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# Region of Upper Austria [AT]

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## Summary Roadmap

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# The regional "Gemeinde-Energie-Programm" for municipalities

## ROADMAP SUMMARY DOCUMENT

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## Background

Since the mid-90s, the government of Upper Austria has been committed to the clean energy transition and has prioritised energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Renewable energy currently supplies 32 % of the total energy demand in the region. This share of renewables in the energy mix was achieved through the region's comprehensive regional energy action plans. In 2017, building upon the success of its policies to date, Upper Austria adopted a new energy strategy with ambitious energy efficiency and renewable targets.

To achieve its goals, Upper Austria has developed policy packages for different target groups. These packages consist of financial incentives (mostly investment grants), legislation to mandate installation obligations, and promotional activities (energy advice, outreach campaigns, training, etc.). This is known as the "carrots, sticks & tambourines" approach to sustainable energy strategy development and implementation.

The OÖ Energiesparverband (ESV), the energy agency of Upper Austria is a key actor in the energy transition. Among others, it supports the regional government by proposing and implementing programmes as well as providing related services.

Municipalities play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of Upper Austria's energy strategy. Based on an assessment of needs carried out by the ESV in the course of the PUBLEnEf project and following discussion with regional funding bodies, the "Gemeinde-Energie-Programm" (GEP), the energy programme for municipalities, was developed. The programme aims to trigger energy-related investments in Upper Austrian municipalities and to contribute to the improvement of the local energy situation.

Many municipalities in Upper Austria have adopted energy action plans with ambitious energy targets, many of which require investments. There is also a range of funding and financing instruments for these investments, both on regional and national levels. However, there is a "gap" which needs to be closed: many municipalities require support for the detailed planning of these investments as they would go significantly beyond the minimum requirements in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Municipalities in Upper Austria are quite small. Due to their limited number of staff, they do not have the time resources to specialise in many different fields. Their needs for support relate both to the technical planning of buildings and installations and to the use of innovative financing mechanisms and funding schemes.

The GEP programme was developed in the framework of PUBLENEF in order to close this gap by funding the technical and financial planning of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in municipalities.

## Objectives

The roadmap developed in the context of the PUBLEnEf project consists of the GEP programme and its successful implementation through a structured roll-out scheme.

The roll-out scheme aims to enhance the impact of the GEP programme by assuring the link between the energy goals of the regional government, the financial resources made available (under the form of the GEP programme) and the implementation of concrete measures in the municipalities. A successful roll-out activates, informs and advises municipalities as well as triggers their participation in the programme and more energy efficiency investments. The GEP programme and its roll-out focus on the "carrots & tambourines" pillars of the "carrots, sticks & tambourines" approach to energy efficiency strategy implementation that has shown to be very successful in Upper Austria.

The impact of the roadmap will be evaluated based on the number of municipalities reached and advised as well as on actual applications to the GEP programme. Furthermore, as time and roadmap activities progress, it will be possible to track concrete energy efficiency investments and measures implemented by the municipalities.

## Target groups

The roadmap follows a communication strategy focussing on reaching out to key stakeholders in the region.

The main target groups are the 440 Upper Austrian municipalities and their different decision making levels, e.g. Mayors, Chief Administrative Officers (Amtsleiter), Head of Building Departments.

Additionally, other relevant groups are being addressed:

- the regional government and the department in charge of the administration of the GEP
- energy consultants and planners, relevant associations and networks
- ESCOs
- other funding bodies on regional and national levels

These groups are targeted through a mix of GEP roll-out activities, tailored to each group's needs, among others:

- information, training events and workshops
- information folders (about the programme and about possible measures)
- e-mail blasts to all 440 Upper Austrian municipalities and relevant businesses
- website, social media & newsletter communication
- personal visits to 50+ municipalities
- face-to-face contacts with 100+ municipalities

## Learning from others

The "carrot, sticks & tambourines" approach to energy efficiency policy has shown to be very effective in Upper Austria. This approach rests on 3 pillars: "carrots" (financial incentive programme), "sticks" (regulatory instruments) and "tambourines" (information, awareness raising and training activities). Based on this experience, the GEP programme and its roll-out were intentionally developed with a focus on the "carrots & tambourines" pillars, known to be a synergetic combination in the region.

In addition, ESV's strong collaboration with FEDARENE permits to identify further potentials. FEDARENE's management of the CoM network allows to increase the visibility of the roadmap and offers a platform for an exchange of experience and know-how with numerous European municipalities.

## Replication potential

The GEP programme is available to all 440 municipalities in Upper Austria. All municipalities are being proactively contacted and solicited through the structured roll-out scheme in order to maximise the number of participating municipalities.

Similar programmes could also be implemented in other regions or even at national or EU levels provided that the required funds and human resources are available. Communication channels and platforms (i.e. the CoM network via FEDARENE) permit to increase the visibility of the programme and potentially lead to replications in other European regions.



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