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To get further information, please visit the project website at:
www.recommendproject.eu



RECOMMEND is an INTERREG IVC project running from 1st January 2012 until 31st December 2014. RECOMMEND provides enterprises and public authorities information on instruments and funding schemes for new ecological measures in the business sector.

Dear readers,

In six months time, the RECOMMEND project will come to an end and this is the penultimate newsletter. Despite being within sight of the finishing line, we are still full of Enthusiasm and look forward to presenting our most recent project highlights to you.

Did you know you can visit a nuclear power plant in Lower Austria (AT) without ever being exposed to radiation? RECOMMEND experts visited the Zwentendorf Nuclear Power Plant in the context of a field mission on the subject of "New Ways to Finance Alternative Energy Solutions". This plant now accommodates one of the largest photovoltaic power plants in Austria, financed by citizen participation. The field missions „e-mobility“ and „new funding instruments“ led to Estonia and the Czech Republic.

In the Italian region of Ascoli Piceno (IT), we teamed up to review our 8 regional RECOMMEND strategy plans, before they are officially submitted to the regional stakeholders in September. All of the plans propose 1-3 concrete measures which we can use to sustainably improve the local environmental situation.

We are particularly proud of the successful conclusion of all three Pilot Campaigns in the Czech Republic, Austria and Estonia, and of the bilateral exchange between Austria and Estonia, which came about as a result of RECOMMEND. The Estonian project partner has shown great interest in implementing the Lower Austrian best-practice example "Eco-Management Lower Austria" in Estonia starting from 2015.

Here's wishing you a wonderful summer!

Best wishes, Ingrid Rozhon MAS
RECOMMEND Projekt-Manager

PS: Our Final RECOMMEND Conference will take place from 11 - 12 September 2014 in Varna (BG).

Green Europe: The Finishing Touches to 8 Strategy Plans



One of the main objectives of RECOMMEND is to enable each of the 8 project regions to develop its own regional implementation plan (RIP). A RIP is a strategic document that defines the environmental support measures the partner identified during the project and would recommend for the partner's own region. A RIP contains information about who will implement the campaigns as well as the applying conditions, time and budget. It will be signed by a stakeholder who has the knowledge, the power and the resources to implement the recommendations.



The RIPs will be finalised before the Final RECOMMEND Conference, scheduled to take place from 11 - 12 September 2014. In order to increase implementation of these regional recommendations, the project team convened in Italy / Ascoli Piceno from 31 March – 2 April 2014. The overall purpose of this meeting was to review all 8 RIP drafts. Each partner presented their RIP in terms of e.g. efficiency, impact, practical feasibility and sustainability. The group members were then asked to provide feedback, recommendations and / or suggestions on how to improve the feasibility of each RIP.

The feedback was presented by the partners to the partners in a respectful, professional and helpful manner. It is now up to the partners to take the newly acquired feedback into consideration when finalising their individual RIP before the document is signed / approved by the party responsible.

At the event it was stressed again that it is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel, but that adopting already existing successful solutions can be just as valuable! When finalising a RIP it makes sense to look at already existing and similar best practice examples in a related field; such as the following web link: www.eco-innovation.eu

In our final RECOMMEND newsletter, which will be available in October 2014, we will introduce you to all 8 final RIPs in detail as well as to our recommendations and measures for each project region. We can already promise you that this article will include valuable, interesting and realistic proposals on how each region can contribute to making Europe a greener and better place to live!

Ascoli Piceno – an Italian Province of the Marche Region

Our Italian project partner will be given the opportunity to introduce you to the Provincia di Ascoli Piceno:

The Province of Ascoli Piceno, situated in central Italy, in the Marche Region, extends from the Adriatic coast up to the Sibillini Mountains. It is the ideal tourist destination, as it includes the sea, the countryside, historical towns of rare beauty and two National Parks: Gran Sasso and Laga Mountains. The brand territory is "Piceno, unexpected Italy", i.e. fine food, art, history, tradition, and culture. The Province's cultural highlight is the "Apennine Festival", held from May to July, a tribute to the mountain and its people, with a rich agenda of shows, concerts, excursions, tastings and meetings. Related to the Festival, the "Franciscan Trail of the Marca region", is promoted by the Province administration. It is a walking path, which follows the footsteps of Saint Francis, patron Saint of Italy, through the symbolic places of the Franciscan movement, between the Marche and Umbria regions. The Piceno region is worth visiting 365 days a year, to enjoy new emotions and discoveries anytime, throughout a busy agenda of events, such as the Quintana parade, historical carnival festivals, and theatre seasons and concerts, played in the many historical theatres of the territory all year round. On the coast, San Benedetto del Tronto, heart of the Palm Trees Riviera, offers a pleasant mild climate, due to the crown of hills framing the coastline, protecting it from the cold mountain winds, and thus allowing palm trees to flourish. The city is a tourist resort and one of the most active fishing ports of the mid-Adriatic.

The economy of the province of Ascoli Piceno is boosted mainly by tourism and supported by further attractions rooted in the richness of the territory, such as food and wine, olive oil, olives, fruit and vegetables processing and production, and craftsmanship. Factories are mainly small or medium, often family-run with high quality products, sold all over Europe.

In recent years, sustainable energies have played an increasing role in the local economy, both in the industrial and home-building sectors. The San Benedetto del Tronto municipality, for instance, has installed solar panels throughout its territory and one of the city schools has even been awarded for its valuable and well-advanced energy plan.



Piazza del Popolo



San Benedetto del Tronto

Text © Luigina Amurri, pictures © Provinz Ascoli Piceno
Head of the European Policy Department of the Province of Ascoli Piceno.

From Theory to Practice: RECOMMEND Finalises 3 Pilot Campaigns

One of the RECOMMEND milestones is the implementation of 3 pilot campaigns hosted by the project partners from the Czech Republic, Austria and Estonia. The aim of all 3 Pilot Campaigns was to test new measures in the area of eco-management and eco-innovation, thereby contributing to a more environmentally friendly Europe. You can read about the individual Pilot Campaigns below.

The Czech Republic and its Pilot Campaign

Based on previous analysis and dedicated discussions on the subject of regional innovation with the participating stakeholders and key actors, a system-critical disparity was identified in the region of South Bohemia (CZ). Intensity of cooperation between local R&D and industry is the lowest in the Czech Republic. The main reason for this is mutual incompatibility since the industry deals more with machinery, mechatronics and similar, while local R&D operates mostly in life sciences. In order to improve the cooperation between these 2 sectors, the RECOMMEND project partner Ekoport, in close cooperation with the South Bohemian Agency for Support to Innovative Entrepreneurship, proposed to implement innovation vouchers in the region. A RECOMMEND Pilot Action was then implemented with a view to checking whether such tools are welcomed and accepted by the regional target groups. The results of a test run have shown that such funding tools help to bring different sectors together, fostering closer cooperation between them. It has illustrated that cooperation between R&D institutions, industry, and economy can thus be improved as well as the communication between economy, politics, science, and industry.

The Regional Authority has already approved the first allocation for the pilot call and has commissioned its shareholder company which operates the South Bohemian Science and Technology Park (JVTP) to provide administration of this tool. JVTP is now working closely with Ekoport to prepare all the needed documents, application forms and selection criteria. Ekoport has already launched a PR campaign including the design of a new logo, website (www.inovoucher.cz), workshops and press releases.

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Lower Austria and its Pilot Campaign

There are many established funding institutions and services in the RECOMMEND project region of Lower Austria (AT) that provide professional support to companies and public institutions when it comes to implementing (corporate) environmental measures. For consumers, the wide range of advice and funding instruments available can be overwhelming or difficult to navigate. The search for an appropriate consultant and the most closely aligned funding streams is often time-consuming and ties up valuable resources. For this reason, the RECOMMEND Lead Partner, the Office of the Lower Austrian Regional Government / Department of Environmental and Energy Economics, decided to develop a new database called MY ECO-EXPERT in the context of its RECOMMEND Pilot Campaign. The aim of this database is to provide an in-depth overview of external Lower Austrian consultants who can support them with their measures in the area of eco-management and eco-innovation. The database supplies detailed information on the training, references and activities of the external consultants. This tool should serve as the equivalent of a directory to help its target groups locate a suitable consultant close by, quickly and without a lengthy search, a consultant who is right for them and matches their issue profile. Additionally, this approach should help enhance the quality of registered consultants and foster networking amongst each other.

Contact person for Lower Austria Pilot Campaign:

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Hier steht später ein kurzer Einleitungstext und Erklärung wie das Tool funktioniert. Eine kurze Einleitung zum Thema Umweltförderung und warum dieses Tool hier erstellt wurde (Ziele, Erklärung)

Ich suche eine Förderung als:

benötige eine geförderte Beratung zum Thema:

(genaue Eingrenzung im nächsten Schritt)

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Geförderte Beratungen für **Betriebe** zum Thema **Umweltschutz** sind in den folgenden Bereichen möglich. Bitte spezifizieren Sie Ihre Anforderungen genauer:

- Abfall, Recycling
- AWK - Abfallwirtschaftskonzept
- Abluft
- Abwasser
- Chemikalien
- Chemikalienleasing
- CO2-Footprint
- EPD
- Feinstaub, Luftreinhaltung
- Klimabündnisbetriebe
- Mobilität, betriebliche Logistik
- Ökobilanz
- Ökologische Baustoffe
- Ökologischer Fußabdruck
- Ressourceneffizienz
- Seveso II
- Umweltschutz allgemein

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Estonia and its Pilot Campaign

In order to raise awareness for the need to improve the environmental situation in Estonia, the Estonian RECOMMEND project partner TREA organised a series of workshops in Estonia. The 3 seminars focused on the following three key issues:

- Green procurement
- Eco-innovation and eco-management supporting measures and schemes
- Eco-design and eco-labels – key to the success on export markets

The workshop on “Green procurement” took place in Tallinn on 16 May 2013. This topic was selected because, in Estonia, Green procurement is rarely used and hardly known. In order to improve knowledge on this subject, international experts from Austria, the United Kingdom and Sweden were invited to keep the Estonian experts informed about the Green procurement procedure in their countries. All experts offered concrete information with regard to how the procedure is organised and implemented in their countries. The discussion at the end was very fruitful, relating to how the public sector can motivate the private sector to use green procurement in city planning, in building and the renovation of houses. In total, 35 Estonian experts participated, representing the Ministry of Environment, the City of Tallinn, the Ministry of Economics and Communication and many other public and private organisations.

The second workshop took place from 25 – 26 February 2014 in Tartu and Tallinn. TREA invited two experts from Lower Austria as guest speakers. The aim of this seminar was to keep Estonian experts informed on how the project region “Lower Austria” endeavours to reduce the environmental impact of public and private businesses, to increase the numbers of firms with EMAS, ISO 14001, and ISO 50001 certificates, and to foster environmental innovation. The target audiences for both workshops were representatives of various Estonian institutions involved in issuing environmental and eco-innovation support schemes on state, county, or municipal levels and representatives of the business sector. One of the key topics was the introduction of the Lower Austrian Best Practice Example called “Eco-Management Lower Austria” – a demand voucher scheme. The Austrian experts offered concrete information on its structure, goals, financial structure, measurable output, promotion activities and the annual award ceremony of good practices that have been initiated through this programme. Plans are to implement this voucher scheme in Estonia in 2015.

The third information campaign took place on 18 June 2014 and focused on “Eco-design and Eco-labels”. The seminar identified ways for companies to improve their competitiveness through eco-design and eco-labelling. Various companies shared their experiences of applying eco-labels. This seminar targeted SMEs interested in raising their competitiveness on export markets outside Estonia and wishing to establish eco-labelled products.

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EXPERT EXCHANGE I-III

After the implementation of the three RECOMMEND Pilot Campaigns, the three pilot action hosts invited the project partners to come and see the results of their activities. Please read about the field mission to the Pilot Campaign hosts below.

Expert Exchange I: E-Mobility – the Baltic Pioneer

At the end of March 2014, an expert meeting on the subject of e-mobility took place in Tallinn to which the Estonian project partner TREA invited interested parties from the project region. Experts responsible for the regional implementation of e-mobility strategies from Lower Austria (Austria), Peterborough (England) and Varna (Bulgaria) participated in this information exchange. The aim was to experience Estonia's pioneering role in e-mobility personally and to draw inspiration from this for one's own e-mobility strategy.

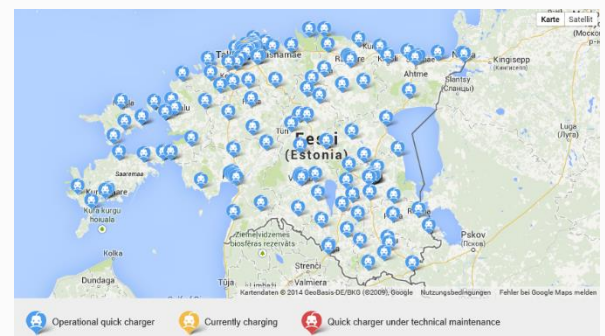
In many technical presentations and site visits, the experts were able to see for themselves that there is every reason for Estonia to be considered a pioneer in this subject. The vehicle fleet used by the Ministry of Social Affairs is being converted to electric cars swiftly and when purchasing electric cars, private individuals are granted subsidies of up to 50%. The basis for this development is the ubiquitous "electric charging station system", unique in the world, comprised of 165 CHAdeMO standard battery charging stations, and being continuously developed and expanded since last year. Owners of e-vehicles can travel across the country without concern, secure in the knowledge that they will encounter e-charging stations at regular intervals along all of their routes. All the cities and all the larger towns of Estonia are equipped with e-charging stations which the driver can locate using an app and reserve in advance. The stations installed along highways are never more than 40 to 60 km apart. The cost of one charging is between 2.5 and 5 euros. It takes less than 30 minutes to achieve a 90% car battery charge which - depending on the model - corresponds to up to 140 km in driving range.

The participants in this field mission were impressed by the Estonian e-mobility concept and emphasised the importance of such international expert meetings. A network at an EU level brings valuable input for one's own regional portfolio as we can only protect Europe's natural resources and push for sustainable living spaces if we do so together.

<http://elmo.ee/home>



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Expert Exchange II: New Funding Instruments

The Czech RECOMMEND partner - Ekoport - who is responsible for designing and implementing one of the 3 pilot campaigns - organised a field mission from 12 - 13 May 2014 in Prague. About twenty experts from the RECOMMEND partner regions of Austria, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Italy and Poland attended this meeting. Aside from presenting the implemented voucher scheme, the overall topic at this meeting was the introduction of new funding instruments and the discussion of current challenges relating to ways in which to support eco-innovation and eco-energy initiatives on the regional level during the upcoming funding period 2014 – 2020.

After introducing the RECOMMEND Pilot Action, the experts from the Technology Center talked about new funding instruments, main priorities, allocations, basic conditions and expected impact as well as the current call-for-tender status. Mrs. Čejková and Mrs. Korytová then presented two topics which were of major interest to the RECOMMEND consortium:

- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials
- Secure, clean and efficient energy

After an intensive discussion, working groups were established in order to discuss new project and cooperation ideas. Due to the excellent cooperation experience in the RECOMMEND context, most of the partners are interested in pursuing further cooperation in the next funding period. International networking cooperation should not cease upon the official end to the RECOMMEND project on 31 December 2014 but should continue beyond that. If this were the case, EU-funded projects such as RECOMMEND are a valuable contribution for improving the European Community.

Expert Exchange III: New Ways to Finance Alternative Energy Solutions

The RECOMMEND Lead Partner, the Department of Environmental and Energy Economics of the Office of the Lower Austrian Regional Government, invited interested project partners to Lower Austria to present to them the results of its RECOMMEND Pilot Campaign "My Eco-Expert". Additionally, the host organised specific lectures and company tours for the guests revolving around the subject of "Ways to Finance Alternative and Sustainable Energy Solutions". A total number of 18 experts from Estonia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria participated.

A highpoint of the delegation visit was the tour of the solar power plant in Schönkirchen, opened in May 2014. The Lower Austrian Regional Government implemented this citizen participation model together with the energy provider EVN and invited private individuals to finance the construction of the solar power plant. The 2,000 solar panels available were issued and the order registrations were received and sold out within just 24 hours.

Not only do the participating citizens contribute to environmental and climate protection, they also receive high interest rates for their green electricity. Employees of EVN and of the Energy and Environment Agency of Lower Austria (eNu) informed the foreign delegates in great detail about how citizen participation models work, what PR measures to use in order to generate the interest of citizens to participate financially and what services are used to support municipalities in implementing the citizen participation models.

The tour of the Nuclear Power Plant Zwentendorf, which never went into operation, also generated great interest among the delegates. It was the first time the guests had seen a nuclear plant from inside, without being exposed to radiation, and they were very interested to see what alternative forms of use have been found for the Nuclear Power Plant Zwentendorf. The premises of the Nuclear Power Plant Zwentendorf now accommodate a solar power research park. The installed photovoltaic power plant supplies sustainable, environmentally friendly energy and allows research in the area of photovoltaics.

The presentation of the successful funding instrument "Climate and energy model regions" represented another topical focus. The purpose of this measure is to support the aim of the Austrian Federal Government to achieve Austrian independence from fossil fuels by 2050. The measures and funding options were presented that Lower Austrian energy regions employ to optimise the use of regional resources and to cover their regional energy needs through a clever mix of renewable energy production, energy efficiency measures and intelligent control.



links:

www.noe.gv.at

www.oekomangement.at

www.klimaundenergiemodellregionen.at

www.klimafonds.gv.at

www.enu.at

www.arge-buergerkraftwerke.at

www.zwentendorf.com

www.evn.at

Lower Austrian Commitment to Corporate Environmental Protection Enjoys International Acclaim!

The overarching aim of the RECOMMEND Project is to promote the sharing of experience between European regions in the area of climate and environmental protection in companies and public offices. Among other things, many successful environmental protection measures from all over Europe were presented throughout the duration of the project.

The Estonian project partner, the Tartu Regional Energy Agency, expressed great interest in the Lower Austrian best-practice example "Eco-Management Lower Austria" and is planning to implement the model in Estonia starting from 2015. For this reason, Peter Obricht, Head of the Department of Environmental and Energy Economics of the Lower Austrian Regional Government and Lead Partner of the RECOMMEND Project, and Josef Wolfbeisser, CEO of ConPlusUltra were invited to Estonia from 25 - 26 February 2014 to give a detailed presentation of the "Eco-Management Lower Austria" programme to Estonian experts from the spheres of politics, business, and environmental technology.

More information about the Austrian voucher scheme:
www.oekomangement.at



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