Report on implementation of eea and integration with SECAPs in pilot municipalities

Deliverable D6.1 of the EXCITE project (final version)

Responsible partner: AERE

Final Version, November 2023

WWW.EXCITE-PROJECT.EU WWW.EUROPEAN-ENERGY-AWARD.ORG

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Contents

Abbreviations

AEA – Austrian Energy Agency
AERE – Alternatives pour l'Energie, les énergies Renouvelables et l'Environnement
AG – Assessment Guidance
BEI – Baseline Emission Inventory
BRANDES - Brandes Energie AG
CoM – Covenant of Mayors
EE – Energy efficiency
eea – European Energy Award
EECU – Association "Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine"
EMT - Energy Management Tool
EnEffect – Center for Energy Efficiency
HFHM – Habitat for Humanity Macedonia
IOeea – International Office eea
KPI - Key Performance Indicators
KSSENA – Institute Energy Agency of Savinjska, Saleska and Carinthia
MEI – Monitoring Emission Inventory
RoGBC – Romanian Green Building Council
RES - Renewable energy sources
SECAP – Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan
SIR – Salzburg Institute for Spatial Planning and Housing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The H2020 project, EXCITE, applies well-established energy management schemes in Central and Eastern European municipalities, enabling them to become trusted partners for investors, engaging and stimulating local communities for climate action and gaining Europe-wide public recognition for their efforts. To achieve this overarching goal, EXCITE will focus on delivering higher quality and consistency of energy efficiency and CO2 reduction measures through the implementation of enhanced energy management systems in countries in Central and Eastern Europe. By using the methodology of the European Energy Award (eea), it will facilitate political recognition and joint application of a common monitoring and verification scheme in a coherent process ensuring strict coordination of different administrative levels. To achieve the maximum effect of the implementation of the activities of the project, it is planned that they will be divided into two main phases for the implementation of eea - at the national level and subsequently at the local level. This makes it possible to adapt the tools and methodology in detail and to be as close as possible to the local specifics, so that they are most useful to the local authorities.

In the local implementation phase, the eea methodology was implemented in new countries: Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia under strict planning and application of quality assurance mechanisms wile the main instruments developed in in the initial stage of the EXCITE project, such as the national catalogue and the national assessment guidance, was tested in the pilot municipalities, listed on the table below. This on-the-ground testing not only serve the purposes of the pilot municipalities, but also helps the regional/national partners to gain insight how the eea processes and instruments must be adapted to the national context and conditions. Also, first potential municipalities undergone a pilot audit during this phase. The report highlights the key steps and challenges encountered during the implementation process.

The municipalities that used the eea tools to initiate or to complete an initial energy review (in the context of the EXCITE project) are presented in the table below:

Table 1

N°	Municipality	Country
1	Sofia	Bulgaria
2	Gabrovo	Bulgaria
3	Dobrich	Bulgaria
4	Karposh	North Macedonia
5	Kochani	North Macedonia
6	Kichevo	North Macedonia
7	Delchevo	North Macedonia
8	Velenje	Slovenia
9	Celje	Slovenia

10	Slovenj Gradec	Slovenia
11	Zalau	Romania
12	Alba Iulia	Romania
13	Sievierodonetsk (*on hold due to the situation in Ukraine*)	Ukraine
14	Novovolynsk	Ukraine
15	Chortkiv	Ukraine
16	Myrhorod	Ukraine
17	Trostyanets	Ukraine

The municipalities that tested the eea tools to do eea audits (in the context of the EXCITE project) are as follows:

Table 2

No	Municipality	Country
1	Sofia	Bulgaria
2	Gabrovo	Bulgaria
3	Dobrich	Bulgaria
4	Karposh	North Macedonia
5	Kochani	North Macedonia
6	Velenje	Slovenia
7	Celje	Slovenia
8	Slovenj Gradec	Slovenia

The following partners worked for the eea implementation in the pilot municipalities:

Alternatives pour l'Energie, les énergies Renouvelables et l'Environnement (AERE), as coordinator and to support for implementation of eea in the pilot municipalities – initial energy review and audits;

- the Institute Energy Agency of Savinjska, Saleska and Carinthia (KSSENA)
- Habitat for Humanity Macedonia (HFHM) in North Macedonia
- EnEffect – Center for Energy Efficiency in Bulgaria

Salzburg Institute for Spatial Planning and Housing to support for implementation of the eea in the pilot municipalities – initial energy review and audits

- the Center for Energy Efficiency EnEffect (EnEffect) in Bulgaria

Brandes Energie AG (BRANDES), to insurance quality and coherence with the eea procedures and approve the national tools (eea national Catalogue and eea national Assessment Guidance)

- the Romanian Green Building Council (RoGBC)
- the Association "Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine" (EECU) to bring their expertise.

Efforts have been undertaken to provide support to the local partners of the new European Energy Award (eea) countries based on their specific requests and while considering their existing organizations. These activities included :

- Holding regular meetings to plan and facilitate workshops for the EEA initial energy review with the chosen pilot municipalities.
- Selecting and providing training for the national auditors.
- Conducting audits for the pilot municipalities that have completed the initial energy review.
- Establishing the national Certification Commission Body (the Label Commission).
- Working on improved versions of the Assessment Guidance, incorporating insights from testing the tools during the eea initial energy review.
- Gaining approval for the eea national tools through collaboration with the eea international office.
- Consulting participating municipalities on the improvement of their energy efficiency action plans and implementation of eea results in the new generation SECAPs.

WORK CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

The specific objective concerning the eea pilot implementation within the project was to initiate a pilot phase across three municipalities in each pilot country – Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia, using the European Energy Award tools. This phase included essentially testing to ensure the eea process suited the unique requirements of each country and national regulation.

Additionally, the phase also involved conducting an initial energy and climate review and implementing a tailored energy and climate policy program for each of the selected pilot municipalities.

Also, in both Romania and Ukraine (that already completed the eea pilot phase during another European project) the EXCITE project aimed to advance in the eea implementation phase, enhance the development of the eea label and tools at the national level, and increase the involvement of municipalities.

Results

Within the **Local eea implementation phase of the project**, the following outcomes were achieved in supporting the local partners of the new European Energy Award (eea) countries:

1. Conducted Workshops for the eea Initial Energy Review: Workshops were organized to facilitate the eea initial energy review process in collaboration with selected pilot municipalities and the national eea advisors.
2. Selection and training of national eea auditors.

3. eea audits for completed Initial Energy Reviews: audits were conducted for the pilot municipalities that had completed their initial energy review as part of the eea implementation process.
4. Establishment of the national eea Certification Commission Body: a dedicated national Certification Commission Body was established to oversee and ensure the accuracy and integrity of the eea certification process.
5. Continuous improvement of the eea Assessment Guidance: the national Assessment Guidance was continually improved and refined based on valuable insights gained during the testing phase of the eea tools in the initial energy review with municipalities.
6. Approval of eea national tools: through collaboration with the eea International Office, the national tools obtained official approval, ensuring their standardization and applicability.
7. Consulting participating municipalities on the improvement of their strategic documents in the field of energy and climate, including on the possibility of integrated planning and management on local level based on the CoM and eea methodology.

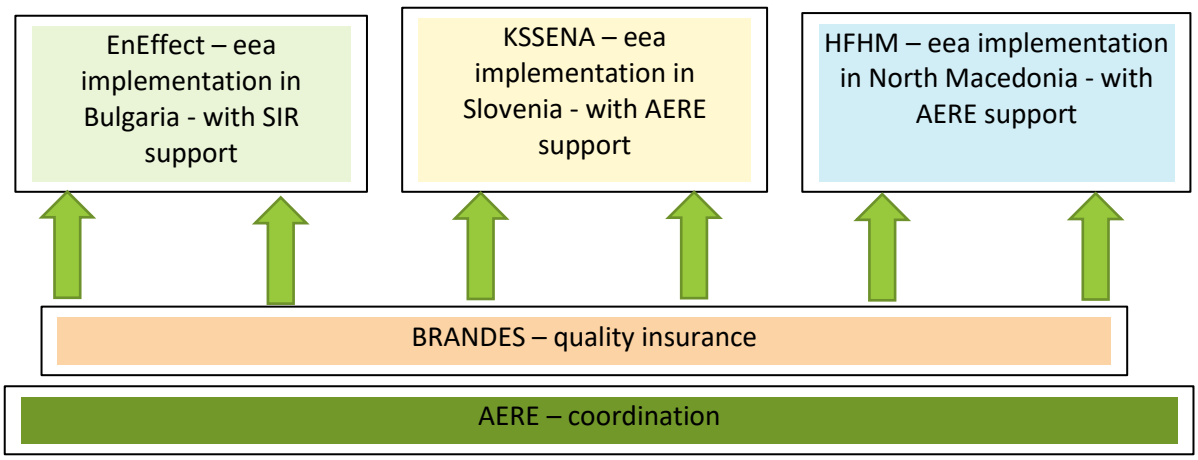
These outcomes were closely linked to the work carried out in regard of **National eea implementation**, which led to several accomplishments, including:

- Raising Awareness: informing relevant stakeholders and municipalities about the eea initiative, highlighting its importance and benefits.
- Establishment of national eea offices.
- Development of national eea tools and training provided to local eea advisors.
- Formulating and implementing the national institutional arrangements for eea implementation.

Organisation of the work

6 partners worked for the process of eea implementation in the new countries: Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia, under AERE's coordination.

The ones related to the tools to be implemented in the new eea countries have been involved in the work performed for this publication, that is to say the teams of Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia, called "eea national partners" and AERE, SIR and BRANDES.



IMPLEMENTATION

I. PERFORMING THE INITIAL ENERGY REVIEW

During the course of the Local eea implementation phase, the initial energy assessments were carried out in three pilot cities within each new country – Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia, employing the national eea tools and benefiting from the knowledge and skills of local consultants who have received training in the previous phases of the project.

This phase also involved rigorous testing and refinements of the eea tools to guarantee their efficiency and appropriateness at national and local level.

A) RESULTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The project team has organized initial meetings in each of the pilot municipalities (Karposh, Kochani, Kichevo) and established local municipal teams that worked together during the implementation of the eea methodology.

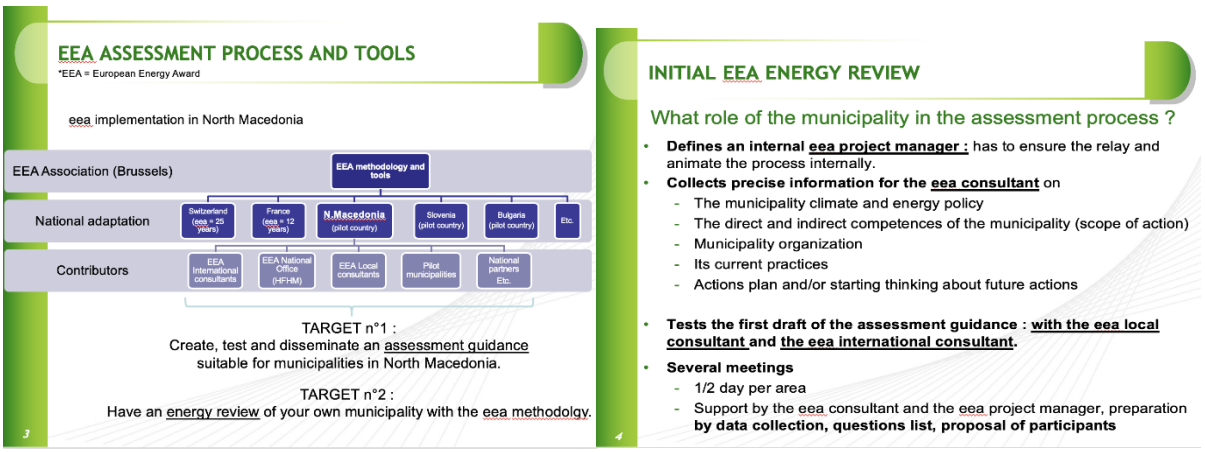


Figure 1 - Workshop presentation for the Initial Energy Review

- September-December 2021: meetings have been organized per each of the 3 target municipalities. The consultants, together with the project team developed a workplan and individual approach for each of the pilot municipalities. They also developed check lists for the documents, processes and procedures for the 6 eea areas of assessment.

- March 2022: assessment working session meeting with Karposh, Kochani and Kichevo for areas 1 and 5 of the assessment guidence;

Figure 2 - Working session meeting

- May 2022: assessment working session meeting with Kochani for area 2 and 6 of the assessment guidence;

- June 2022: assessment working session with municipality of Karposh for areas 2 and 6 of the assessment guidance;

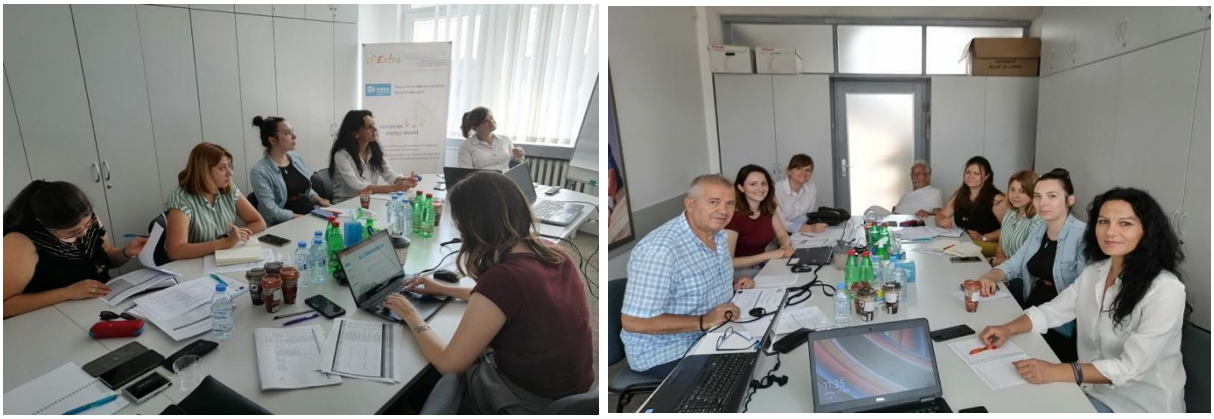


Figure 3 - Working session meeting

- July 6th-7th 2022: a two-day event, aiming to implement Public and stakeholder participation training (day 1) and assessment working sessions of areas 3 and 4 (day 2) with Karposh and Kochani

Figure 4 - Public and stakeholder participation training

- September 2022: assessment working session meeting with Karposh, Kochani and participation of Delchevo – presentation of first results;

Figure 5 – Working session

- March 2023: Presentation of Karposh during the peer-to-peer meeting Excite event in North Macedonia.

The following Key activities were imolemented:

1) Translated, adapted and adjusted eea documents: Master catalogue and Assessment guidance according the Macedonian context.
2) Established national structure and build its capacity for implementation of eea methodology:
    - National office and national office staff.
    - Selected and trained team of 6 national advisors and auditors. 3 of them were involved directly as national eea consultants into the process of initial energy review.
    - Developed terms of reference (with significant and substantional support and guidance of the international expert).
    - Established and trained the National certification comission.
    - Implemented eea international audit into 2 municipalities (Karposh and Kochani).
    - Ahievements promoted at national and electronic media.
3) Linking the eea methodology with beneficial strategic local documents, such as municipal PEE - Energy Efficiency Programs:
    - The SECAP is not mandatory document for Macedonian municipalities, but PEE are required.
    - Developed local tools such as Road map for implementation of the findings and conclussions of initial energy review into municipal projects and programs for EE and decreassion of the CO2 emissions.
4) Completing the international eea audits.

International eea audits key findings

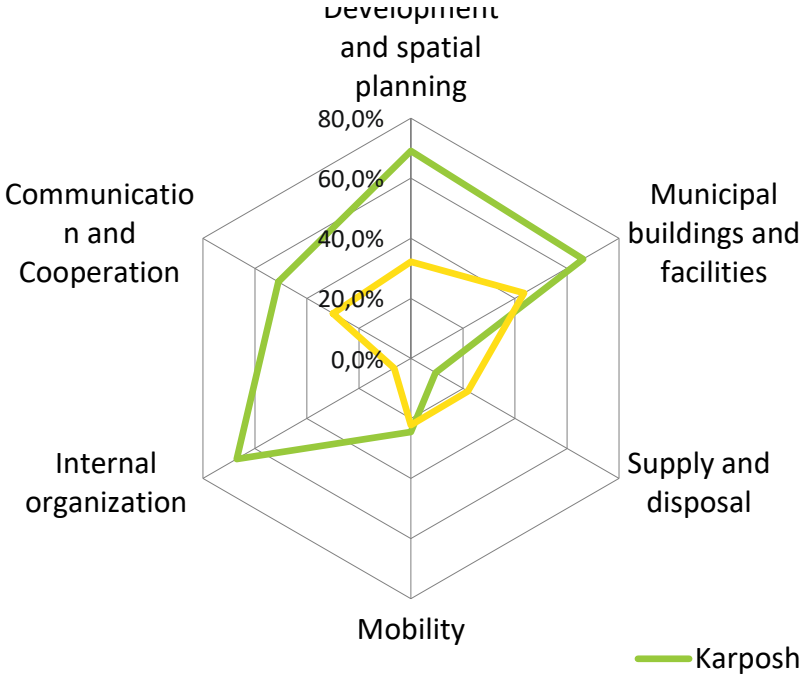


Figure 6

	Karposh	Kochani
Evaluation result	50,2%	27,2%
Potential points	431	496
Evaluated points	217,34	135,7
Reviewed documents	45	31
Reviewed pages	1754	758

Municipality of Kichevo lacked the high level of commitment, so it was decided not to get assessed by the international eea auditor.

The evaluation of the municipalities involved the utilization of the EMT platform (eea management tool) and an Excel file for customizing the national catalog and implementing modifications during the testing phase and implementing modifications during the testing phase.

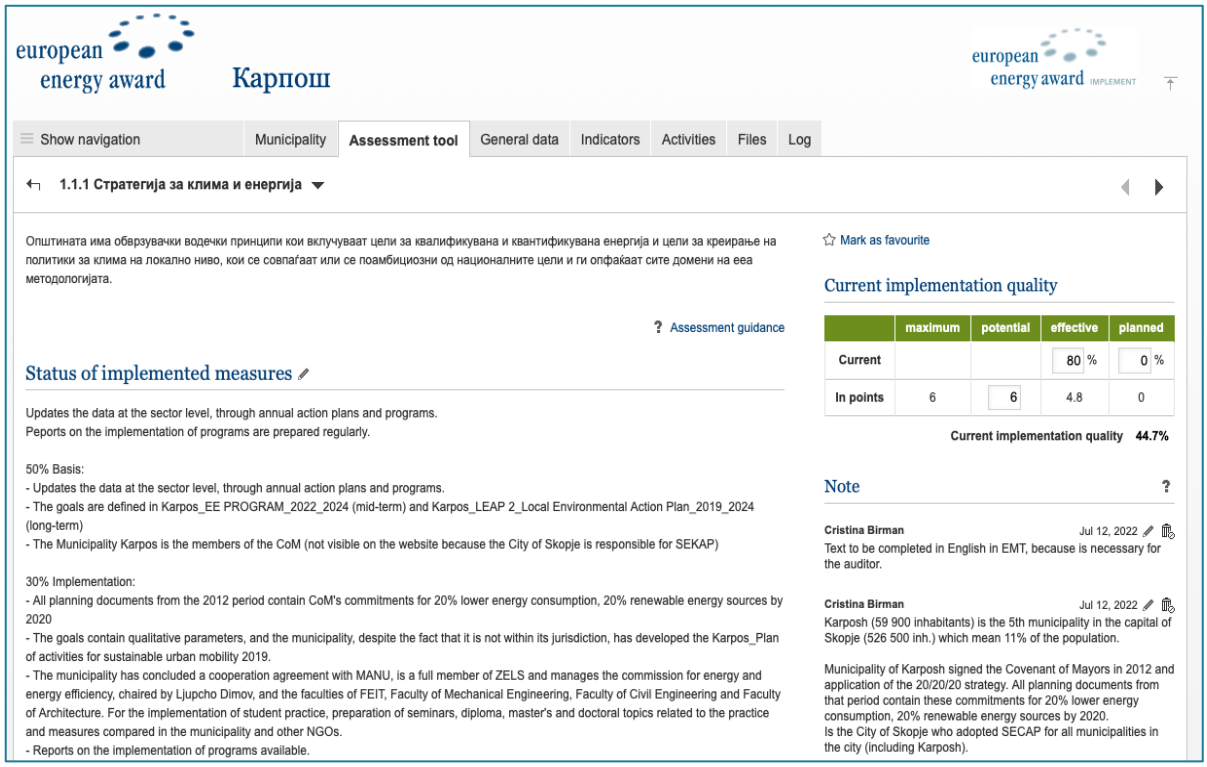


Figure 7 – Evaluation in EMT (eea management tool) for Karposh municipality

The two municipalities with a score > 25% went into the eea audit phase (see chapter 2 – Pilot audits).

B) RESULTS IN SLOVENIA

The Initial Energy Review meetings took place in the first half of 2022.

- February 9th online
- February 22nd
- March 1st
- March 22nd

The KSSENA project team coordinated the Initial Energy Review process in Slovenia, adapting it to the specific characteristics of each of the pilot municipalities. This phase involved extensive engagement with Velenje, Celje and Slovenj Gradec. This ensured access to up-to-date data and took into account local particularities. The team successfully navigated the challenges posed by external factors, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events, and applied the following approach to the three pilot cities:

- **Municipality of Velenje**

The Municipality of Velenje adopted its Local Energy Concept (LEK) in April 2022, coinciding with the European Energy Award process. This made the initial energy review a bit easier, as the stakeholders had a lot of data relevant for the assessment. The Municipality of Velenje adopted its Local Energy Concept (LEK) in April 2022, coinciding with the European Energy Award process. This made the initial screening a bit easier, as the stakeholders had a lot of data relevant for the assessment. The municipality of Velenje is one of the most advanced Slovenian municipalities in the field of green transition. They are successfully building on their coal mining past with a green transition that has been

recognised by others, including Velenje winning the European Green Leaf Award and participating in the Climate Neutral Cities mission.

- **Municipality of Celje**

The municipality of Celje is the largest municipality participating in the pilot phase of the European Energy Award. For the initial energy review, a fruitful cooperation was established between the staff of the municipality and the energy manager, who has a very good knowledge of energy issues in the municipality. The local energy concept was adopted by the municipality in 2018, but the energy team involved in its preparation is still being formed, so the municipality's activities in this area were not carried out in a meaningful way and, as a result, the initial evaluation was uneventful. Overall, the municipality of Celje is active in the field of transport, energy supply and energy renovation of buildings.

- **Municipality of Slovenj Gradec**

The Municipality of Slovenj Gradec has adopted the Local Energy Concept 2020. The data for the analysis of the current state of energy use and supply in the Municipality of Slovenj Gradec were collected with the help of the Steering Group and the staff of the Municipality of Slovenj Gradec and Komunala Slovenj Gradec d.o.o., through surveys of organisations, energy audits, the websites of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the Slovenian Forestry Service and other publicly available sources. The analysis of the current situation of energy use and supply in the Municipality of Slovenj Gradec is based on the geographical location, climate, nature, population and building characteristics. The municipality's actions focus on appropriate spatial planning and energy supply. As part of the energy audit, we visited a brand new biomass boiler plant that supplies heat to a large part of the city and plans to remove car traffic from the old city centre. The municipality is also actively attracting investors in public infrastructure, with public buildings being renovated through a public-private partnership. They are also active in the renovation of residential buildings.

After collecting and analysing the necessary information for each of the assessment areas, the work continued with filling in the relevant data and comments for assessment in the EMT. Once the work in the EMT on the different areas was completed, a series of online meetings were organised between the national consultants and the international assessors to present the context for each of the pilot communities, to comment on technical issues and, where necessary, to clarify the proposed assessment scores. In the process of preparing the assessments, potential improvements were identified according to the national context and conditions that could be applied to the tools, and these were discussed with the auditors. The consultation with the auditor helped the national team to finalize the EMT. After the audit municipalities achieve scores presented below:

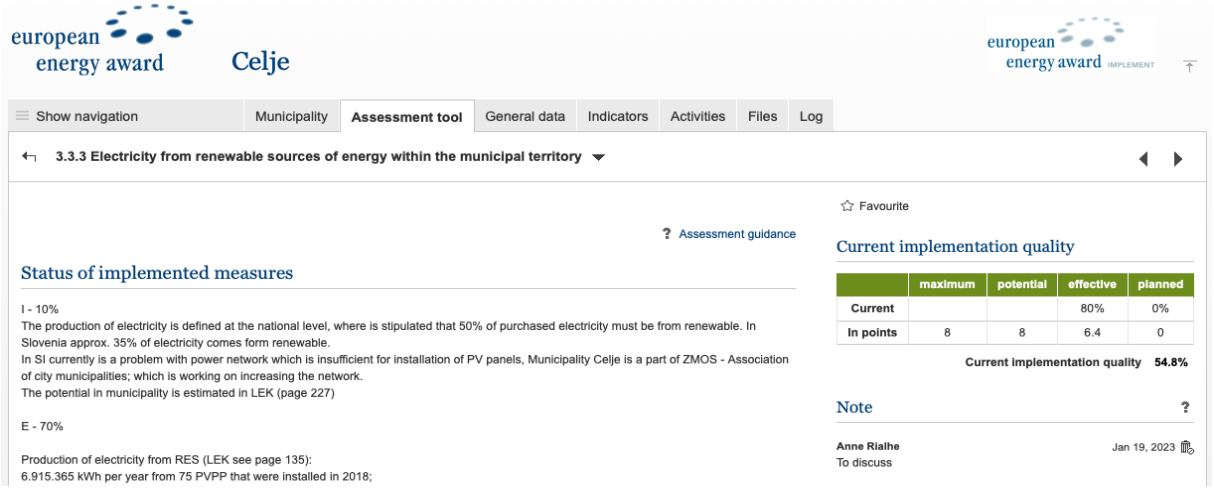
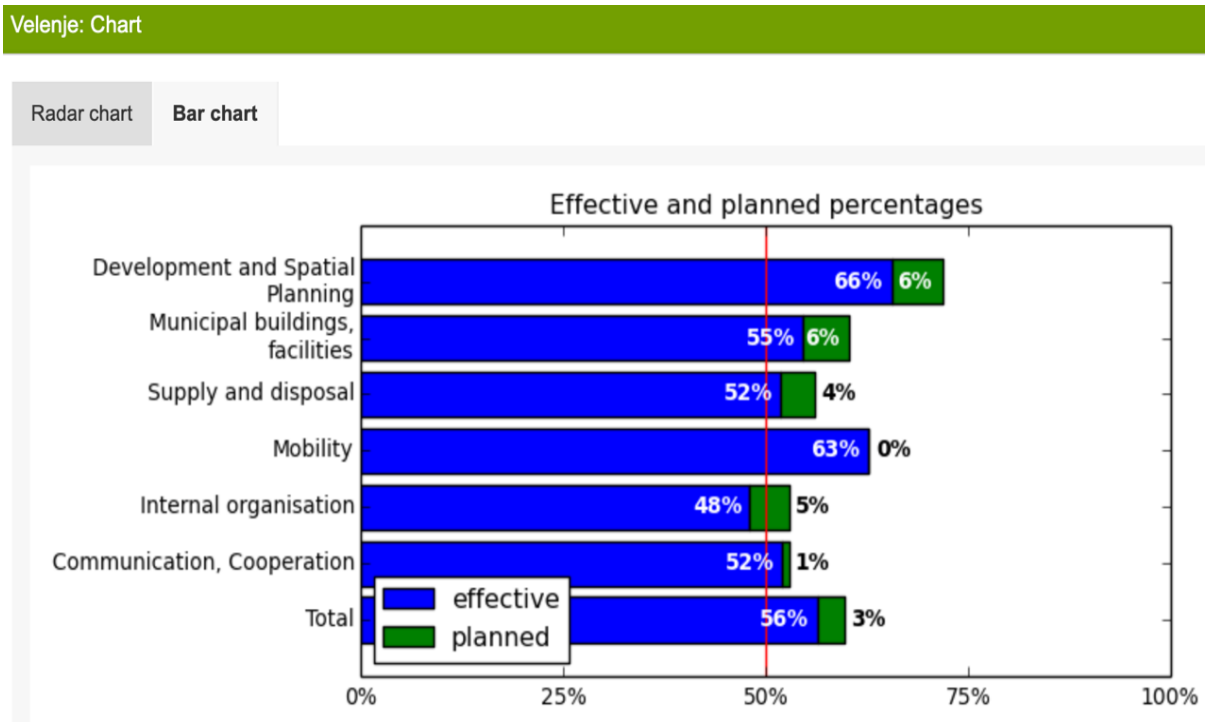


Figure 8 - Evaluation in EMT (eea management tool) for Celje municipality

Results of the Initial Energy Review are available in the EMT: https://tool.european-energy-award.org

Velenje Charts:



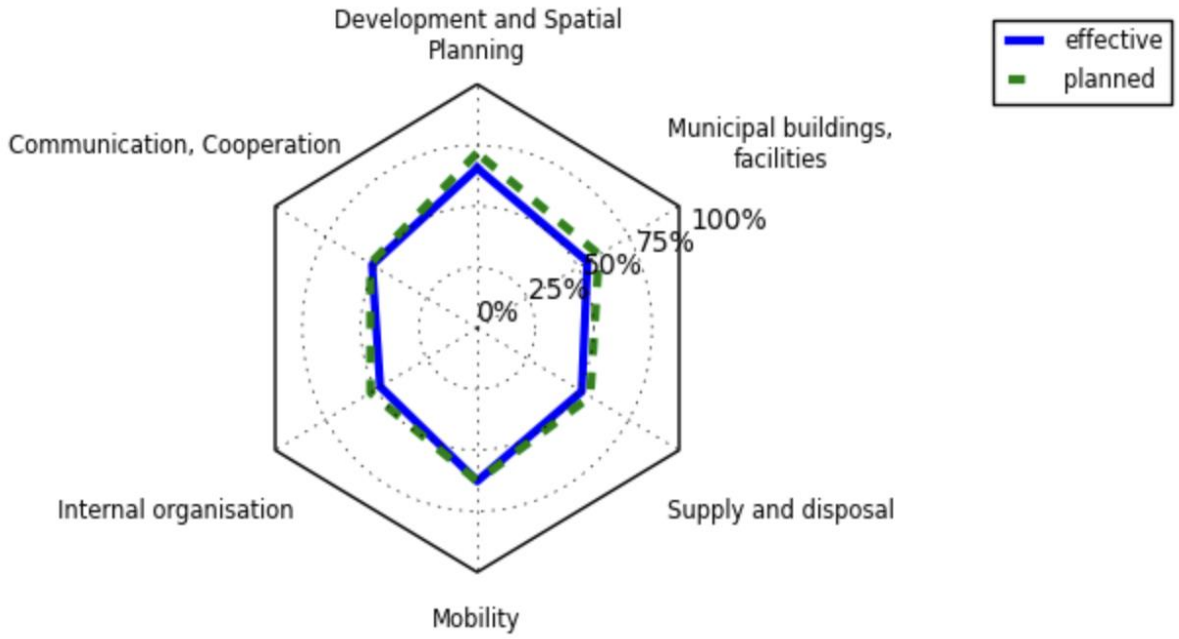


Figure 9 – Velenje Charts

Celje Charts:

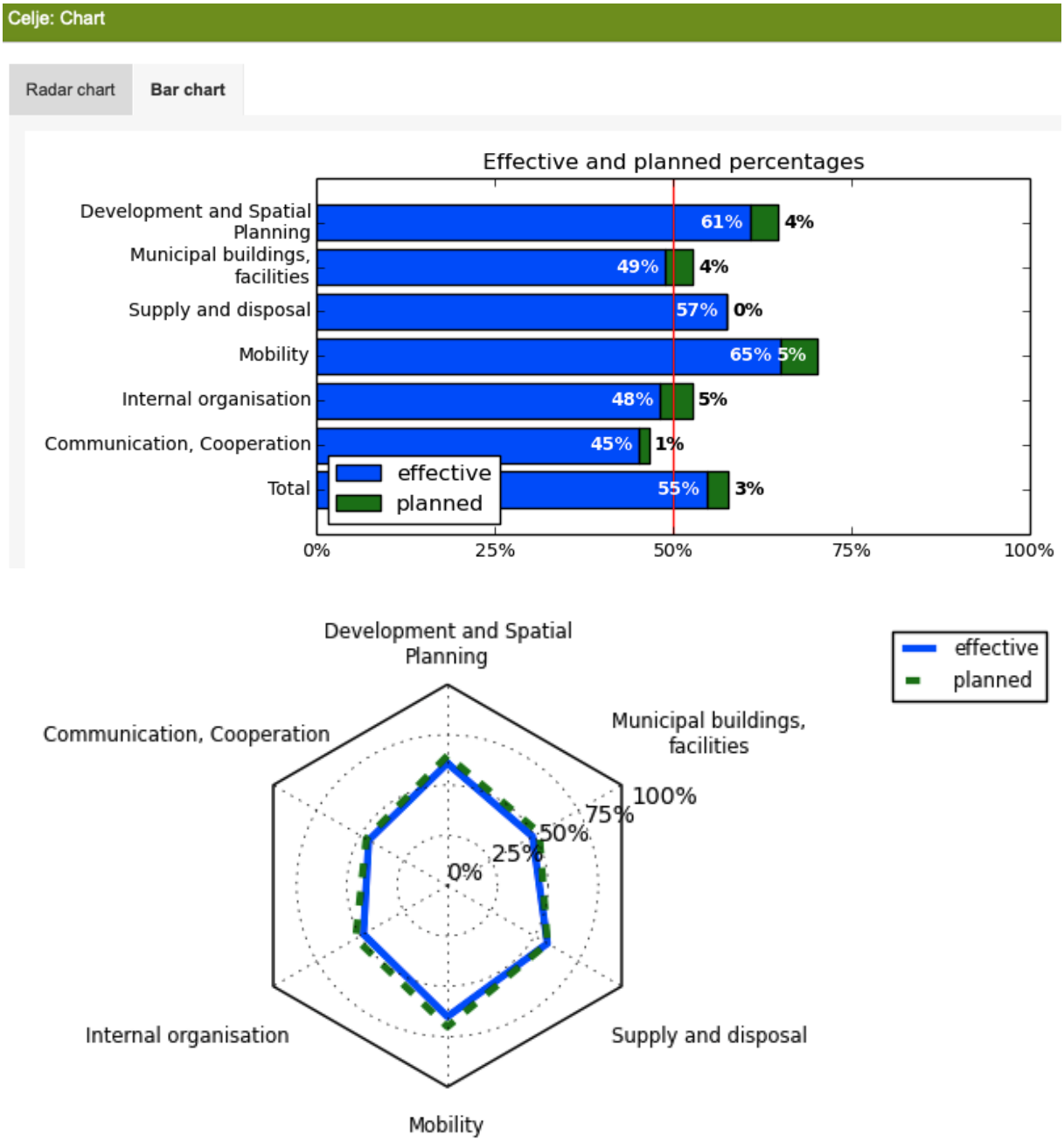


Figure 10 - Celje Charts

Slovenj Gradec Charts:

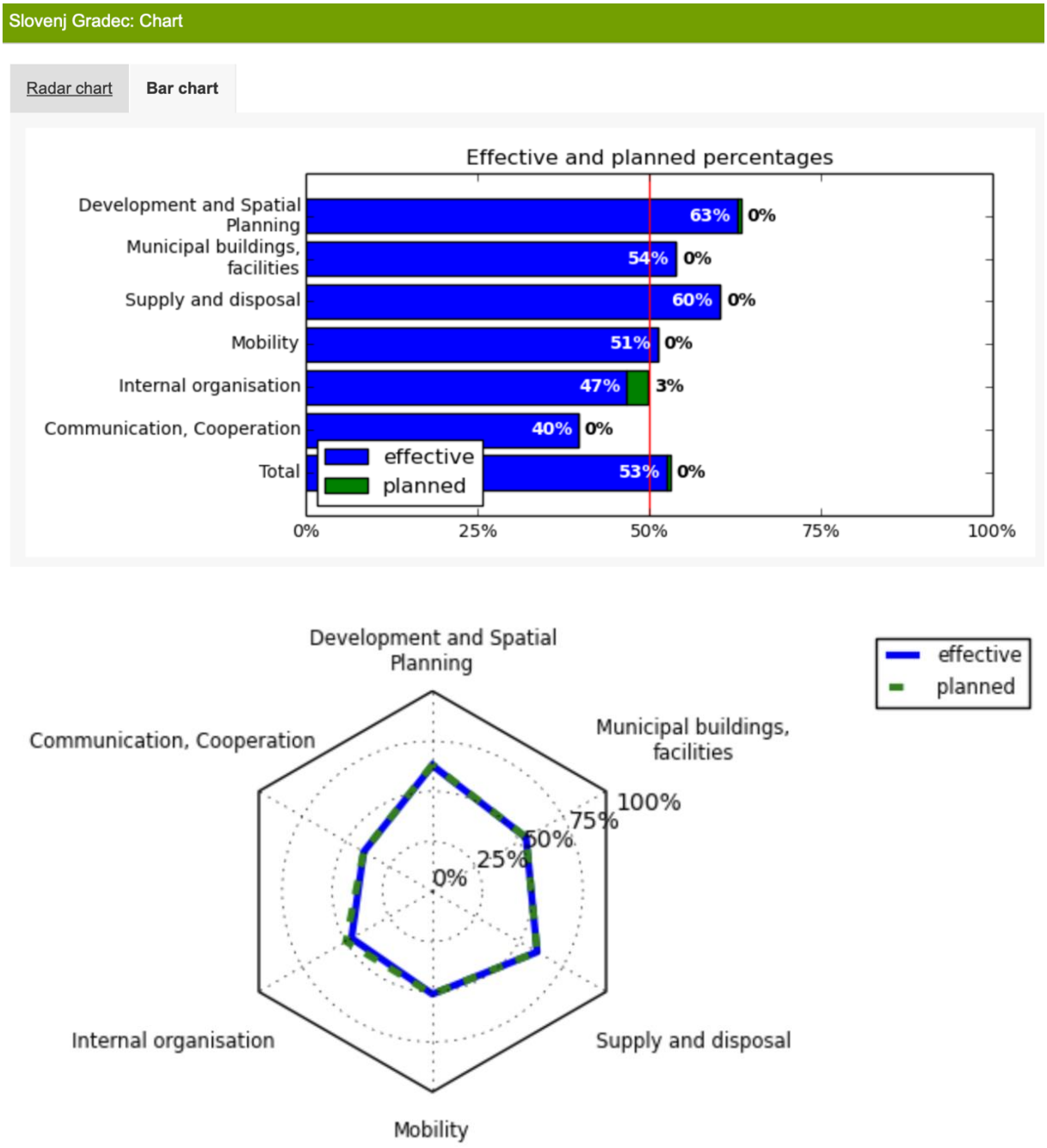


Figure 11 - Slovenj Gradec Charts

C) RESULTS IN BULGARIA

Within the framework of the project on the territory of Bulgaria, the eea's adapted instruments were practically implemented in three pilot municipalities, namely Gabrovo, Dobrich and Sofia. The three pilot municipalities are significantly different, in terms of both population, geographical location, and economic development, implying different challenges from a management and climate perspective. The participation of three municipalities in Bulgaria was predefined at the application stage, and their commitments were confirmed within the framework of held working meetings and signed memoranda at the beginning of 2021.

The next step was to select and train the local advisors. For this purpose, it was organized one day training course on September 30, 2021covering the Guidance for implementation eea Catalogue and eea EMT tool. Invitations were sent to all energy agencies to select suitable experts to participate in the training. Among them, Sofena and the Black Sea Energy Cluster responded, including experts from EnEffect. Later, two more national advisors (from EnEffect team) were additionally trained using a separate methodology.

Figure 12 – Local advisors training

The municipal team was straightened by conducting dedicated trainings as follow:

October 15, 2021 - online training of municipal energy teams from 3 pilot municipalities and other interested municipal experts. The training covers introduction to EXCITE project; Basics of eea methodology; Benefits of CoME EASY tool for SECAP reporting; Benefit for the implementation of standard ISO 50001 as well as eea Catalogue.

13 municipalities participated the training, including 3 representatives from Sofia Municipality, 2 from Gabrovo Municipality, 3 from Dobrich Municipality, 1 from Yambol Municipality and 1 from Valchi dol Municipality.

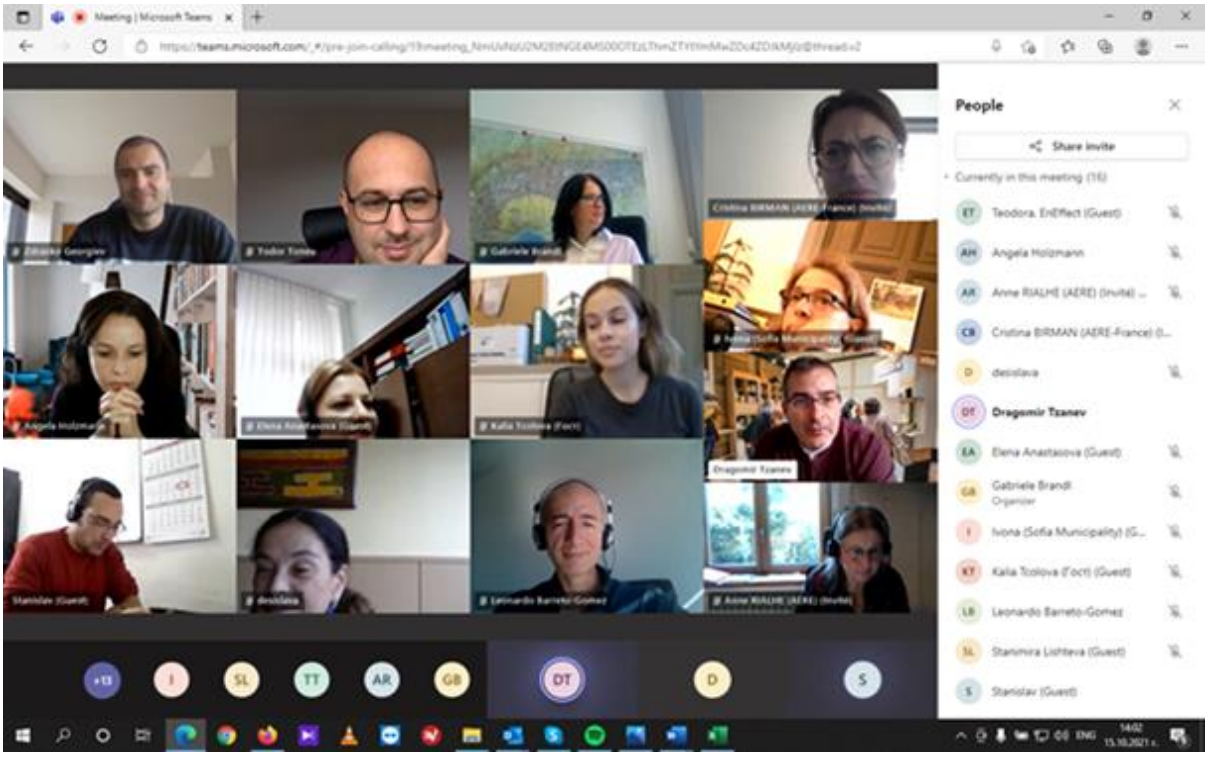


Figure 13 – Training

A month later, on November 17, 2021 the 2nd practical online training in support of the Bulgarian municipalities was held. Among the training objectives was introduction to CoME EASY Mitigation Calculator Tool.

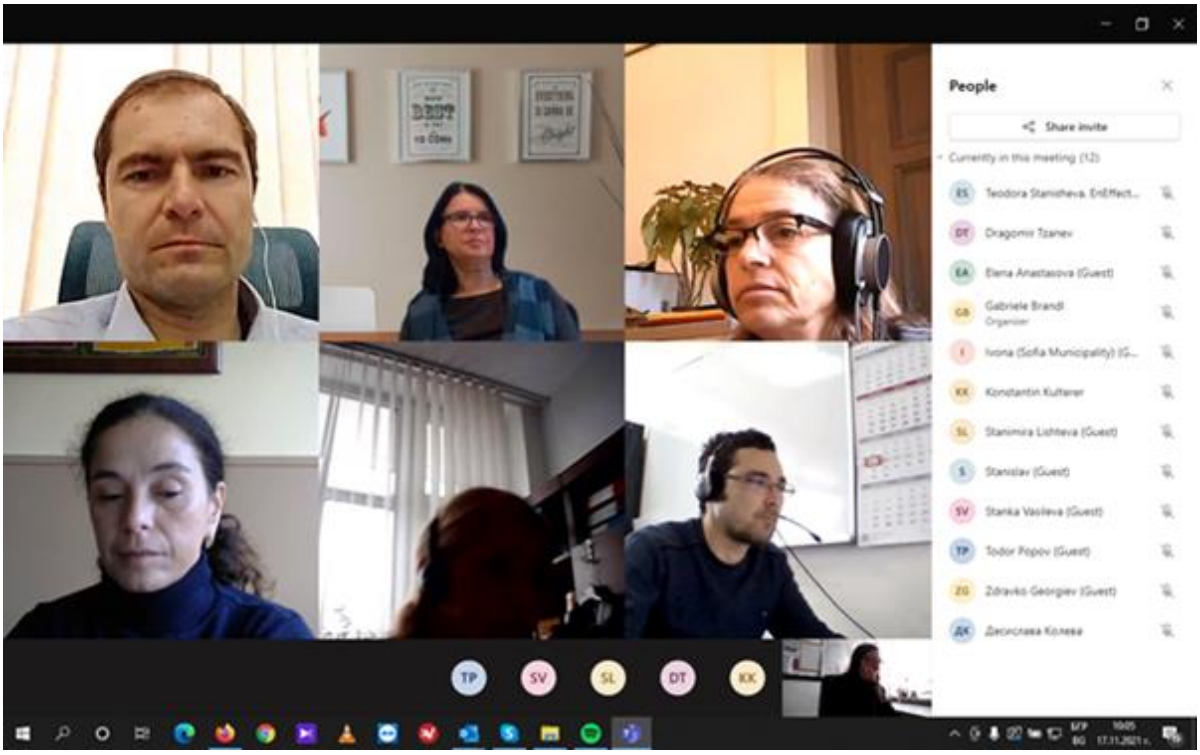


Figure 14 – Local authorities training

Soon after the completion of the trainings for national energy advisors/auditors and municipal specialists from the three pilot municipalities, the activities of collecting the necessary data, holding joint meetings, and setting a work plan began in 2022.

The Initial Energy Review process in Bulgaria was organized differently in the three pilot municipalities according to their local specificities and the effectiveness of the teams, as follows:

Sofia Municipality

Just before the start of the initial energy review process, Sofia Municipality adopted its Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan 2021-2030. This helped the process because up-to-date data was available. In this regard, after the initial provision of the source information, a clarifying working meeting was held between the auditor and the municipality's team to supplement the missing data.

Gabrovo Municipality

In the case of Gabrovo, an introductory meeting was held with the team, during which the necessary data and the work plan were specified. The work continued with a desktop study of available public data, as well as with direct communication with municipal experts. Online conversations were organized as well as face to face meetings with representatives of the various directorates that are relevant to the specific areas.

Dobrich Municipality

An introductory meeting of the auditor with the municipality team was organized in Dobrich, during which the work plan and the main documents to be reviewed were discussed. After that, 2 on-site visits to the municipality were organized for meetings with the relevant municipal experts involved in the implementation of the activities in the different evaluation areas. After that, the work continued in close cooperation between the advisor and the representatives of the municipality through weekly coordination talks.

After collecting and analyzing the necessary information for each of the assessment areas, work continued with filling in the relevant data and comments for assessment in the EMT. As soon as the work in the EMT on different areas was completed, a series of online meetings were organized between the national advisors and the international auditors, during which the context for each of the pilot municipalities was presented, technical issues were commented on, and the proposed assessment scores were clarified when needed. In the process of preparing the assessments, potential improvements according to the national context and conditions that could be made to the tools were identified and have been discussed with the auditors.

Scores before audit:

- Gabrovo – 472 potential points; realized points: 194 /41%
- Dobrich – 471 potential points; realized points: 141,7 /30%
- Sofia – 406 potential points; realized points: 157,5 /38,8%

8. PILOT AUDITS IN THE SELECTED MUNICIPALITIES

The audits have been realized in the three pilot countries– Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia. Only one pilot municipality has not undertaken an audit, due to a too low score.

The audits were a very good opportunity to learn more about the eea process, both for the eea local teams and for the municipalities. They have shown the interest of the municipalities and the progress of their energy and climate policy, of their action plans.

A) RESULTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Training of national eea auditors

Two national eea auditors have been trained in December 2022:

1. Liljana Alceva – Deputy Director - Program, Habitat for Humanity Macedonia
2. Ljupco Dimov – Consultant, Former energy manager of Karposh Municipality

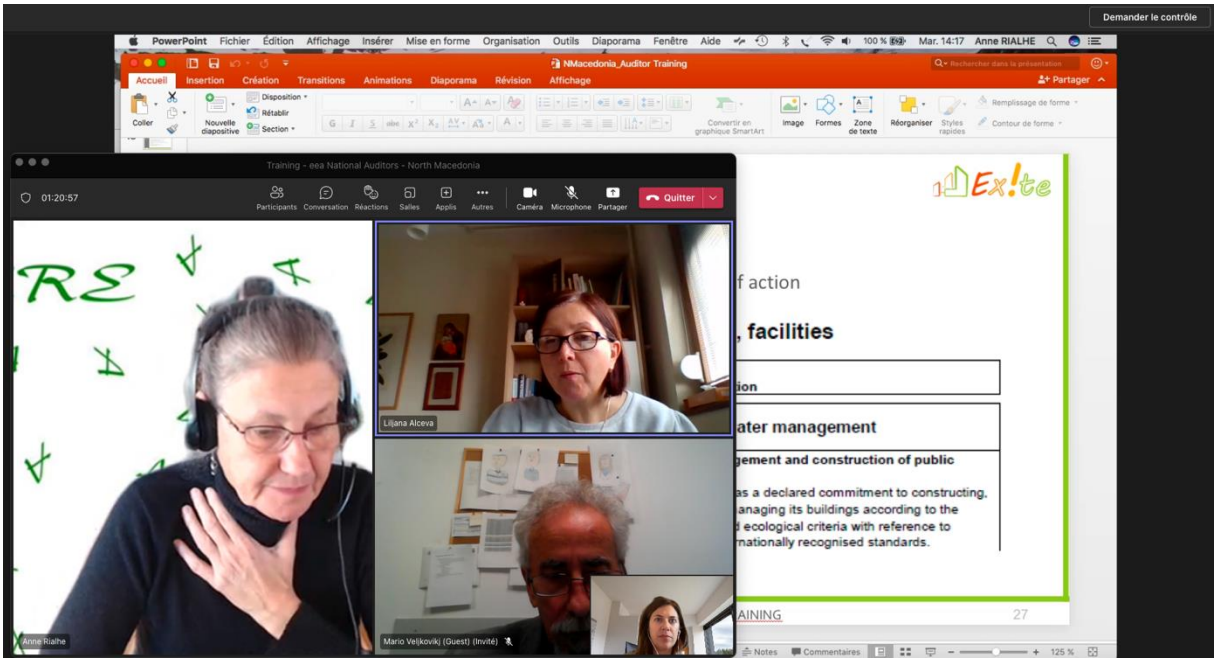


Figure 15 - National Auditors training in virtual meeting, December 2022

Audit meetings

In North Macedonia:

- From the 18th to the 21st of September, for the municipalities of Karpos and Kocani, by international eea auditor Anne Rialhe.
- Assessment guidance has been discussed, reviewed, approved then sent to the IOeea for final checks.
- Final eea scores for the pilot municipalities (after audit):
    - Karposh – 433 potential points; realized points: 217,3 /50,2%
    - Kochani – 500 potential points; realized points: 135,7 / 27,2%

Figure 16 – Meetings with municipalities

B) RESULTS IN SLOVENIA

Training of national eea auditors

National eea auditors have been trained in January 2023:

1. Hana Kolenc
2. Sašo Mozgan
3. Nejc Jurko

The training was given by Anne Rihale and was followed by practical examples over the next two days. Helmut Strasser provided practical information on the role and work of eea auditors.

Audit meetings

- From the 23rd until the 26th of January, 2023, for the municipalities of Velenje, Celje and Slovenc Gradec, by international eea auditor Helmut Strasser.
- The 3 municipalities have reached the eea level of more than 50% actions implemented
- Assessment guidance has been discussed, reviewed, approved then sent to the IOeea for final checks.

Figure 17 - Audit meeting in Celje

C) RESULTS IN BULGARIA

Audit meetings

- From the 5th until the 9th of June, 2023, for the municipalities of Dobrich, Gabrovo and Sofia, by international eea auditor Anne Rialhe.
- The 3 municipalities are under the eea level, even if some areas are successful, as the Area 6, Communication and cooperation for Gabrovo.
- Assessment guidance has been discussed and reviewed by the national and international advisors and the international auditor
- Final eea scores for the pilot municipalities (after audit):
    - Gabrovo – 487 potential points; realized points: 172,25/ 35,4%
    - Dobrich – 475 potential points; realized points: 133 / 28%
    - Sofia – 500 potential points; realized points: 132,75 /26,5%

At the beginning of June 2023, an on-site visit of the international auditors to the three pilot municipalities was organized. Thus, they had the opportunity to get to know the municipal teams, discuss the various areas and gain a personal insight into the activities and policies of the municipality.

Gabrovo

In Gabrovo we have the meeting with the mayor, Mrs Tanya Hristova, who presented the Climate and Energy policy of the Municipality as well as the ambitious goal Gabrovo to become a climate neutral city by 2050. The meetings continued with experts from different departments in the new center for administrative support of citizen in EE projects as well as demonstrations of the municipal energy management system and the system for the street lightening.

Figure 18 - Audit meeting in Gabrovo

Figure 19 - Audit meeting in Gabrovo

Figure 20 - Audit meeting in Gabrovo

Dobrich

In the beginning of June 2023 Dobrich Municipality was a part of the organized peer-review meeting in Albena. On the first day we have a welcome by the Mayor of Municipality – Mr. Yordan Yordanov and after that we had visit some of the renovated municipal buildings. On the next day we had a meeting and discussion with municipal experts and the international auditors in the premises of the municipality.

Figure 21 - Peer-review meeting in Dobrich

Figure 22 - Peer-review meeting in Dobrich

Sofia

In Sofia, the international auditors met with the head of the "Climate and Energy" department and experts from the municipality. They discussed the strategic documents and especially the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan of the Sofia Municipality 2021-2030, as well as current projects for the adaptation of the urban environment. The meeting continued with a visit to one of the sites in the city center, which aims to create a green space for relaxation and recreation with plant species that are adapted to the expected changes in the climate.

Figure 23 – Site visit in Sofia

9. CERTIFICATION COMMISSION BODY

A) NORTH MACEDONIA

Development of criteria for selection, completed by the national eea office - HFHM and commented by the international consultants.

On late October 2022 was organized the first meeting of the Certification Commission Body in North Macedonian eea National office.

Than HFHM organized of the two-day event on February 7 and 8 2023 that had elements of meeting as well as training for 5 participants selected as members of the National Certification Board for eea methodology.

On November 22, the national eea office organized formal meeting with purpose Presentation of the International Audit findings, conclussions, recommendations of the International Auditor as well as to discuss the possible next steps of the promotion an implementation of the eea methodology in North macedonia.

Figure 24 - Second meeting of the Certification Commission Body in North Macedonia

Members of the eea Certification Body in North Macedonia:

Table 3

Name and surname		Institution
1.	Андријана Стојановска **Andriana Stojanovska**	**Ministry of Local Self-Government**
2.	Катерина Билбиловска **Katerina Bilbilovska**	**Ministry of Economy**
3.	Ефтим Пејовски **Eftim Pejovski**	**Management Board of Habitat Macedonia**
4.	Љубиша Јовановски **Ljubiša Jovanovski**	**Ministry of Transport and Communications**

5.	Драган Блажев **Dragan Blazev**	**TIMEL Project LLC Skopje** *(private engineering company in the energy industry)*

B) SLOVENIA

Members of the eea Label/certification commission in Slovenia:

Table 4

Name and surname		Institution
1.	Boštjan Krajnc	**Energy Agency of Savinjska, Šaleška and Koroška region**
2.	Rajko Leban	**Goriška Local Energy Agency**
3.	Klemen Sredenšek	**Faculty of Energy Technology**
4.	Sebastjan Seme	**Faculty of Energy Technology**

The training of Label commission members took place on September 6th 2022.

EEA Slovenia

Label commission training

Date: 6th September 2022
Location: Vila Bianca, Velenje, Slovenia - LINK
Timing: 6th September: 9:30 – 12:00 CET

	6th September 2022
09:30	Welcome coffee and registration
10'	Official opening Welcome address by the host and the international consultant Facilitator: Anne Rihale Introduction of the participants Facilitator: Nejc Jurko
Session 1:	Introduction
15'	Tasks of the auditor, the advisor, audit organization Presentation of the pre-audit analysis: notation (+/-), what has been done, strengths and weaknesses Change since the previous audit, integration of previous recommendations (if re-audit)
Session 2:	Organization of the municipality
15'	Structures, responsibilities, organization (manager, team...) Organization of the monitoring (who, what, when)
Session 3:	Objectives, energy and climate program, ambition
20'	Vision: general objectives of the commune Ambition, priorities Integration of national (regional) requirements
Session 4:	Review of the commune's actions
45'	Questions from the catalogue (all domains)
15'	Conclusions and closure of the meeting: What are the next steps for the municipality? (eea auditor) Synthesis on the label demand (eea auditor) Next steps in the process (eea consultant)
12:00	End of the meeting and lunch

KSSENA

Figure 25 - Agenda of Label commission training

Figure 26 - Label Commission training in Slovenia

The first meeting of the Label Commission was expected in November 2023, with the discussion three pilot audits for municipalities will be discussed. As the audit went smoothly and the results are clear and incontrovertible, we expect a positive outcome and the awarding of the three pilot municipalities.

C) BULGARIA

Members of the Certification Commission Body In Bulgaria:

Table 5

Name and surname		Institution
1.	Zdravko Genchev	**Municipal Energy Efficiency Network – EcoEnergy**
2.	Dragomir Tzanev	**EnEffect**
3.	Tsvetomira Kulevksa	**SEDA[1], Director "Coordination and management of energy efficiency and renewable energy"**

[1] Sustainable Energy Development Agency (SEDA) – governmental agency in charge for the EE and RES national policy implementation and coordination

10. EEA'S ADAPTED INSTRUMENTS: FINAL VERSIONS OF THE NATIONAL CATALOGUE AND THE ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

The primary tools, namely the national catalogue and the national assessment guidance, started to be developed in the initial stages of the implementation of the EXCITE project, are detailed in the *Intermediate report on design and setup of national eea programmes and organisational structures* (December 2021).

Throughout the Local eea implementation phase, these tools underwent testing and revisions to ensure their effectiveness and suitability. During the audit phase, discussions were held with local municipalities, national advisors and auditors, and local partners.

Based on the audits carried out in the pilot municipalities, as well as because of the working meetings with experts from the various stakeholders, the eea tools have been improved so as to reflect the local and regional specificities to the maximum extent, while at the same time allowing the assessment of progress in individual areas.

As an illustrative example, in North Macedonia, various versions were introduced:

1. **1st Version:** Translation of the Catalogue and Assessment Guidance from English to Macedonian.
2. **2nd Version:** Adaptation to the national context before implementation with municipalities, incorporating insights from national experts and the eea international advisor.
3. **3rd Version:** Updated during the initial energy review to incorporate feedbacks from pilot municipalities using the tools.
4. **4th Version:** Refined during the audit phase to integrate best practices and calibrate the assessment guidance based on the best performances observed in the country. Both in English and in Macedonian.
5. **Final Version:** Validated by the eea international office.

The same steps in the process of improving and adapting the tools were applied in Bulgaria and Slovenia as well. In Bulgaria, the EXCITE team had the opportunity to test the tools both on smaller cities in the countryside (for example, Gabrovo with a population of 60,000 inhabitants) and in the Capital of the country and the largest city (Sofia has a population of over 1,300,000 inhabitants).

The final version of the national catalogue and of the assessment guidance for Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Slovenia were submitted for validation to the eea international aee office.

11. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION IN ROMANIA

Romania has already established in 2016 a national entity called "Comunitate Sustenabila" which has obtained the eea license as a project partner through RoGBC (the eea national office).
Between 2018 and 2021, the focus shifted towards supporting some eea communities through the H2020 CoME EAsy project.

Recognizing that one of the major challenges faced by local officials is the lack of continuous learning programs, the EXCITE initiative aimed to encourage online training. This was a criterion for European Union funding to empower both the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) and eea. Additionally, a new business plan for eea was prepared.

Until the EXCITE project there were only two eea certified communities: Vama Buzăului and Iași (second largest city in Romania).

Since EXCITE the following cities were certified:

- Alba Iulia
- Cluj-Napoca
- Turda
- Gherla
- Sighetu Marmatiei
- Oradea (to be finalized in December 2023)
- Buteni (to be finalized in December 2023)

Figure 27 - Alba-Iulia eea certification

The scores are from 27% in the case of Gherla till 45% in the case of Cluj-Napoca and are based on the international eea catalog. In Romania we went for the international one and have not created a specific one, in order to encourage the comparison with other European cities.

Figure 28 - Cluj-Napoca eea certification (President of RoGBC Andrei Botis, Swiss Ambassador Arthur Mattli and Cluj-Napoca mayor Emil Boc)

New eea municipalities were approached thanks to the EXCITE project and thanks to study visits new connections and new energy solutions were developed. In the case of Cluj-Napoca there is an 8% CO2 reduction compared with the 2012 situation, for one of the fastest growing cities in Europe.

- Update of the eea catalogue: finished in June 2023.
- Dissemination of eea in the country: training for city managers through SAMER (city managers association in Romania), participation to PRIA conference in Romania and Moldova and involvement of the new NetZeroCities cluster project created by Romanian universities and funded through PNRR.
- Prizes for the best eea communities in the RanBC 2023 Gala ceremony: one prize for Vama Buzăului for rural and for Oradea as city.
- Based on the EXCITE and CoME EAsy experience a new Master in English was created at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca: Building Services for Regenerative Cities, run by assoc.prof. Dorin Beu.
- Coordination with SECAPs: first the eea certification and then SECAP in Cluj-Napoca and Alba Iulia, followed by Oradea. Cluj-Napoca is part of 100 NetZero Cities and together with Oradea are the lighthouse cities for the Romanian city councils.

From January 1, 2024 the Ministry of European Projects will receive the license for eea, as eea is perceived as an excellent solution for city management and as an opportunity to measure the cities performances and to compare them.

12. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION IN UKRAINE

At city level, Ukraine is dynamically developing its energy management practices and legislation in energy and climate planning. Most of the achievements are built on the practical actions, initiated by the municipalities. Although the European Energy Award has the potential to significantly improve these rates and the quality of implementation measures, its methodology and approach was not broadly known until 2018, with only two cities participating. In 2018, Swiss Cooperation office launched a new call for proposals for additional cities, and National office for EEA. ECU in cooperation with Swiss partners is implementing a program of training the national roster of consultants and auditors to extend participation of Ukrainian cities in EEA; however, for involvement of more engaged actors and attraction of municipalities, further support is essential, mainly due to limited internal resources and capacity of the local authorities. Within the Local implementation phase of the project, in Ukraine was foreseen 5 new municipalities to be involved. Due to the complicated situation related to Russia's actions towards Ukraine, certain changes were necessary, which did not significantly affect the implementation of the project activities.

For example, as the city of Syeverodonetsk was almost completely destroyed by Russian invaders and still remains under occupation, the EXITE implementation there was put on hold. In accordance to the amendment, the new city – Khotyn, Chernivtsi region (western part of Ukraine) was selected for project implementation. The city council voted for implementation of eea in their community and appointed the members of the energy team. The EECU project team prepared and completed the kick-off meeting on August 8, 2023 with the city decision makers and energy team. The initial review was performed and Action Plan drafted. Besides that, in all EXITE pilot cities the initial assessment was made and in two of them (namely Novovolynsk and Myrgorod) the monitoring of eea implementation status was performed. In the cities of Trostyanets and Myrgorod that suffered heavy shelling and bombing the current situation with project and eea implementation was thoroughly analyzed and the appropriate corrections to the Action Plans were proposed. In other municipalities the adjustments to the Action Plans were recommended and approved in regard to the warfare, depopulation, losses in qualified personnel and IDP factor. Final event for the five pilot municipalities took place online on November 30, 2023.

The table below present the actual situation on eaa implementation in Ukraine.

Table 6

Project municipality	Popu-lation	Adhesion	Energy Team	Initial review/ Monitoring	eea Action Plan	Integration with SECAP
Novovolynsk (Volyn)	56,902	25/02/21	18 members (established on 31/03/2021)	38,18% (November 2021)/ 45,1% (October 2023)	Approved on 22/12/21	Actions are interlinked with eea Action Plan
Chortkiv (Ternopil)	28,414	27/04/21	12 members (established on 27/04/2021)	35,03% (December 2021)	Drafted in August 2022	Tbd during the monitoring of SECAP

Myrhorod (Poltava)	38,630	12/03/21	25 members (established on 23/04/2021)	39,04% (November 2021)/ 47,2% (November 2023)	Drafted in August 2022	Actions are interlinked with eea Action Plan
Trostyanets (Sumy)	20,638	17/06/21	15 members (established on 17/06/2021)	38,55% (December 2021)	Drafted in December 2021	Tbd during the monitoring of SECAP
Sievierodonetsk (Luhansk)	102,396	22/04/21	22 members (established on 26/07/2021)	On hold	On hold	On hold
Khotyn (Chernivtsi)	11,124	08/08/211	(established on 08/08/2023	38,5% (October, 2023)	Drafted in November, 2023	Tbd during the monitoring of SECAP

Despite the war, all Ukrainian pilot cities have passed the initial assessment by the end of 2021 (except the new one – Khotyn, that had passed it recently), and two of them – Novovolynsk and Myrgorod – have already the monitoring results. The results of the assessment are the following: Chortkiv – 35,0%, Khotyn -38,5%, Trostyanets – 38,6%. Novovolynsk has shifted in almost two years from 38,2 to 45,1%, Myrgorod had shown the progress from 39,0 to 47,2% despite the everyday bombing and shelling. The latter two are approaching the eea certification. The results of eea implementation are in the table below.

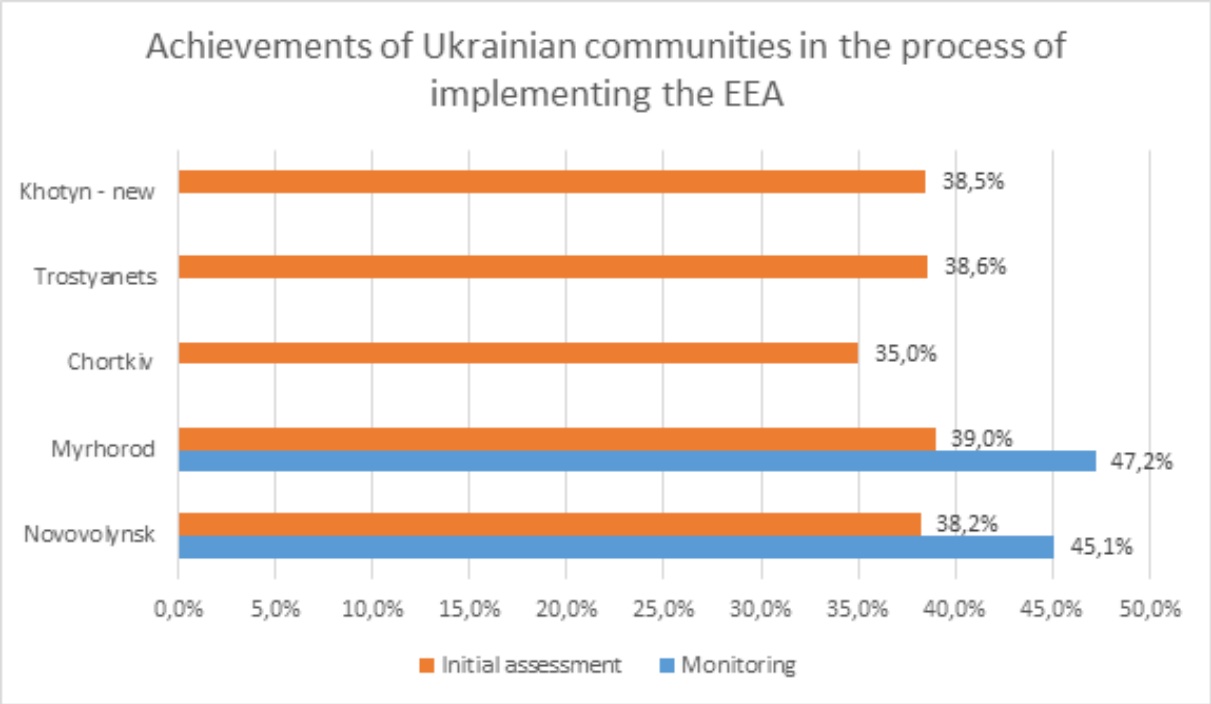


Figure 29 – Ukrainian municiaplities scores

In addition, two 2-days national city-to-city study visits were organized and performed for the representatives of energy teams of 5 Ukrainian EXITE pilot cities to the successful eea municipalities of Vinnytsya (August 3-4, 2023) and Dolyna (September 27-28, 2023). The EECU project team has developed the study visit agendas and provided all organizational work including support during the

both visits. The information about the visits was placed on the EECU and eea online resources and all materials related to the events were provided to the participants.

3 case studies on the best practices implemented in Ukrainian communities within the SECAPs and eea implementation processes were developed and prepared for further dissemination. Namely, these are the case of use of the EECU Municipal Revolving Fund as an instrument of financing the EE measures in residential sector, Cooperative initiative "Solar Town" implemented in Slavutych and Cell Energy Supply System that is in process of implementation in Dolyna. They are available via the link: https://eea.enefcities.org.ua/korysni-materialy-pro-yeev/tematychni-publikatsi-partneriv/

13. WORKSHOPS (AEA)

AEA organized the following workshops:

1) 27th of April 2023 - On the road to decarbonize the building sector
2) 17th of May 2023 - Energy Poverty
3) 7th of September 2023 - The Challenge of walking in a city
4) 12th of October 2023 - The Art of Making Excuses
5) 16th of November 2023 – Decarbonising District Heating

Factsheets are provided for dissemination and publication on the Excite website: http://www.excite-project.eu/publications.html

Factsheet 1_Creating links between energy consultants and social workers
Factsheet 2_Best practice - Vienna on foot
Factsheet 3_Austria on the Road of Decarbonizing the Building Sector
Factsheet4_The Art of Making Excuses
Factsheet5_District Heating_Wien Energie
Factsheet6_Positive Energy Districts
Exposing Climate Myths

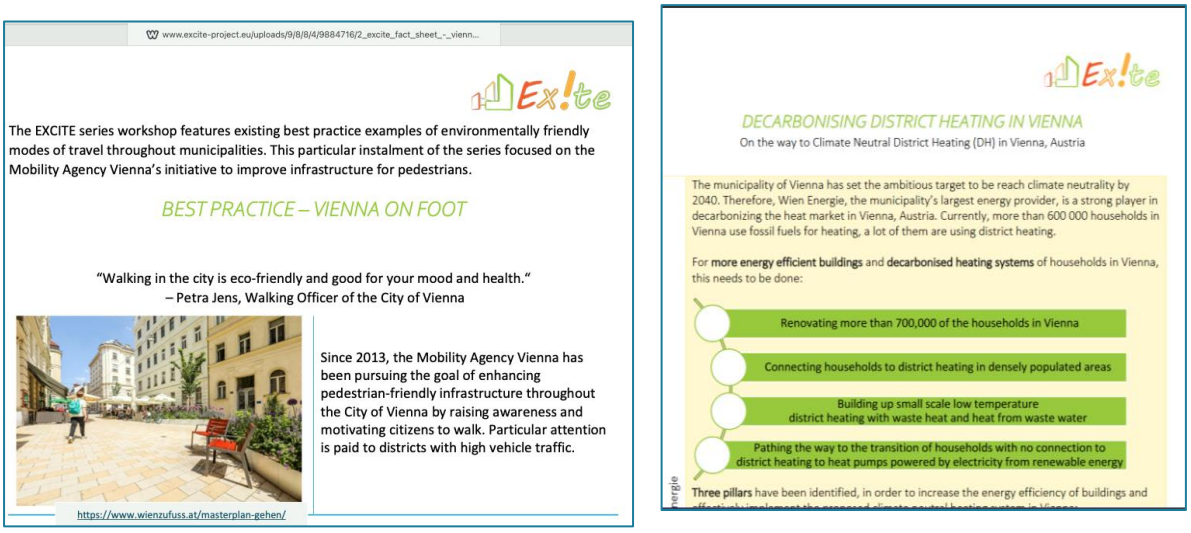


Figure 30 - Example of factsheet on EXCITE website

14. SECAP INTEGRATION

Both the European Energy Award (eea) and the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) initiatives come with specific documentation requirements. The eea documentation requirements must be inputted into the European Energy Award Management Tool (EMT), while the CoM documentation requirements go into the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP).

The EU Horizon project "H2020 CoME EASY" aimed to harmonize the documentation requirements of the eea and CoM initiatives. To achieve this, an interface was integrated into the eea EMT tool, allowing the direct transfer of energy efficiency and climate measures from the eea into the SECAP report.

This integration should facilitate streamlined reporting for municipalities participating in both the Covenant of Mayors initiative and the European Energy Award.

CoME EASY trainings were provided under initial phases of the eea implementation in new countries, together with the development of the institutional framework and ECITE toolbox *(cf.* Eea integration and national frameworks and Design and setup of national eea programmes and organisational structure*)*.

Situation in november 2023:

- **SECAP extract from EMT**: A SECAP extract from EMT is possible. However, the SECAP is then not 100% complete since the section on climate change adaptation (risks and vulnerability analysis) is missing, but can be added directly in the downloaded SECAP.
- **CoM reporting through EMT:** This was partially implemented with EMT 1.0: The part with the most data to be transferred - the emission inventories - can be exported directly and automatically from the EMT to the MyCovenant platform. The other parts, e.g. the activities/actions, cannot yet be exported directly to the CoM platform via API, but must be done by downloading an Excel from the EMT and uploading the Excel to CoM again.
- **EMT 2.0 (go-live scheduled for summer 2024):** With EMT 2.0, in the medium term all data exchange should be possible directly and automatically. In the short term, i.e. when it will go live in summer 2024, the functions that already exist should continue to be available.

National situation concerning SECAPs:

North Macedonia

In North Macedonia, there is currently no active Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) in place. Consequently, the CoME EASY tools within the European Energy Award Management Tool (EMT) have not been used, and there is no designated municipality where these tools should be implemented.

The national office (HFHM) has opted to assist municipalities in approaching their eea process through the obligatory elaboration of a PEE - Energy Efficiency program. Thus, the European Energy Award (eea) program should become a useful tool for municipalities to comply with national regulations.

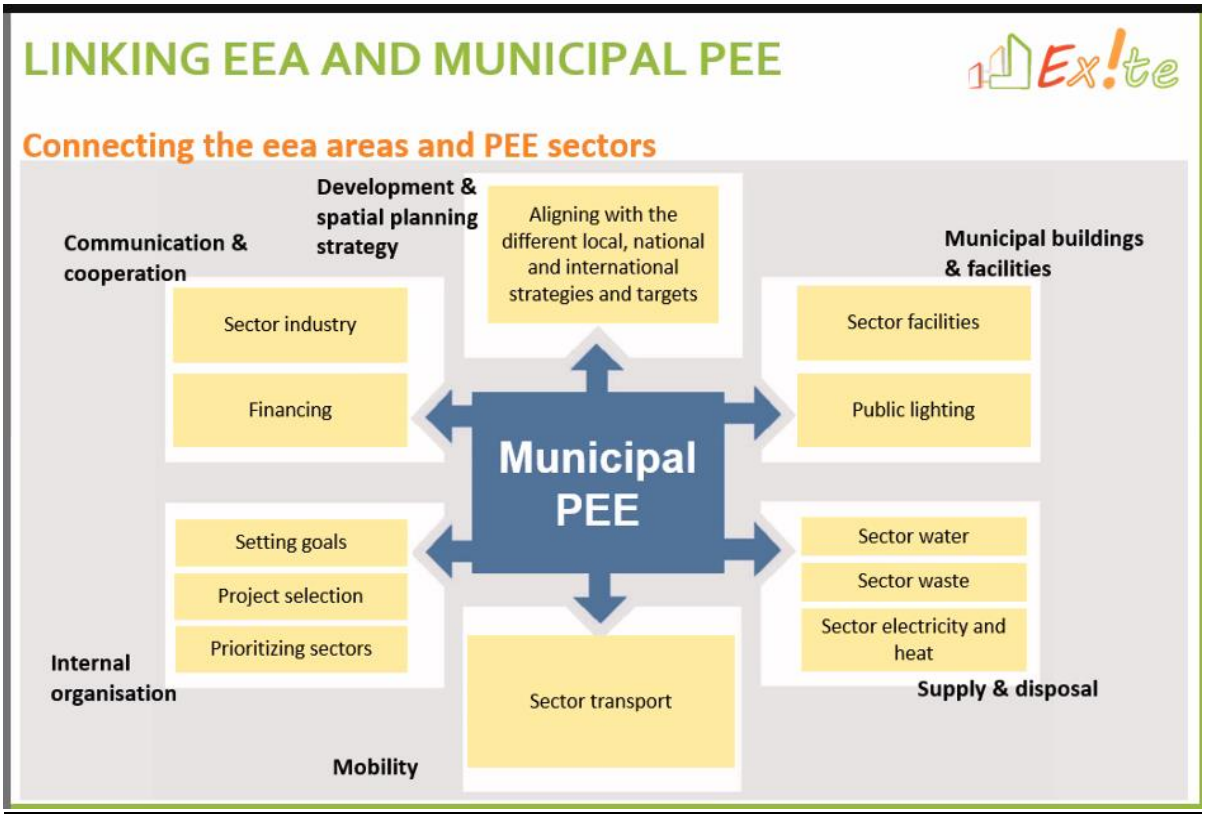


Figure 31 – Link between municipal programs for Energy Efficiency and eea

Slovenia

In Slovenia, several municipalities have adopted a SECAP and there are a number of others where SECAP is currently being prepared. According to Slovenian legislation, municipalities must have a Local Energy Concept, which is a good basis for SECAP integration.

Regarding the connection of eea and COM, the energy agency KSSENA is preparing SECAP for the municipalities of Velenje and Celje. In both cases we used the EMT tool to support the SECAP preparation. Additional knowledge was gained through CoME EASY training and peer to peer meetings within the EXCITE project.

Bulgaria

According to the national legislation in Bulgaria, the municipalities have a commitment to prepare only short-term (3 years) and long-term (10 years) programs for RES and a program for Energy Efficiency. By applying the eea methodology in practice, municipalities can satisfy part of their commitments, but also upgrade their practices in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring of their activities in the field of sustainable energy development. In addition, working together with national advisors, municipalities can increase their own capacity and support the implementation of measures in a more ambitious way.

However, the level of long-term commitment to additional initiatives in the area is not too high among the majority of municipalities in Bulgaria. By unwritten rule, they seek to fulfill only legally imputed

commitments, and it would be challenging to involve them. The long-standing provision of 100% grants for the implementation of energy efficiency measures aimed at local authorities without criteria for granting them does not help them to be active and proactive.

For municipalities that are part of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy initiative, an opportunity is available to ease the administrative burden, following the example of the Sofia Municipality, where SECAP serves as a long-term program for RES and EE program.

The compatibility of the CoM and the eea were clearly expressed in the framework of the preliminary energy review. Both, Sofia and Gabrovo have SECAPs, which allowed direct use of a large volume of already available data. This made the process smooth and productive for the advisors and allowed a comprehensive overview of the municipalities' practices and results. Certainly, the application of the eea methodology would support the monitoring of implementation, as well as the assessment of the need for periodic updating of the SECAPs, and tools that allow progress reporting on both initiatives would ensure better uptake and implementation by local authorities.

EEA ROLL-OUT PLAN

The pilot phase provided valuable insights, allowing the pilot countries and municipalities to validate the eea approach, the national structures and tools.

The upcoming phases must be strategically outlined in two key directions:

1. **Ongoing Support for the Pilot Municipalities:** the commitment extends to providing continuous support to the pilot municipalities over the course of the next three years, by the national eea offices and the national eea advisors, ensuring their sustained progress and success within the process.
2. **Expansion to New Local Authorities:** broaden the impact by reaching out to new communities, fostering collaboration, and extending the benefits of the eea initiative to a wider network of local authorities.

Further steps in North Macedonia

Table 7

	Timeline	*Financing*	*Actions*
Support for the Pilot Municipalities	2022-2026	HFHM	In the capacity of both a national office and a national advisor, HFHM has successfully established positive connections with the pilot municipalities. There are plans in place to maintain support for Karposh and Kochani, extending until at least 2026 to encompass the entire four-year EEA process. This EEA work involves the annual visits (3 to 5 days per year), in the framework of HFHM activities. HFHM already supports these municipalities in developing a roadmap and a 3 years action plan (mandatory program for Energy Efficiency in the country).
Expansion to New Local Authorities	2024-2026	Durring the appointed period, HFHM will support the operations of the national eea office HFHM will work on development of local partnerships with municipatities	New municipalites that have been introduced to the eea process: Delchevo, St. Nikole, Kumanovo. Delchevo has also participate to the eea peer to peer meeting organized in North Macedonia. HFHM will work on development of local partnerships with municipaties. The initial plan is to try to involve at least 2 new municipalities per year into the process of adaptation and implementation the eea methodology. HFHM is looking forward to any grant as well as partnerhip opportunities in aim to continue to promote the opportunities and benefits of the implementation of the eea methodology.

Further steps in Slovenia

Table 8

	Timeline	*Financing*	*Actions*
Support for the Pilot Municipalities	2022-2026	National programs/EU projects/KSSENA	KSSENA will continue to work with three pilot municipalities and help them implement the ambitious climate goals. After three years additional revision of the eea will be made.
Expansion to New Local Authorities	2024-2026	National programs/EU projects	Unfortunately, the national programme for the eea has not yet been set. The further extension will depend on the ambition of the municipalities. Additional EU funding will be beneficial for the further development of the eea process in Slovenia. National implementer - KSSENA is expected to carry out initial assessment and certification for one municipality per year.

Further steps in Bulgaria

Table 9

	Timeline	*Financing*	*Actions*
Support for the Pilot Municipalities	2022-2026	EnEffect/ National programs/EU projects	The team of trained local advisors will continue their joint work with the pilot municipalities and support them to improve their energy planning and management over the next 4 years. Municipal teams maintain direct contact with advisors, communicating as necessary through telephone calls, e-mail and personal meetings. EnEffect will continue to support active municipalities and provide a platform for the exchange of good practices through the series of public events for local authorities that it holds every year. In addition, EnEffect will support the municipalities' energy teams with regard to the development and implementation of measures specified in the eea action plan. Last but not least, EnEffect will actively look for opportunities regarding national and international projects, through which it can support Bulgarian municipalities in energy planning, management, implementation and reporting based on eea and CoM.

Expansion to New Local Authorities	2022 -2026	EnEffect/National programs/EU projects	EnEffect, as the secretariat of the municipal network for sustainable energy development EcoEnergy, disseminates information on the possibilities for improving energy management and planning as well as implementing the eea methodology. Currently, three new municipalities, namely Bansko, Elin Pelin and Troyan have expressed interest in developing a local strategic document in the field of sustainable energy and climate, for the preparation of which will be used the accumulated experience of implementing the eea in Bulgaria under the EXCITE project.

CONCLUSION

A) GLOBAL VIEW

In the EXCITE project, we encountered some challenges while adapting the eea Assessment Guidance (AG). We were mindful of not burdening local authorities with additional tools or demands that could require extra efforts from municipalities. Instead, our main goal was to facilitate their work, helping them progress further and define ambitious action plans. Additionally, our objective throughout this process was also to ensure that the AG seamlessly aligned with each country's unique national conditions, municipal competencies, and potentials.

We recognized that the successful introduction and implementation of the eea process in a new country extended beyond technical expertise and knowledge. Equally important was effectively communicating the benefits and relevance of the approach to stakeholders, policymakers, and local communities to gain their support and engagement.

To tackle these challenges, we embraced a collaborative approach. This collaborative effort allowed us to work towards integrating eea principles into the country's energy and climate policies, fostering shared goals.

B) NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

At the end of the Excite project, the organizational structure of eea programs in North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Slovenia are summarized below.

North Macedonia

Figure 32 – eea national structure North Macedonia

Bulgaria

Figure 33 – eea national structure in Bulgaria

Slovenia

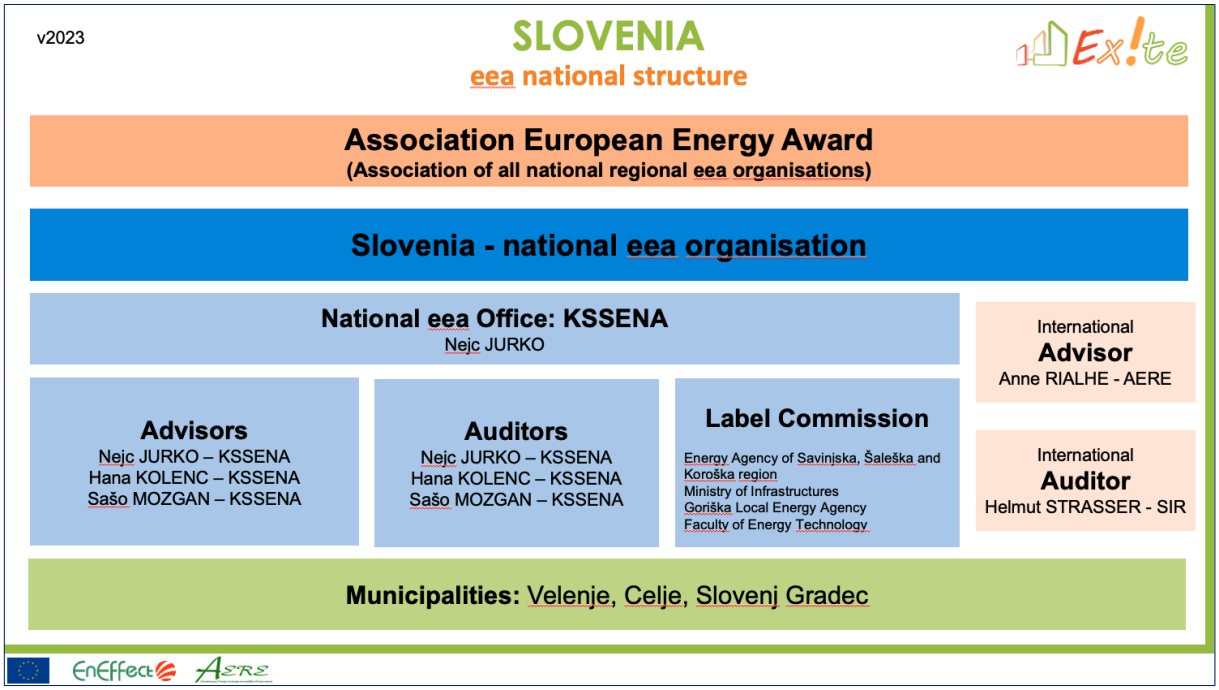


Figure 33 – eea national structure in Slovenia

WWW.EXCITE-PROJECT.EU WWW.EUROPEAN-ENERGY-AWARD.ORG

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 892034.

EnEffect

AUSTRIAN ENERGY AGENCY

AERE
Alternatives pour l'énergie, les énergies renouvelables et l'environnement

ROMANIA GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

KSSENA

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