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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,

A very warm welcome to our final RECOMMEND project newsletter.

Time can pass so quickly! The INTERREG IVC project RECOMMEND started successfully almost 3 years ago and it will complete on 31st December 2014. The overall project target was to develop new policy instruments - or to adopt existing ones to improve eco-innovation at a regional level.

This newsletter focuses on our final RECOMMEND conference which took place in Varna / Bulgaria last September. One of the core topics at the conference was the presentation of the 8 regional implementation plans (RIP). Each RIP set out different environmental support measures each partner discovered during the project and recommended for their own region. An additional highlight was the presentation of the European Initiative "The Covenant of Mayors" which is strongly supported by our Bulgarian project partners. Also have a look at our project results at a glance. The results of our work show clearly just how important EU funded projects are. We are convinced that improving eco-management and eco-innovation at a regional level will help to meet the current environmental and economic challenges at a European level. Only a joint approach and international cooperation will help to reach the EU's contribution for worldwide environmental changes.

In this spirit- all the best for your green activities and many thanks for your interest in RECOMMEND!

Best wishes, Ingrid Rozhon MAS
RECOMMEND Projekt-Manager

Eco-innovation in Varna

The final RECOMMEND project conference took place in Varna / Bulgaria from 11th -12th September 2014 and was hosted by the two Bulgarian Project Partners: Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities and the Public Environmental Center for Sustainable Development.

Varna is the biggest cultural-administrative center in North Bulgaria and on the Black Sea Coast. The population of the city is 348,527 people (2014) which makes Varna the third-largest city in Bulgaria. The municipality produces 4.5 % of gross domestic product over Bulgaria and 60 % in the Northeast Planning Region. Considering one of the fastest growth rates since the beginning of the political changes in Bulgaria, the expectations are that in the coming years Varna will take second place in population after Sofia. The geographical position of the city determines its economic outlook. Traditionally, the two pillars of the economy are the shipping business and tourism & services. The service sector forms nearly 60% of sales revenue for the municipality and provides the highest employment at 66.4%. Tourist flow is constantly increasing and in recent years, the average number of visitors to Varna has reached 800,000 per year.

The maritime industry accounted for a share of 30% of revenues. This includes all companies associated with maritime activities. The sector employs over 12,000 people who earn 14-15% of the sales revenue of the municipal economy. There are enterprises of shipbuilding, ship repair, shipping, dredging and maintenance of sea lanes and facilities.

There are 1,965 SMEs which produce 34% of the GDP for the municipality. It is highlighted the tendency of priority growing number of companies in the IT sector. In total 73 % of the companies in the information and communication technologies sector in the Northeast Planning Region work in Varna – that's more than 600 in total.

The community in Varna has the potential to move to the knowledge economy. Typically in Varna there are more than 10% of companies that emit more than 20% of its turnover for innovation. Results from a survey of companies in Varna in 2008 compared with the results of a survey in 2006 showed a significant increase in the percentage of companies that develop new products and services (58%).

Regarding the use and adoption of eco-innovation we can note that there is a lot to be desired, though good examples are not lacking. One of the pioneers in this field is the company 3K. With a workforce of ten people, the company just completed the construction of a Center for Energy Solutions. The buildings that make up the center are designed to be energy independent, using 100% renewable energy. The center has its own treatment system for effluent water. Part of the future plans of the company is the manufacture of electric cars in 2015 and the construction of charging pumps in the city. In 2015 it is expected that with the support of RECOMMEND project Varna Municipality will launch an Eco-voucher system for financing small and medium enterprises that plan to introduce eco-innovation in their activity.

Iliyan Iliev, Public Environmental Center for Sustainable Development (BG)

Covenant of Mayors

The Covenant of Mayors Initiative - Committed to local sustainable energy

At the Final RECOMMEND conference, the Bulgarian host organised a Round Table event on the topic “Covenant of Mayors”. The aim was to discuss with Bulgarian experts and RECOMMEND partners the impact of such a European movement- especially on Bulgaria.

In 2008 the ambitious Covenant of Mayors Initiative was launched by the EU Commission to endorse and support the local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change. It was stated as a voluntary commitment of signatories to meet and exceed the EU targets through the implementation of Sustainable Energy Action plans /SEAP/ thus achieving a sufficient level of energy sustainability vs. the 20-20-20 targets. The new Energy Efficiency Communication Strategy, released as of 23 July 2014, proposes mid and long-term objectives for the EU's energy efficiency policy by assessing progress towards the 2020 energy efficiency target and setting a new 30% target for 2030.

Varna, Burgas and Dobrich were the first Bulgarian cities which have signed the Covenant of Mayors in 2009 and energy savings have been achieved following the energy and climate policy in place. These actions serve as examples for others to follow, notably through referring to the following benchmarks of excellence:

- Application of energy efficient measures in municipal buildings in Burgas – energy savings: 13,1 Mio kWh
- Energy efficiency in street lighting in Burgas – energy savings: 1,1 Mio kWh
- Application of ESCO contract for energy efficient management in public buildings in Dobrich
- Improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in respect to safety in Varna

Beyond energy savings, the results of signatories' actions are manifold: creation of skilled and stable jobs; a healthier environment and quality of life; enhanced economic competitiveness and greater energy independence. “Covenant of Mayors” is an excellent best practise example which clearly shows how innovative partnerships can mobilise local and regional actors to fulfil EU objectives together.

For further information please visit: www.covenantofmayors.eu

Mariana Ivanova, Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities



RECOMMEND results at a glance

The RECOMMEND project team is convinced that through the RECOMMEND project each partner could make meaningful and valuable contributions to the numerous EU initiatives such as Lisbon, Gothenburg or Europe 2020 strategies in order to make Europe a healthier, cleaner and more liveable and sustainable environment. Here is a summary of our project which we hope will convince you too!

ABOUT RECOMMEND

RECOMMEND. Regions using eco-management for eco-innovation development is an INTERREG IVC project running from 1st January 2012 until 31st December 2014. The Lead Partner is the Regional Government of Lower Austria. Together with 9 public and private organisations from 8 European Member States, they have set up measures to meet the project targets.

THE OVERALL PROJECT TARGET

The main objective of RECOMMEND was to improve regional policies with regard to environmental sustainability in their economic policy. Concrete regional adopted recommendations and approved instruments, such as funding schemes, were developed during the lifetime of the project. This input offers regional authorities and public intermediaries a set of proposals and ideas around how they can foster and use eco-management as a lever for enhanced eco-innovation in their region.

THE CHALLENGE

The following three crucial questions were handled during the project life time:

- How can regional public authorities and enterprises be made aware and convinced of the importance and efficiency of environmental management?
- How can enterprises be supported effectively when starting or intensifying their orientation towards more eco-efficient and eco-innovative production?
- Which will be the appropriate methodologies to stimulate a high level of commitment for sustainable development at the different levels of regional economies?

OUR RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Done	Project results
✓	8 action plans (RIPs) for future regional actions in eco-management / innovation
✓	3 Pilot actions testing new methods and measures in eco-management/ innovation
✓	6 field missions to partner regions on specific eco relevant topics
✓	4 training sessions on Circular economy, crowd funding, green procurement, e-mobility
✓	6 site visits (Best Practice examples)
✓	53 thematic talks for awareness raising conducted by all partners
✓	16 dissemination events organised by partners
✓	24 external events where RECOMMEND was presented
✓	7 RECOMMEND project meetings in partner regions
✓	1 study on 15 best practice examples
✓	54 media articles about RECOMMEND
✓	9 RECOMMEND press releases
✓	3 project films
✓	6 RECOMMEND newsletters
✓	1 project homepage: about 900 visits / month
✓	75% -85% EU funding / partner
✓	RECOMMEND as a Think Tank & gate keeper for future activities (extract) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Green distribution Centre (IKEA in UK) • transfer of best practice: Ökomanagement Lower Austria -> to Estonia • bilateral meeting on Emobility -> AT expert delegation visited Estonia • transfer of best practice: Czech Voucher scheme-> to Bulgaria, Italy, Poland
✓	Enhanced networking at (inter)national level
✓	Promoting the Lead Partner as an expert at (inter)national level
✓	Improving staff members' skills: more knowledge in eco relevant topics, international project management know-how, intercultural skills, language skills, ...

Green Europe: 8 concrete strategy plans

One of the main objectives of RECOMMEND was the preparation of 8 regional implementation plans (RIPs). A RIP is a strategic document that defines the environmental support measures each partner identified during the project and would recommend for their 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.

Recommended RIP Measures at a glance	Country
Development of common search tool "My eco-expert" for eco experts of all consultancy programmes in the region.	AT
Innovation vouchers & Establishing instruments support for cluster development	PL
Implementing pilot (eco) innovation vouchers scheme	CZ
Establishing Eco Bionics Cluster	SI
Launching annual award ceremony for eco friendly companies	EE
Implementing a system for the evaluation of environmental sustainability of buildings to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption & Eco-Management Vouchers	IT
EMS Cluster Club & Improved networking, advice, support and training for key sectors and Fengate geographical cluster	UK
Voucher supporting Energy innovation	BG

For further information please visit our project homepage:

http://www.recommendproject.eu/rip_output.htm

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For further information about the RECOMMEND project, please contact:



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