Title
Technical support to clean energy transition plans and strategies in municipalities and regions
Funding Instrument
LIFE PROGRAMME
Code
LIFE-2021-CET-LOCAL
General Information

The topic aims to provide local and regional authorities with the necessary capacity to deliver sustainable plans and strategies for the energy transition. To successfully support the achievement of energy and climate targets, transition strategies and plans need to be institutionalised, cross-sectoral and tailored to the level of innovation, ambition and specific geographic context of the involved authorities.

Local and regional authorities are a decisive lever for the EU to achieve its carbon neutrality target by 2050. Policy-makers and administrations at all sub-national levels (regions, provinces, cities, towns, urban districts, rural areas, etc.) need to commit to and effectively plan the clean energy transition of their respective territory, energy systems and infrastructures at an unprecedented level of ambition and pace with a long-term time horizon.

However, local and regional authorities often lack capacities to plan such plans and strategies, in particular in smaller municipalities, rural areas and carbon-intensive regions that are lagging behind in the energy transition. For instance, small municipalities among the Covenant of Mayors signatories still highly need support to design their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs). Other cities which have already developed such a SECAP or similar plans still need to align their plans to the new targets and deliver more ambitious actions to reach carbon neutrality. Innovative policy features, such as applying carbon budgets, earmarking and tracking resources for climate actions in the municipal budgets[1], defining energy efficiency and renewable energy targets at district and community levels and social innovations based on transition management, systems thinking or reflexive monitoring, can support the upgrade of the plans.

Another challenge faced by public authorities is the holistic energy planning required to deliver the clean energy transition. A successful clean energy transition will require more sectoral integration (energy production, buildings, mobility and transport, land-use, waste, water, health, etc.) when planning the transformation of cities and regions, also with a view of a socially fair transition. The integration of both climate mitigation and adaptation remains complex for many Covenant of Mayors signatories. Integrated energy planning piloted in previous EU-funded projects (e.g. energy and mobility, energy and urban planning, etc.) proved beneficial in mutually reinforcing sectoral policies, improving the efficiency of the planning process, activating or reinforcing cooperation between different departments of public authorities.

A stronger political commitment, ownership of the plans by public authorities beyond electoral cycles and appropriate resources need also to be secured to deliver on the required reduction in energy consumption and GHG emissions. Often, the plans and strategies already adopted are not supported by robust governance structures, dedicated competences and available resources within the administrations to implement the required change. Planning processes need to be institutionalised and new participative governance schemes, involving key local stakeholders and citizens, established for the clean energy transition to be truly embedded in the territories and locally supported, also by vulnerable groups affected by the transition.

Moreover, alignment and consistency with other energy and climate frameworks are necessary, in particular with national and EU levels. Energy and climate targets and measures defined in the clean energy transition strategies and plans developed by regional and local authorities need to clearly support and front lead National Energy and Climate Plans, Recovery and Resilience Plans, EU Green Deal and its initiatives such as the Renovation Wave, the transposition of the Clean energy Package into national laws, the national Long-Term Renovation Strategies, the Horizon Europe mission on climate-neutral and smart cities, etc., in order to contribute to a coherent transition of the energy systems in the Member States.

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Objectives and expected impact

Scope:

- Actions should provide technical support to regional and local authorities and build their capacities to develop and monitor ambitious long-term clean energy transition plans/strategies for 2030 and/or 2050 in coherence with EU and national reporting frameworks, through a right mix of activities (tailored-made assistance adapted to territorial circumstances, training programmes for policy-makers/public officers, promoting replication and roll-out of planning best practices and information tools, etc.). Actions should support regional and local authorities in particular in gaining technical, legal and social skills and resources required to deliver holistic, integrated and inclusive energy planning based on stakeholders' engagement and social innovations.
- Actions should seek to institutionalise integrated energy planning in local and regional authorities and implement a cross-sectoral approach to plan the energy transition, by designing and improving planning processes which can facilitate integration of clean energy with other sectors such as mobility and transport, land-use and urban planning, services, infrastructures, etc. The aim is to professionalise and accelerate planning processes, support higher ambition levels, break silos and increase cooperation between different departments of the local (regional) authority, and maximise the impact of local and regional plans. Actions should take into account the regulatory framework conditions, the social impact of plans and investigate new participatory policy models and planning instruments to involve and engage the civil society and a wider spectrum of stakeholders. Actions should support the establishment of new forms of participative governance structures to involve multiple stakeholders and citizens in the planning and implementation of the clean energy transition.

- Specific territorial focus should be put on public authorities willing to establish innovative planning processes through local pilots and/or on geographical areas, municipalities and regions that despite their significant level of ambition are still lagging behind, affected by the transition and not yet fully engaged in it.

Link with CMA Goals

Goal I: Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems / **Priority 5:** Encourage the production, management and sharing of marine and coastal environmental knowledge for effective environmental monitoring and observation

Deadline for submission

12 January 2022

Project duration

Indicative project duration: 18 months

Financial allocation

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of up to EUR 1.75 million would allow the specific objectives to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Funding rate: 95%

Partnership

Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine

Eligible partners/key conditions

1. Admissibility conditions: described in section 5 of the call document

Proposal page limits and layout: described in Part B of the Application Form available in the Submission System

2. Eligible countries: described in section 6 of of the call document

3. Other eligibility conditions: described in section 6 of the call document

4. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion: described in section 7 of the call document

5. Evaluation and award:

- Award criteria, scoring and thresholds: described in section 9 of the call document
- Submission and evaluation processes: described section 8 of the call document and the Online Manual
- Indicative timeline for evaluation and grant agreement: described in section 4 of the call document

6. Legal and financial set-up of the grants: described in section 10 of the call document
Sector of activity
Nature and biodiversity; Environment and Climate Change; Governance
Further Info
Call document Standard application form — *call-specific application form is available in the Submission System*