

The German Government has been supporting the EU approximation process of South-East European countries in the energy sector through the GIZ Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe - Energy Efficiency since 2008. The ORF-EE has actively been contributing to sector reforms in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. Croatia acts as a model country within ORF-EE, considering that it has undergone extensive sector reforms as part of its EU integration process.

The ORF-EE promotes cooperation among stakeholders with the capacity to drive the process of reform in the energy and climate sector in South-East Europe. Its efforts are directed at building partners' capacities and providing a regional platform for exchange of experiences and best practices through regional networks. It provides support to energy and climate relevant political and civil society actors through regional SEE partner networks in implementing required EU regulations and sector reforms, and helps spur development of the region. It empowers partners to address sector relevant issues and find mutual solutions. In doing so they directly contribute towards a more effective implementation of necessary measures in their respective countries.

ORF-EE provided support to SEE partner countries is in line with the EU Energy Strategy 2030, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the countries' responsibilities as signatories of the Paris Agreement.

Over the past ten years the ORF-EE has successfully implemented a great number of projects in the SEE region. Among others, it helped establish the Network of Energy-Efficient Capital Cities in SEE. It also supported partner cities from the region in joining the European Covenant of Mayors initiative, helping them establish energy management structures and develop Sustainable Energy Action Plans.

In collaboration with the Network of Schools of Political Studies in SEE and through the Public Dialogue Initiative on Sustainable Use of Energy in SEE, the ORF-EE helped strengthen the political will for reform processes in the energy sector of partner countries. As a result, public hearings of parliamentary committees, responsible for energy efficiency, were held for the first time in these countries.

The Fund also supported the development of National Energy Efficiency Action Plans and their implementation monitoring process. These are mandatory across the EU. Monitoring was further strengthened by a specifically developed monitoring system and a complementary software program - the Monitoring and Verification Platform, which is used for calculating energy savings and CO₂ reductions. The system was developed as part of an earlier phase of the ORF-EE and was transferred to SEE partner countries for use.

Furthermore, the ORF-EE implemented (under EU's Horizon 2020 Program) the

multEE project that supported the improvement of the consistency and quality of energy efficiency planning and implementation in several SEE and EU countries, by introducing innovative monitoring and verification schemes. This was done through enhancement of the MVP online based system, adjusting it to fit the specific needs of different countries. The multEE project was implemented by ORF-EE in collaboration with a consortium of ten specialist partners from EU and non-EU countries.

Another component of the Fund focused on provision of support to municipal associations of partner countries in strengthening their capacities to adequately represent the interests of their clients - the municipalities and therefore the interests of the citizens. This component was co-financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Government of Switzerland. It was implemented jointly by ORF-EE and GIZ ORF- Modernization of Municipal Services.

In collaboration with the Energy Community Secretariat and the Višegrad Fund, the ORF-EE is co-funding and co-organizing the EnC Summer School since 2016. Although only a few years in the making, the program has already become one of the most sought after summer school programs in the SEE region, and to an extent, even Europe as such.

Another success story the ORF-EE has been involved in for many years, is the Regional Summer School on Sustainable Development and Low Emission Planning, which has been organized in 2017 for the thirteenth year in a row in Fojnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is implemented by the Regional Education and Information Centre in cooperation with the ORF-EE, and the GIZ projects Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Promotion of Energy Efficiency in BiH. This summer school concept has successfully served as a basis for another regional summer school, organized in Kosovo for several years now.

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