start their planning independently, simulating different financial schemes for their projects. Especially the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry stated the usefulness of the tool for local companies. Furthermore, NEU e.V. alternatively contributed to the pilot action by analysing project data which was provided by the Regional Energy Agency. With this data, the tool was able to quantify and qualify specific investments in the energy efficiency measures financed by public funding, and thus stress an important role of the financial instrument in meeting the goals of regional energy.

Fraunhofer IMW:

The last month before the end of the FIRECE project was full of events, with finalization of the last activities and organization of the successful closure of the project. A mixture of physical and online events took place in Leipzig, Germany. Within one week, along with the final Steering and Technical Committee Meeting on 15.09.2020 and the big FIRECE Final Event on 16.09.2020 concrete project results were presented. Also two other local events successfully delivered concrete project results. The Kamingsgespräch, also on 15.09.2020 but as physical event, with regional representatives from the industry, local authorities, business support organizations and other local stakeholders was a place to show some of the final project results and to discuss again, in person, the future possibilities for implementation of the project results with the local actors. Two days after that (on 17.09.2020), some of the FIRECE project results were also presented in front of local representatives of the SPARCS project - Sustainable energy Positive & zero cARbon Communities with the aim of sustainability and transfer of the knowledge and opinion among different projects.

Near the end of the project, certain priorities crystallize and on a local level it is the finalization of different project agreements and licenses. Reaching further, the generated knowledge needs to be available free of charge for everyone interested in the FIRECE project also after its end.

