



Renewable Community Empowerment in Northern Territories



Northern Periphery and
Arctic Programme
2014–2020



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Investing in your future
European Regional Development Fund

Issue 1

Project Objectives:

To increase the capacity of communities to develop their own solutions for reliable, energy efficient public infrastructure;

To maximise energy asset management in water services;

Knowledge exchange programme leading to increased awareness and sustainable public policy;

Robust, sustainable community projects that will be self-sufficient post NPA funding.

What is RECENT?

RECENT (Renewable Community Empowerment in Northern Territories) is a project part funded by the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (Interreg 2014 - 2020), which started on the 1st September 2015. The Lead Partner is International Resources and Recycling Institute (IRRI) www.irri.org.uk from Scotland, with partners from Sweden, Finland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The RECENT project aims to increase energy knowledge in rural communities, and help them to have more resilient and energy efficient public infrastructure capable of handling climate change related risks. The project will develop 24 pilot community energy and energy efficiency projects across 5 NPA partner countries, with focus on the innovative use of community-owned water assets.

A previous project, Water Asset Renewable Energy Solutions (WARES) www.waresnpp.eu demonstrated that small communities in the NPA region need help to identify and explore their hidden resources and build capacity. RECENT

will meet this demand and leave a lasting legacy through tangible solutions and improved level of organisational knowledge. The target communities are small, remote, and face challenges to public infrastructure, such as competing uses for land and water, combined with climate change impacts. RECENT will support communities to become more energy-self-sufficient by developing small-scale solutions, building synergy between critical public infrastructure. The innovation comes from exploring a range of new solutions in the water-land-energy nexus and applying the appropriate solution to the needs of the communities.

The objectives of the project are:

To increase the capacity of communities to develop their own solutions for reliable, energy efficient public infrastructure;

To maximise energy asset management, in water services; Knowledge exchange programme leading to increased awareness and a sustainable public policy;

Robust, sustainable community projects that will be self-sufficient post project funding.

The outputs of the project will be:

24 pilot energy projects (A minimum of 5 in Scotland) in 5 NPA countries with community benefits and tangible impacts;

6 of the pilots will demonstrate symbiotic solutions of energy use of by-products; Benchmarking pilot solutions to gain benefit from the transnational collaboration;

A knowledge exchange programmes, with workshops best practice guidelines and templates to improve the stock of organisational knowledge and positive impact on public policy.

Contribution to policy and debate on sustainable community energy at regional, national and European levels through the development of a multi-level stakeholder group, interacting nationally and trans-nationally, with the RECENT partners who will act as the secretariat.

To address these issues, a transnational partnership has been established which combines research expertise in renewable energy and resource efficiency, communities' Climate Strategies, business development and innovation as well as in the use and application of co-design and co-production methods.

Partner Meeting—Jokkmokk

Jokkmokk municipality is situated at the Polar Circle and has about 5000 inhabitants. It is the second largest in size of all Swedish municipalities and is with an area of 19,477 km² slightly smaller than Slovenia or 1,5 the size of Northern Ireland.

Jokkmokk is a centre for the Sami people, and traditional reindeer herding is still an important business in Jokkmokk. The name Jokkmokk is Sami for the words "river" and "bend", since the town is situated close to a bend in the nearby river. The Lule River is very important for the municipality, both historically as a main transport route but also nowadays producing 12.5TWh electricity within Jokkmokk boundaries alone.

The meeting was opened with a speech from Jokkmokk mayor Robert Bernhardsson who welcomed the partners and spoke about

the region of Jokkmokk.

Each partner presented on the work they have done so far as part of their work packages. Discussion was held around the social media requirements of the project and each member will take over the social media for a month to promote their region.

Other actions for future activity were agreed between the partners including researching relevant funding streams for each region and preparation for webinars.

A video production workshop was held so that the partners could begin to bring together media ideas and create videos of the activity being carried out as part of the project.

During the meeting the partners also partook in a

series of workshops addressing issues related to the theme of the project. Three questions were asked and the partners' responses can be seen later in this newsletter.

Partners discussed the pilot sites that have been identified so far and presented to the group on what work has begun in this area.

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Renewable Community Empowerment in Northern Territories

international resources and recycling institute

Lead Partner Introduction—International Resources and Recycling Institute, Scotland

Office location: Scotland;

IRRI was founded in 2004 and is active in seeking innovations that will help accelerate the theory and practice of resource use. IRRI's cause is making the world's resources stretch to meet the world's needs. We cannot invent any more resources than the world can provide. But we can invent new ways of using them to make them stretch further. Its main office is in Edinburgh, Scotland, however a significant amount of work is delivered in the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland, and a presence also exists in Inverness. We are an independent charity which has a voluntary Board of Trustees who derive from a wide range of backgrounds.

Our work connects with policy-makers in all regions and IRRI is trusted within the public, private and academic sectors to be able to draw out the most productive issues for exploration, and design projects with

interest and potential for a wide variety of partners and concerns, with a particular emphasis placed on the social impacts that resource use has on the communities involved.

IRRI designs, develops and manages innovative partnership projects addressing different areas of resource use. In the past few years the vast majority of our projects are based in European partnerships and are funded by the European Union. Two have been in water management, dealing with groundwater management, and with the creation of new lakes and wetlands; two dealt with renewable energy for communities, and for SME's; one examined the means of helping to make islands more sustainable; and one working with the principles of variable pricing and the use of smart metering for increased energy efficiency. Throughout the delivery of these projects, IRRI has created an excellent reputation for its project management and leadership in addition to effective project delivery.

IRRI also led a solar kiosk project in Malawi in partnership with the Scottish Government and Renew'N'Able Malawi (RENAMA) amongst a number of other partners and IRRI continue to act as trusted advisors and supports of the work that RENAMA deliver in Malawi.

"Water Day was a great way to raise awareness of water conservation and engage with the younger audience"

International Water Day—19th March 2016

CLAR ICH organised a programme of activities for International Water Day including hosting a fantastic family fun day on the 19th March in County Mayo to celebrate the occasion.

The fun day was held Mayfield Lake Development, Claremorris. The event was widely successful, with activities including bilingual storytelling, a puppet show, water quality sampling and various art activities. International Water Day was organised for children between 0 and 12 years of age and children and adults from all areas were welcome to participate.

Sarah Duffy, RECENT Co-Coordinator

for Clár ICH, said, "RECENT offers an exciting opportunity to really make a difference to remote, rural communities. Changing climate and the ongoing development of renewable energy solutions provides a platform for communities to adapt their local economies and ensure that they can plan for a sustainable future. International Water Day was a great way to raise awareness of water conservation and engage with the younger audience to help the growth of awareness".



Early Project Activity and Baseline Report—University of Oulu, Finland

University of Oulu works with two Finnish regions in RECENT, with more than 60 municipalities: Lapland and Northern Ostrobothnia. Choosing a pilot within a 400 km travel distance from Oulu is a challenge. During the first weeks, we were busy with finding a strategy how to pick a community with needs and interests in the project. Luckily, Sodankylä, located in the middle of Lapland, was very interested in the project.

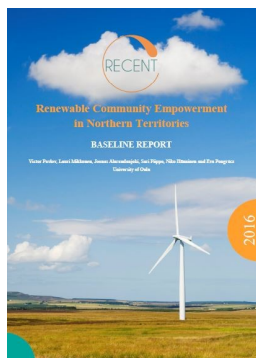
We organized a meeting with the local authority and it turned out that they had many potential pilot sites to choose from. We decided to work with them and sent there our researcher for several days to collect energy and community data necessary for the project. Now, the pilot sites are being studied for potential energy genera-

tion/saving and some results will be available soon.

Meanwhile, a baseline report about all participating countries in RECENT and selection criteria for pilot sites has been developed. The baseline report includes information about community critical infrastructure services, in particular the water sector; tell about energy solutions intended to improve community energy security and self-sufficiency; and describe tools to support implementation of renewable energy solutions in RECENT participating countries, with their similarities and differences underlined. The selection criteria will help decide which pilot site to choose within the community. It will take into account factors like, availability of energy assets, climate change, innovativeness

of the pilot, etc.

Now, the work has begun on reviewing different methods for assessing the pilot sites energy generation and saving potential. Finding the most suitable method for the different situations is what we are aiming for.



Issue 1

What should change policy-wise in the next 10 years to enable communities in your region to create a sustainable energy system? Is there anything all regions have in common?

It was agreed there are some commonalities across all the geographical areas of the partnership, including suffering from the effects of climate change, suffering from the cost of energy increasing and all areas are remote and experiencing depopulation. It was also agreed that all areas have "communities" but the definition of a community may vary across the regions.

Several challenges to creating a sustainable energy system were identified. Primarily it was felt the EU was too large for a 1 size fits all policy and the challenge of passing on info on EU and national policies to communities was also recognized.

It was felt that better coordina-

tion between water, energy and waste policy measures are a key requirement for the future and the project should consider "awareness raising". Communities are often not aware of EU targets or policies or how they can help contribute to reaching these. It was also felt it was important to link command and control mechanisms to policies in a clear, transparent and understandable way.

The outcome of this discussion was the idea of implementing a rating of EU communities and introduction of a mentoring program.

A mentoring program would bring financial benefit and could be based upon the old "Twin Towns" initiative that has brought different communities together in the past.



What barriers do you see today and the next 10 years to come for communities to develop sustainable energy systems? Is there anything all regions have in common?

After much discussion and attempts to identify them it quickly became apparent that many of the barriers to developing sustainable energy systems for all regions involved as Partners in RECENT were broadly similar and these are set out below:

The first barrier was being able to encourage people to change their behavior and habits—people are set in their ways and used to using a car, for example. This feeds into the belief that the entire economy is based upon growth and fossil fuels and has been since the mid 1800s making it difficult to change habits and the system.

Barriers caused by population issues also raised much discussion. The growth in urbanization as people move away from the rural periphery to larger cities in search of employment has led to a falling density and also led to an aging population in the rural areas. This low population density impacts on the ability to create a sustainable public transport system and discourages investment in infrastructure meaning the existing infrastructure remains aging and in need of high investment just to keep it in working order.

Other barriers noted included lack of information on sustainable systems, lack of trust in new energy systems as they are unknown and a lack of clarity

in legislation and regulations which can appear overly complicated and sometimes contradictory.

"Barriers include changing behavior, population issues, lack of information and trust"

Which politician or political bodies have the power to change the framework conditions in your region to enable communities to build a sustainable energy future in the next decade?

The key challenge is that EU policies are relatively broad and implemented differently depending on nation which makes work across countries more difficult. There is also a feeling that policy making decisions are made far away and may not have relevance to other areas and that more information, access and transparency on policy making is required.

Several bodies were identified as carrying influence and it was noted that policy influencing should be considered from both upstream—local to regional to national—and downstream angles.

Organisations with influence that were identified included political parties, Nordic/Arctic councils, Assembly of European Regions, North/South Irish council, Environment Committees and umbrella organisations in areas such as renewable energy, energy in general, research groups and economy (such as trade unions).

RECENT can target these organisations in several ways. Use the project to provide concrete results and facts and policy papers to policy decision makers at all levels. RECENT also aims to work with other projects carrying out similar work to join forces and avoid duplication.



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KEEP IN TOUCH WITH INFORMATION ON NORTHERN PERIPHERY ENERGY ISSUES, FOLLOW THE RECENT SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS!

The European North is one of the areas that will undergo significant changes in the coming decades due to climate change. Climate change is likely to challenge the provision of water services and local water and energy infrastructure. Projected challenges include precipitation induced flood events and increased run-off especially in winter and spring months and, in the summer, increased competition for water.

The impacts of climate change may also open new possibilities for the remote NPA regions that could make the region become a major energy producer. The 5 partner countries are some of the top regions of the world as regards the amount and quality of water. While water is abundant, providing water services in these regions is energy intensive. To become more efficient and smart in this area is therefore a significant objective.

Contact Us



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