



Sustainable Energy Action Planning: Learning from each other

**A report on successful peer-to-peer
working**

Experience from the Intelligent Energy Europe projects LEAP,
Conurbant, Covenant CapaCITY, CASCADE and eReNet

annexs A to E

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photographs

The photographs in this publication have been provided by the project coordinators and partners of each of the Intelligent Energy Europe projects involved



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This report has been developed from the capacity building methodologies applied through five Intelligent Energy Europe Integrated Initiatives projects and implemented between 2011 and 2014.



Embedding sustainable energy at local level by helping local authorities to plan and deliver local sustainable energy solutions.

<http://leap-eu.org/>



An inclusive peer-to-peer approach to involve EU CONURBations and wide areas in participating to the CovenANT of Mayors

<http://www.conurbant.eu/en/>



Capacity building of local governments to advance Local Climate and Energy Action – from planning to action to monitoring.

<http://www.covenant-capacity.eu/>



Investigating and analysing dryland ecosystems in southern Europe to obtain a better understanding of sudden shifts in drylands that may lead to major losses in biodiversity and concomitant ecosystem services.

<http://www.cascadecities.eu/>



Sustaining rural communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of their Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs) and capacity building of the related actors through knowledge transfer from experienced communities.

<http://erenet.epu.ntua.gr/>

annex A

LEAP – Leadership for Energy Action and Planning

The 'peer-to-peer approach' formed part of the Leadership for Energy Action and Planning (LEAP) project's institutionalisation and capacity building program. LEAP's aim was to encourage local authority energy leadership by strengthening the institutionalisation of sustainable energy policy among partner local authorities, through stakeholder engagement and inter-departmental working on sustainable energy initiatives.

Using the peer-to-peer approach, the LEAP partners worked in small groups across 'experienced' and 'learning' partnerships with the aim of developing and delivering successful Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP). By using peer-to-peer, mentoring and work-shadowing methods the partners were able to build capacity of staff at several levels of expertise enabling them to act as effective internal drivers and multipliers to develop, or renew and improve, the institutionalization of sustainable energy policy and practice among their local authority departments. In particular, the peer-to-peer working enabled both 'experienced' and 'learning' partners to devise plans for sustainable energy action, to help meet the EU 20-20-20 carbon reduction targets. The success has been evidenced by the positive support from all partners in this approach, as evidence in the mid-term review. Most notably, the involvement of high-level policy makers and experts has subsequently enabled action in energy planning and opened new funding streams.

The definition of 'experienced' and 'learning' partners caused some criticism during the project as it meant the expertise of 'learning' partners was not utilised throughout the approach. When this method is used in the future it may appear 'experienced' partners have little incentive to enable 'learning' partners in such a way. Yet all of the partners agreed this method was highly successful and that 'experienced' partners gained a vast amount of expertise from 'learning' partners.

The opportunity to forge sustainable partnerships beyond the project date could be established as part of the methodology to the approach in its future use. Although long term partnership is challenging and relies on commitment from the local authority officers and politicians, it has been proved possible by some partners in the LEAP project. Partners have created working groups and contracted commitment to each other with

the hope that this could be replicated from the start of future sustainable energy projects.

Partners highlighted the need for high-level political backing and robust funding when delivering a successful SEAP action. Unfortunately, many nations and localities are experiencing economic and political insecurity which could be a major threat for future projects if commitment to the approach diminishes as political ideology or the economic situation changes. This threat can only be dampened by ensuring mechanisms from the start of the project such as cross-party agreements and reliable and robust private financial support or EU funding.



SWOT analysis of the LEAP approach Peer-to-peer



Strengths

Overall this method was successful in achieving the aims of the LEAP project, as the review process brought practical discussions and recommendations to SEAP actions. When asked, 84% of partners said they *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that the 'Peer-to-Peer assessment' had enabled the organisation to improve its SEAP. This resulted in practical change: recommendations were taken on board and implemented in partner localities. Successfully implemented recommendations include: employing Climate Protection Managers; the comprehensive review of baseline emissions and standards; the development of funding bids; the rolling out of community awareness programmes across local authorities; the enabling of private sector funding streams, and stakeholder engagement. This method allowed a fresh perspective for partners who may have lost sight of the improvements needed due to the longevity of the SEAP process.

Assessing partner documentation was an effective way to obtain knowledge and new ideas. This approach allowed for both 'learning' and 'experienced' partners to assess projects with a similar interest to their own. Without this method, many of the 'experienced' partners would not have had an adequate review of their delivery as they did not have a 'mentor'. This also gave 'learning' partners greater powers within the partnership. Notably the 'learning' partners peer group gave recommendations to one another on a more equal expertise level of how to start the process of SEAP delivery. The documentation from their reviews can be used as an example for other local authorities wishing to start SEAP of their own.

Weaknesses

At times, some partners believed they were too removed from the peer partner localities, in distance, knowledge and ideology, to assess adequately their SEAPs. Some assessors had never visited the partner's locality and this caused some issues deciphering the written documentation and evidence needed to produce a fair assessment. Some partners found it extremely difficult to comprehend the differing national and regional planning frameworks and therefore it was challenging to compare how they could implement their SEAP actions. Vague or confusing partner documentation given to their peer assessor may have frustrated efforts for a detailed response. For the improvement of this method, additional training and/or a longer time frame would have facilitated the process of exchanging information.

Opportunities

Matching peer groups to those who already have a working knowledge of each other, or who are in close proximity, may create further opportunity for effective assessment in the future use of this method. The opportunity to use the connections and networks made through this approach for further funding and support beyond the project end date is vital for safeguarding SEAPs.

Threats

Political and economic change is a very real threat for many of the partners who were involved in the LEAP project. Change can bring about apathy to the peer-to-peer assessment particularly as this method is used in the final stages of the project. Without the backing of high-level politicians and decision makers as well as economic long term viability, SEAP implementation and the continuation of peer-to-peer assessment would be extremely challenging. In all of the assessments this was noted as a threat, and many partners identified that the opportunity to overcome this could be through increased funding and engagement with the private sector. Peer-to-peer working made a positive impact on partners by enabling them to share expertise on funding streams and engagement methods.



SWOT analysis of the LEAP approach mentoring

Strengths

The mentoring programme brought together high-level decision makers from differing local authorities so that they could build their technical and institutional capacities. This strength was so successful that **83% of partners agree, with a further 17% strongly agreeing, that the mentoring programme 'enabled senior members of staff to engage with the energy agenda'.**

One of the many strengths throughout the mentoring programme, was the ability to bring European local authorities together, forging effective working relationships. This can be seen as highly successful as **33% of partners agreed, and 67% of partners strongly agreed, that the mentoring programme had 'enabled strong ties to be developed with other local authorities'.** The bonds forged in this process are vital to create pan-European networks to increase funding potential and expertise amongst local authorities as well as the direct transferability of good practice. In order to reach the challenge of the 20-20-20 targets, local authorities need support both politically and financially as well as practical and technical advice. For the institutionalisation of energy efficient practices to take hold in local authorities, there needs to be a clear understanding of energy practices and policies throughout the organisation, as well as political commitment from the top.

The mentoring programme identified the barriers of implementing sustainable energy plans and found solutions to these challenges. This strength of systematically finding practical solutions together meant that **67% of partners agreed that the mentoring process directly 'enabled the organisations understanding of energy planning to be strengthened'.** With a strengthened understanding of energy planning through the LEAP project, **50% of partners believed it 'clarified the means to overcome barriers to delivering energy actions'.** Site visits provided in-depth and technical expertise on a wide range of energy related projects and were specifically chosen and wide ranging in nature, providing tangible, on-the-ground evidence based learning. Gaining this knowledge of the steps needed to overcome barriers to deliver successful energy actions has meant that within the project time frame, already **34% of partners believe the method has 'led to specific energy actions to be developed for the inclusion in our SEAP'.**

'Learning' partners gained unique expert knowledge, which local authorities, individual and private sector experts may have felt reluctant to share without the bonds of 'partnership' such as preparation of strategies and documentation. The capacity building of staff, new internal links and a scheme of regular meetings further fostered the institutionalisation of sustainable energy policy. This evidenced by **84% of partners who believe that the mentoring programme directly supported them to achieve 'institutionalisation of energy leadership in their organisations'.**

The continuous and flexible nature of this method was a major factor in the success of the mentoring approach as the aims could be adjusted depending on the changing situations (including political) and mentee needs.

Weaknesses

The monitoring process for this level of engagement was difficult due to the extent of communication between mentor and mentee which was frequent and ongoing rather than over one brief period

Language barriers caused difficulties in communication in some of the partnerships. It could be recommended that when this method is used in the future, recruiting a translator and formulating this cost into the initial budget for translation would keep costs down. In some cases the mentoring programme was hampered by the matching process of mentor and mentee, as it was challenging to connect differing pan-European localities with similar governing systems.

Opportunities

Both 'experienced' and 'learning' partners can use this experience to form new mentoring partnerships in future pan-European projects, or independent partnerships, leading to engagement of new localities and new funding streams. Support and advice given consistently throughout the project has meant that realistic SEAPs have been approved in the majority of the partner local authorities. Through the mentoring partnership, the partners have the opportunity to continue the good work and implement real action on the ground. Some partners successfully forged networks, including local universities, to develop local innovation and leadership.

Threats

More guidance is needed for partners who have not been involved in a mentoring program before, however through the long collaboration, all of the partners were able to utilise effectively the method effectively. The cost of travelling to meet with the partners 'mentors' or 'mentees' was highlighted as a threat for future implementation of this method and for future projects.

Without high-level political involvement and future commitment in the mentoring partnership, as a 'stamp of approval' there is a risk to stakeholder involvement and funding. Therefore, without this high-level political endorsement, the task of implementing energy planning action becomes more challenging.

Below

LEAP: Mentoring between Cornwall and Zagreb





SWOT analysis of the LEAP approach work-shadowing

Strengths

A major strength of work-shadowing was the experience of learning through interacting with initiatives first-hand. Work-shadowing enabled high-level decision makers and experts to visit innovative projects, stimulating more enthusiasm than watching a presentation as they had an contextual, in-depth understanding of the various projects. The face-to-face meetings enabled 'learning' partners to gain a higher skill set from experts so that they could implement similar projects in their localities and gave 'expert' partners an opportunity to review their current projects from an outsider's perspective. **In the mid-term review 83% of partners believed that work-shadowing had directly helped them understand the crucial steps needed to produce a SEAP as partners experienced a variety of practical and structural ways of working first hand.** Partners were able to experience a variety of projects, including ones similar to their own 'in development' projects and completely new initiatives. Partners were matched so that they could view similar projects to their own and established prior to the visit their basis of shared interest. The 'seeing and doing' method has been proved to create a sense of understanding and increased knowledge about SEAP development and implementation, as well as enthusiasm and excitement about future possibilities.

All of the LEAP partners believed they forged strong working relationships through work-shadowing placements as staff from differing localities spent many days working closely together. **A positive 84% of partners strongly believed that their knowledge regarding local energy leadership and the barriers to institutionalisation had been strengthened by the work-shadowing placements.** To effect change within local governance, many of the partners needed to immerse themselves in a different locality, so that they could compare practices and form innovative thinking. This was deemed the most successful methodology of the 'peer-to-peer' working according to the majority of partners.

Weaknesses

Some partners experiencing political and economic difficulty found it was too costly to find time for high-level decision makers to be away from the local authority for four weeks on placements. Suggestions were made that the 'experienced' partners visited the 'learning' partners once to better understand their challenges as well as allowing for 'learning' partners to share their expertise in a more balanced approach. This recommendation was taken on board. A lack of information and communication was highlighted as a weakness by partners who experienced this approach. All of the local authorities had extremely time-pressured calendars, which sometimes caused a lack of communication, including a lack of feedback after the placements.

Opportunities

'Expert' and 'learning' partners met with local business and stakeholders, learning how to engage with the private sector as well as creating funding connections for the partners in the future. This resulted in **67% of partners feeling their understanding of financial mechanisms had been strengthened through the work-shadowing placement.**

Some 'learning' partners brought a wide range of stakeholders including experts, private sector representatives and energy political bodies to the placements. This meant the policies and practices learnt on the placement were taken back to the 'learning' partners locality from different perspectives thereby increasing the opportunity of wider integration throughout energy practices, which is key to achieving institutionalisation of sustainable energy. This demonstrates the effective use of stakeholder involvement and could be replicated by other partners in the future of this method by implementing a mechanism that ensures sustainable working relationships between stakeholders beyond the project end.

Threats

For the placement approach to be feasible it needs political will and economic support, as it does take up the time of high-level decision makers. If there is leadership change, placements may be curtailed.

annex B

Conurbant

In general, local authority international cooperation and peer-to-peer is not a new issue and has been established before. Simply put, it creates an opportunity to share practical experience and knowledge between employees as well as politicians from different local authorities.

However, it is important to clarify a set of questions at the beginning. Why do we need peer-to-peer? What can it really offer? Why should we learn from one another and what can we actually learn? All of these questions were tackled through the lens of sustainable energy planning and implementation of energy efficiency, renewable energy and other measures.

The main objective of the Conurbant project was to bring together medium and large cities from eight European countries as well as smaller towns in their urban area to address sustainable energy planning, institutionalisation and implementation via capacity building by using peer-to-peer support and training between less and more experienced local authorities.

There is no doubt that many small towns in the European Union have difficulties with energy management and planning. One reason for this is a lack of skills and resources. Medium-sized and large cities have a greater responsibility linked to a higher rate of human activity and more complicated issues of sustainable land use, planning and mobility.

As well as the introduction of the peer-to-peer approach between medium-sized and large EU cities and the involvement of their smaller, surrounding conurbation towns, the Conurbant project had two further important objectives:

- To develop, implement and monitor SEAPs in all involved local authorities. During the project, 52 SEAPs were developed and approved by local councils;
- To guarantee institutionalisation of sustainable energy policies and to ensure coherent implementation and political continuity of SEAPs during and after the project.

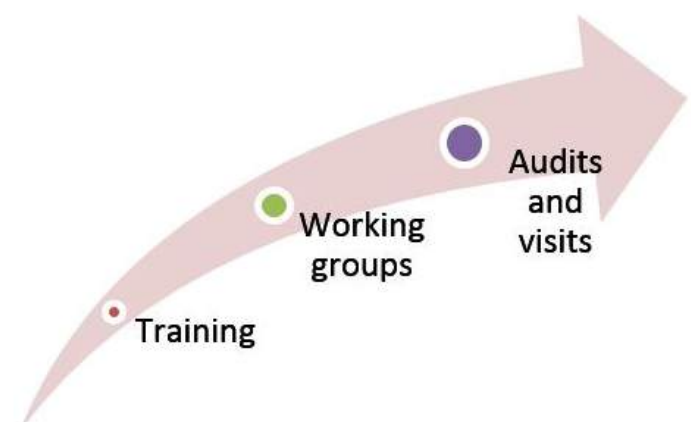
Conurbant used the peer approach between pairs of cities – guided by a tutoring/ mentoring city – as a different way of operating the training/learning process

within the boundaries of the Covenant of Mayors Initiative.

Peer activities were conducted throughout various project activities and involved various actors in each phase. The three main activities are shown in the graph.

The peer-to-peer approach aimed to increase the awareness and capacity building of less experienced peer cities and their conurbations. This was done through both an indirect and a direct approach:

- The indirect approach was managed through audit schemes;
- The direct approach was used with cities during peer visits, and with conurbation cities/villages in specific sessions of peer visits.





SWOT analysis of the Conurbant approach Peer-to-peer

Strengths

Peer-to-peer proved to be a crucial driver for the development and implementation of SEAPs within the framework of Conurbant. This approach was particularly important due to the fact that many inexperienced or small local authorities were involved.

Twinning activities have many advantages. Conurbant identified the following three main strengths of the applied peer-to-peer methodology:

- By working and acting together you can commit and set new goals. This is particularly important at the national level;
- Some knowledge and some issues are regionally specific, but most of the local authorities face the same issues and problems. Peer audits and visits can give inspiration and new ideas for solutions;
- All parties gain from showing and discussing various good and bad examples in the local authorities.

There are many large, medium and small investments made in various innovative, sustainable and even simple projects from which local authorities can learn, and can then replicate, avoid or adapt for their own needs.

Working across different departments and disciplines works well. Technical experts complement the tutoring local authorities with specific technical knowledge, and tutoring cities can contribute by giving advice on how to convince politicians. Political support throughout the action was noted as one of the main driving forces to ensure commitment.

The peer-to-peer methodology also brought together local authorities at the local level. There are still some barriers, but the Conurbant project proved that there are many opportunities for cooperation between conurbations, e.g. common projects, shared experts etc.

Weaknesses

The peer-to-peer approach in Conurbant was weakened by the fact that it was very multifaceted:

- city to city;
- conurbation to conurbation;
- tutoring to tutored.

Such a complex approach alongside a complex subject can generate confusion. Clear objectives and guidelines should therefore be set out as early as possible. There were various other weaknesses such as:

- when officers or politicians in the local authority change the process, peer-to-peer is not effective;
- it requires willingness and motivation;
- it is time consuming;
- building institutionalization, BEIs and SEAPs is very complex: all these steps must be implemented throughout the process, which increases the risk.

Opportunities

Peer-to-peer could be used directly with all the conurbation cities and not only indirectly via the large central partner city.

There is plenty of room for improvement of skills, internationalisation and institutionalisation.

Threats

Often small local authorities have little involvement in the process, which is more suitable for officers and politicians from large cities. This can create an even greater separation between large cities which have money and skills, and smaller ones.

There are several other threats such as:

- the goals must be very clear to all partners from the outset;
- the lack of time;
- is the need for motivated and expert tutors;
- tutors must also be skilled facilitators.

annex C

CASCADE

CASCADE was a networking and peer-to-peer learning project on local energy leadership. It supported cities in delivering the European Union 2020 targets for climate and energy policies.

Led by EUROCITIES, the network of major European cities, CASCADE aimed to improve the implementation of sustainable energy policies in large and medium European cities.

The project focused on three main areas:

- Energy efficiency in buildings and districts;
- Renewable energy sources and energy distribution;
- Energy in urban transport.

The CASCADE consortium comprised EUROCITIES, Wuppertal Institute, Koucky & Partners AB and 19 European cities: Amaroussion, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Burgas, Edinburgh, Eindhoven, Gateshead, Genoa, Gijon, Malmo, Mannheim, Milan, Nantes, Stockholm, Sunderland, Tampere, Terrassa, Venice and Warsaw.

CASCADE inspired improvements in the implementation of sustainable energy policies through three 'cascading' levels of high quality networking and peer-to-peer learning activities:

Level 1: in depth peer- review visits among partner cities.

City experts and decision makers, as well as local stakeholders were involved in six intensive peer review visits in Amsterdam, Birmingham, Genoa, Nantes, Sunderland and Tampere. During these visits, the visitors assessed specific energy projects currently being implemented and provided the hosts with recommendations on possible areas of improvement.

Level 2: mentoring, work-shadowing and study visits.

Using the experience from the peer review visits, CASCADE organised 22 transnational networking activities. Three different peer-to-peer learning methods were tested: mentoring, work-shadowing and study visits.

20 additional cities, mainly from Central and Eastern European countries were financially supported to participate in the activities: Bacau, Belfast, Bilbao, Brighton & Hove, Bratislava, Budapest, Bydgoszcz,

Gdynia, Hamburg, Iasi, London Borough of Haringey, Skopje, Sliven, Rzeszów, Tallinn, Tartu, Timisoara, Tirana, Vilnius and Yerevan.

These activities were an opportunity for cities to share experiences and solutions regarding the implementation of local energy policies

Level 3: regional and national networking. CASCADE cities demonstrated their leadership in energy practice through 'peer advice' to 38 neighbouring cities and 11 national technical seminars.

CASCADE managed to strengthen the cooperation between European cities and move forward local energy policies.

Thanks to CASCADE:

- 76 cities from 19 European countries started working together towards the Europe 2020 targets.
- More than 300 city experts, decision makers and local stakeholders involved in implementation of energy and climate policies were brought together.
- 77 European cities improved their energy strategies and projects. For example, a peer review visit helped Tampere set more ambitious energy and climate mitigation targets (GHGs-40% by 2025 vs. -20% by 2020), while a study visit led to improvements in the way Mannheim communicates its energy efficient services to citizens.

The **three key success factors** of the CASCADE peer-to-peer learning and networking methodology were:

- Enrolling in the learning process all categories of actors involved in the development and implementation of energy policies: city experts, decision makers and local stakeholders.
- Making the learning experience beneficial for everyone involved. The peer-to-peer learning visits were interactive, allowing both the hosts and visitors to share their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others.
- Allowing opportunities for participants to network, to get familiar with each other's work and in general to get to know each other better and build good and long-lasting personal relationships.



SWOT analysis of the CASCADE approach Peer-to-peer

Strengths

In the CASCADE peer review approach, the climate and energy policies of the host city are evaluated against all the key factors crucial to the successful implementation of an energy policy. This allows for a holistic and thorough evaluation of the host city's work that helps identify potential gaps and points of improvement.

The peer reviewers, as external observers, make an unbiased and objective evaluation of the host city policy, moving beyond a business as usual approach. This helps the host city to gain fresh insights into its work and to think outside the box.

All actors involved in the development and implementation of climate and energy policies (decision makers, city experts and local stakeholders) are enrolled in the CASCADE peer reviews. This allows the evaluation of local policies from different perspectives and helps with building consensus and moving forward in implementing the suggested improvements and changes.

The CASCADE peer review teams bring together 'peers' from cities across Europe and mix advanced and less advanced cities. The diversity brings greater creativity within the team helping to get the host city's work evaluated from various viewpoints, while the mix of experience strengthens the city-to-city learning character of the process.

The exchange seminar at the end of the CASCADE peer review visits helps with the sharing of experience and knowledge between the participants and makes the visit beneficial for the peer reviewers as well.

Threats

The CASCADE peer review is a complex procedure requiring the coordination of more than 30 people from more than five cities. Lack of good coordination can hinder its successful implementation.

Strong political support is necessary to move forward with the improvements suggested by the reviewers. Changes in politicians, or in political priorities, could hinder the implementation of the suggested improvements.

Similarly, changes in personnel and the departure from the organisation of the main people involved in the peer review can hinder the implementation of peers' recommendations. The hosts should therefore share the outcomes of the peer review with their colleagues and start drafting an action plan soon after the visit.

The suggested improvements might not be feasible due to financial, legislative, institutional or other restrictions.

Weaknesses

The CASCADE peer review is a rigorous and very time-consuming process. It requires months of preparation prior to the visit both from the hosts and the reviewers.

The ability of reviewers to conduct good interviews and gather useful information is crucial for a successful CASCADE peer review. Therefore, previous peer review experience and/or training are necessary to ensure that the peers have the necessary skills.

The reviewers come up with solutions and recommendations based on their city's experience and practices. The peer review did not give reviewers and hosts enough time to discuss and explore the transferability and adaptability of the suggested solutions to the host city's local context.

The peer review did not foresee any follow-up activity, it is up to the host city to keep the reviewers updated about the results and improvements from the review.

Opportunities

Self-assessment allows the hosts to take a critical and fresh look at their current practices and evaluate the effectiveness of their policies. This might help them to understand their weaknesses and make corrections and improvements.

The recommendations of peer-reviewers can help the city significantly improve and accelerate its reviewed policies and projects and meet its Covenant of Mayors' commitments sooner.

Hosts and peer-reviewers work closely together for three days. This helps build good personal relationships and to continue collaboration after the end of the visit.

By reviewing the work of the host city, the reviewers gain a deep understanding of the main drivers, challenges and solutions of its energy policy, which can help them to further improve their own work back home.

SWOT analysis of the CASCADE approach mentoring

Strengths

Compared with the CASCADE peer-review method, the CASCADE mentoring method is less rigorous and less time consuming.

The CASCADE mentoring method helps cities to find solutions to specific aspects of energy projects or policies where they are weak and need support.

Together, the mentors and the mentee build an understanding of the issues, situations and challenges faced by the host city and then explore new ideas, options and solutions. This interactive process helps shape practical and easily applicable solutions.

The main outcome of the CASCADE mentoring visits are action plans, clearly defining the next steps the host city needs to take. This enables the hosts to take action soon after the visit.

Although a mentoring relationship is usually focused on the mentors assisting the mentee, there are many benefits for the mentors including developing their own skills, reflecting on issues raised, gathering new ideas and addressing their own thinking and organisational methods in order to make improvements in their own work. Furthermore, the mentors can directly benefit from the expertise of the other mentors during their interactions.

Opportunities

The mentoring involves less than 10 people from two to four cities working closely together for few months. This can help build personal relationships and become the start of a long and fruitful collaboration.

The action plan clearly defines the next step a city should take to improve its policies or projects. This allows short term wins and improvements, which can accelerate the implementation of the reviewed projects/policies.

The mentoring helps the host city to find solutions and overcome existing problems and barriers. Thus, it can improve the implementation of the projects or policies under review and help the city meet its energy and climate targets sooner.

Weaknesses

Although the CASCADE mentoring method foresees the provision of information to the mentors prior to the visit, this is not done in such a structured and thorough way as in the CASCADE peer review.

The CASCADE mentors and mentee use the [CASCADE Benchmark](#) to build a better understanding of the local situation and conditions, and to identify weaknesses and gaps. However, a structured and well-defined process by which to evaluate the project under review is lacking.

The CASCADE mentoring method does not foresee any follow-up activity or any procedure for monitoring the implementation of the produced action plan. It's up to the hosts to keep the mentors informed. Therefore, it is important that the host city stays in contact with the mentors and, if possible, organises follow-up visits.

Threats

The mentor's role is to stimulate and challenge the mentee's to explore new ideas and solutions. In other words, their role is to guide them and not to give them ready-to-use answers. In case the mentors are not experienced, or have not received any mentoring training before the visit, they might have difficulty playing their role successfully.

The CASCADE mentoring method assumes that the host city has already evaluated its projects and policies and has correctly identified the main gaps and weaknesses, for which it is now asking for support. However, since a structured appraisal procedure is missing, there is the risk that the host city has not identified the main weaknesses of its projects and policies and the mentoring is focusing on less crucial aspects.

In order that a mentoring visit is successful, the mentors should get sufficient information about the host city and the project under review prior to the visit. If the mentors do not get sufficient information on time, it will be challenging to help the mentee identify effective solutions.

Where no decision makers are involved in the mentoring visit, the hosts may not have the necessary political support to implement the produced action plans. Thus, the engagement of politicians in the mentoring process is crucial.

As with the other two methods, changes in personnel and the departure from the organisation of the main people involved in the mentoring can hinder the implementation of the action plan. Thus the hosts should share the outcomes of the mentoring with their colleagues and start implementing the action plan soon after the visit.



SWOT analysis of the CASCADE approach work-shadowing

Strengths

The CASCADE work-shadowing methodology is particularly effective where new tasks, methods, responsibilities or roles have been introduced within a city's administration. It can be implemented not only between technical experts, but also between politicians who want to exchange views on policies and ways of working with other cities.

During a work-shadowing visit, the visitors have the chance to take a close look at the day-to-day work of their counterparts in another city. They closely follow the hosts for one to three days and take part in meetings and site visits. This helps them develop a deeper understanding of the working methods applied in the host city.

Work-shadowing can be beneficial for the hosts as well. The hosts have the opportunity to reflect on their own job, while describing their role to the visitors. Moreover, the visitors can come up with useful recommendations for improvements.

Work-shadowing is the peer learning method in which the two parties spend the most time with one another and therefore can more easily build good and long-lasting personal relationships.

Weaknesses

To have a clear insight into the professional roles and working methods of the host city, it is often necessary to speak their national language. In contrast with the other peer learning methods, language can pose a barrier to joining hosts in day-to-day business meetings, attending local committees discussions and interacting with other city experts and decision makers.

In the case of work-shadowing visits involving politicians, the visit might be shorter than three days due to busy schedules. However, a shorter visit does not always allow for efficient exchange and acquisition of a deep understanding of the methods and strategies used by the hosts.

Threats

The personal chemistry plays a great role in work-shadowing. In a case where the two work-shadowing partners have difficulty collaborating the visit won't have the expected results.

A further threat could be that the local context and the administration structure of the two cities are so different that the working methods applied in the host city cannot be transferred or adapted to the visiting city.

Since only a small number of people are involved in work-shadowing (usually two people, one from each city), if one leaves his or her work place the link between the two cities will be lost. Thus the participants should try to extend the cooperation between their cities and involve more people.

Opportunities

A good personal relationship between the two work-shadowing partners can be the start of a close collaboration between their cities and can lead to new visits and exchanges.

The work-shadowing visit could help both the hosts and visitors to improve their working methods. This can accelerate the implementation of their energy policies and help them meet their city's energy targets sooner.

Observing a person with similar responsibilities in another more experienced city can help an expert adapt to a new professional role (e.g. SEAP coordinator, head of the city's energy officer) more quickly and effectively.

annex D

Covenant CapaCITY

Covenant capaCITY – **Capacity building of local governments to advance Local Climate and Energy Action – from planning to action to monitoring** is a three-year project, co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme. It started in June 2011 and ran until May 2014.

Covenant capaCITY takes up the urgent challenge to develop more sustainable energy communities (SEC) across Europe. This is done by offering a comprehensive European capacity building programme empowering local governments (LGs) with appropriate knowledge and support in all phases of their Sustainable Energy Action Planning.

It does this via three main activities:

- 1. An easy learning programme** offered to local governments (local leaders and local authority staff)
- 2. A 'train-the-trainer' programme** to extend the support offered, inviting participation of representatives from local government associations and networks, and energy agencies working with local authorities
- 3. Support of selected cities and towns in 15 countries** – step-by-step rolling-out of their Local Climate and Energy Actions.

A major goal, while assisting Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) development in Europe, is to ensure that qualified and committed experts from different professional backgrounds have the opportunity to come together, to share their experiences, and to build capacity in others, motivate their peers and integrate their area of expertise.

Covenant capaCITY moves beyond the usual ad hoc, single workshop concept and offers a comprehensive, well-structured European LG capacity building programme. This includes a combination of information and interactive training elements (e-learning, games, video and text case studies, expert interviews, workshops, webinars and video conferencing), using the direct exchange of knowledge and experience. Face-to-face training, city peer guidance, and expert guidance are core elements in actively assisting LGs to gain confidence, setting more ambitious goals and actions, and finally engaging in the Covenant of Mayors.

As part of its capacity building programme, Covenant capaCITY has developed a **free online Training Platform** for local political representatives and local authority staff, designed and developed by their peers. The platform

provides local governments with short and easy-to-understand training modules focusing on eight key issues relevant to local energy action planning. Developed by experts in the fields of energy, local government, and adult education, the platform is now available in 12 country specific versions ([Bulgaria](#), [Croatia](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Greece](#), [Italy](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#), [Slovenia](#), [Sweden](#) and [United Kingdom](#)), as well as a general [European version](#).

It is aimed at local authorities and local governments planning a second generation Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP), as well as those cities and towns just starting to explore local climate and sustainable energy actions.

The modules offer guidance, ideas, tips and tools on how to deal with stakeholders, structures, and processes. By completing the training programme, local leaders and local authority staff will gain the knowledge necessary to develop and improve a SEAP.

The experts that support the development of the training programme (both online and face-to-face), belong to the **Covenant capaCITY trainers' network** and continue supporting peers and Local Authorities across Europe.

Room for improvement

The online training approach proved to be quite challenging as many local authorities across Europe did not seem to have either adequate access to online tools (i.e. due to internal restrictions) or enough familiarity with online communication tools such as webinar tools preferring face-to-face training and meetings. It is crucial to continue promoting the use of online low-cost and low-carbon communication solutions such as cost-effective and environmentally friendly webinars.





SWOT analysis of the Covenant capaCITY approach Peer-to-peer

Strengths

The profound interest in learning from one another and benefiting from different experiences, have been crucial factors for the successful outcomes of the Covenant capaCITY project.

The peer-to-peer approach within the partnership has helped to strengthen links between communities, and has also offered an excellent opportunity for in-depth learning to extract lessons from established integrated processes. This has also helped to strengthen the role of local and provincial governments as political and administrative bodies, guiding their communities in the sustainable energy transition period. It has also supported the strengthening of the collaboration between energy agencies and associations of local authorities with the communities they support at country level.

These processes of constructive interactive learning between start-up and frontrunner communities has helped the project to overcome non-technological barriers and create an environment of visible, tangible results for local and regional actors. The peer-to-peer approach has a positive impact on stimulating awareness-raising thanks to the particular interest demonstrated by the Local authorities in learning from other advanced communities.

The Covenant capaCITY experience demonstrates that an open and cooperative environment is the best route for effective and high quality climate and energy action planning. The peer-to-peer approach is the fast, cheap and smart solution to boosting a sustainable energy transition and fostering local action.

The results of such peer exchanges within the partnership and with external experts has provided, additionally, a **comprehensive and consistent online training programme**, targeting both start-up and advanced local authorities, as well as experts interested in sharing their knowledge on sustainable energy action planning, and on learning more about how to manage training and increase their soft-skills.

Weaknesses

While online training programmes have significant strengths and offer unprecedented accessibility to quality education, there are weaknesses inherent in the use of this medium, for example, where an audience is unable to access adequately the online learning environment. Lack of access (e.g. low speed internet connection), whether for economic or logistical reasons, can limit the possibility of using this media. Furthermore, a minimum level of computer knowledge is necessary in order to take advantage of such tools.

User friendly and reliable technology is critical to a successful online programme. However, even the most sophisticated technology is not 100% reliable. When everything is running smoothly, technology is intended to be low profile and is used as a tool in the learning process.

Opportunities

Online-learning can be a highly effective alternative medium of education for busy professionals who have only limited time, and for this reason need to be able to continue their training at their own rate. It is an appropriate learning environment for self-motivated and independent learners, and it gives the opportunity to review and restart the learning programme from where they left off, at their convenience, and it allows for flexible schedules.

Online training can be revised and adjusted according to needs as well as changes in policies and technology, and it can easily reflect language and country related specifics.

Threats

Successful face-to-face instruction does not always translate into successful online instruction. The success of the online programme can be compromised by lack of clarity, and the lack of physical presence can be a limitation for online delivery. Management of the feedback given through an online training approach can be especially difficult. The management of feedback needs to be automated, in order to avoid it being too time and cost-intensive. It is important to anticipate and consider opportunities for establishing a feedback loop. In the case of Covenant capaCITY trainers who can see the results of the exercises and the progress made by learners in their countries, but can only contact the learners through ad hoc social media pages, or through including relevant topics in the programmes of future training sessions, which can limit the potential for interaction, as it assumes the users are also experienced and able to interact via social media.

SWOT analysis of the Covenant capaCITY train the trainer approach



Strengths

The programme gives trainers:

- Practical, relevant – and free– training on topical issues.
- Valuable, first-hand experience in understanding the challenges, (often complex) approaches and range of solutions that can be explored by local authorities when dealing with their Sustainable Energy Action Plans.
- The opportunity to join a growing trainer network that helps to build urgently needed capacity among local governments in Europe.
- The opportunity to gain personal training skills, including soft skills and an improved understanding of group dynamics, etc. This includes a unique opportunity to improve communication and moderation skills.
- Support from a group of experts in various disciplines in the project lifetime.
- Stimulation to replicate good practice among members.

Local government associations can act as a hub on this topic – linking members to experts, while building new expertise.

Energy agencies can improve knowledge of local energy and climate action plans, and issues relevant to local authority processes and approaches.

The online training library gives access to useful materials both related to the topics relevant to Sustainable Energy Action Planning (from procurement to water, from waste to mobility), but also to material useful for improving moderation and soft skills.

Weaknesses

Financial constraints reduced the possibility for trainers to travel and attend training sessions and capacity building events organised within the project. When travel support was provided, trainers joined the events (i.e. the study tours) and greatly benefited from them.

The training material specifically related to soft skills was only available in English.

Opportunities

The train-the-trainer programme provides the opportunity to improve the ability to communicate key messages and moderate or train other stakeholders, for example in the preparation and sharing of meetings and workshops. It covered:

- Presentation skills
- Communication skills (including marketing, media and reporting)
- Moderation skills (including interview techniques)
- E-training
- Body language - Understanding non-verbal communication

The **Trainer Virtual Library, available online**, is structured with an introduction section (which the user signs up to), the trainer guide plus some other basic information. In addition, there is a section on soft skills and trainer guidance which can be used with the thematic modules (presentations, ideas for workshops, how to formulate key questions, which questions are likely to be asked and answers that can be provided, etc..).

Through the online Training Platform trainers can not only access selected resources to support both their knowledge on the topic and their soft-skills development, but they can also view the profile, and review the exercises by learning users, and can use the results to inform and better shape future training, on a country basis.

Threats

The main threats are from external influences such as changes in political and environmental priorities and associated funding. Making significant savings in energy use and carbon emissions will inevitably require resources to be made available in terms of staff time, political support as well as funding for capital projects.

A lack of central and local political will to tackle some of the difficult issues and a tendency to focus on easier and higher profile projects may limit the allocation of resources.

Although unlikely, a perceived change in the reliability of climate change data could turn public opinion against devoting resources to tackling what may be seen as a non-existent problem.

annex E

eReNet



eReNet - Rural Web Energy Learning Network for Action

eReNet – Rural Web Energy Learning Network for Action - was set up to foster rural learning communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of SEAPs; capacity building of the related actors through knowledge transfer from experienced communities, and the identification of bankable projects mature enough to be included under national or European Union (EU) structural funds.

To assist in this process, eReNet developed web tools for the SEAP elaboration, including learning tools, to contribute to the efficiency of local authority resources for the development of tailor-made SEAPs and their monitoring. The eReNet customized approach for SEAP development in rural communities was also used for the learning communities' SEAPs, approved by JRC in 2013.

eReNet involves the triangular interaction of academia, regional energy agencies and local authorities. An experienced local authority from Germany and six rural communities from old and new EU member states, namely Greece, Austria, Portugal, Bulgaria and Croatia, participated in the consortium. These partners also facilitated the capacity building of the nearby communities through knowledge transfer.

Approach for SEAP Elaboration and Implementation in Rural Communities

The approach of elaborating a SEAP and implementing it is a very challenging process, especially for rural local authorities that usually lack the technical capacity and the resources, compared to larger local authorities. A number of suggestions and lessons learnt deriving from the eReNet experience towards the capacity building of rural communities' employees and the elaboration of the SEAP are provided below.

- For the capacity building of the local authority personnel to be engaged in the SEAP elaboration process, participation in respective training workshops and seminars is considered necessary to achieve real know-how transfer from the experts in the field.
- During the training, open time for discussions is vital for the trainees to comprehend the workshop's outputs. Panel discussions among experts on specific issues contributed to the identification of problems and exchange of experiences.
- Significant parameters for the elaboration of successful training are the balanced inclusion of

theory, best practice examples and field visits to successful RES/RUE projects.

- Rural communities are advised to address separately the agriculture sector (including forestry and fishery), since they may contribute over 20% of the total energy consumption at the local authority level. This means that the overall energy savings potential in the specific sector can largely contribute to the satisfaction of the set targets by the local authorities.
- Early engagement of the local stakeholders in the SEAP development is considered crucial for the plan to be embraced by the public and for its overall success. Key steps in the engagement procedure are the distribution of customized questionnaires to acquire feedback from the stakeholders; the distribution of official support letters by the local administration, and the realization of Public Consultation Meetings for the SEAPs' discussion and approval. The usually smaller size of rural local authorities allows for this more personalised approach, i.e. by bringing , the process closer to the citizens. Utilization of the local media (newspapers, blogs, radio) can also further boost this effort.
- Setting real achievable targets for the SEAP instead of unrealistic goals is the key for the SEAP's success. This does not mean that a more ambitious vision for the local authority should not be pursued at the long term planning stage, even towards 100% independence from fossil fuels, as long as it is based on solid, thoroughly studied actions, with a carefully planned time schedule.
- The utilization of web tools for SEAP development and monitoring can make the crucial difference for the interested stakeholders who are not 'experts' in the field, thereby saving resources and time.

eReNet Web Tools

eReNet web tools provide an efficient, user-friendly medium to address stakeholders who are not 'experts' in the field (<http://eReNet-tools.epu.ntua.gr/>). The web tools are free for use for all registered users and simplify the SEAP development and monitoring procedure. They are available in six languages - English, Greek, German, Portuguese, Croatian and Bulgarian – including an instruction manual on use.

As concerns the training platform, the incorporation of Tutorial, Best Practices, Wiki and Forum has given all interested stakeholders the opportunity to remain aware of a variety of issues related to CoM and SEAPs. 62 local authorities are developing their SEAPs using the eReNet Web Tools and another 58 have been trained in their use.



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Sustainable Energy Action Planning: Learning from each other

A Report on Successful Peer-to-Peer working

Experience from the Intelligent Energy Europe projects LEAP, Conurbant, Covenant CapaCITY, CASCADE and eReNet

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