

URBAN EMPATHY – Work Package 3, Phase 2

Structured Dialogue

INTERVIEWS - COUNTRY REPORT

SLOVENIA

Country: Slovenia

Responsible partner: Jozef Stefan Institute – Energy Efficiency Centre

Names of the decision-makers and position:

Damijan Uranker

- Institution: **Ministry of Infrastructure and Spatial Planning**
- Position: **Secretary, Spatial Planning Directorate**
- Responsibility and influence : **high-level public administrator**
- Field of competence: **Spatial planning**
- Decision-making level (used as criteria balance): **National**
- Date of the interview: **7.1.2014**

Rajko Leban, Boštjan Mlač

- Institution: **GOLEA (Local Energy Agency Nova Gorica)**
- Position: **Managing Director, (Energy Technical Expert)**
- Responsibility and influence : **Agency is acting as an expert advisor to high-level public administrators on regional and local level**
- Field of competence: **Energy management, urban development**
- Decision-making level (used as criteria balance): **Regional and local**
- Date of the interview: **15.1.2014**

Alenka Loose

- Institution: **The City of Ljubljana, Municipality**
- Position: **Secretary, The Mayor's Cabinet**
- Responsibility and influence : **high-level public administrator**
- Field of competence: **Energy management, Environment protection, Spatial planning**
- Decision-making level (used as criteria balance): **Local**
- Date of the interview: **11.2.2014**

1. Sustainable urban policies in general

Summary of the main ideas developed: [global evaluation of sustainable urban policies](#), including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Problems considered in the agenda
- Importance of policy areas
- Priorities of the new programming period

In general sustainable urban policies on national level are in the stage of development. They are mostly driven by EU directives. Additional problem is in current policies which are not being successfully implemented. Some sustainable policies are successfully implemented through „local energy concepts“.

Some national sustainable policies are too ambitious (i.e. near zero public buildings in 2018, is local industry ready/capable) considering current economic situation. On the other hand only ambitious policies can have positive impact on economic development (i.e. RES, energy efficiency policies).

Short term “political mandate” does not follow long term commitments set in strategic urban documents. There is a mutual agreement that sustainable urban development must become a priority in next programming period (whereas previous was environment and agriculture). In this new urban context Cities become carries and drivers of development.

On the local level urban policies follow national regulations on energy efficiency in buildings and mandated local strategies (Municipality spatial plan, Local energy concept; Program of environmental protection). On this level the disparity between short term political priorities and long term commitment is even greater. Therefore short term political agenda should always apply green public procurement based on life cycle costs (LCC) in the field of refurbishments, public lightning, transport etc. This also means that sustainable urban development is based on sustainable energy supply and use of local resources (integration with rural area). Energy efficiency, air pollution mitigation and mobility are considered as main pillars of sustainable policies; however sustainable urban models have to take into account all urban problems.

The main obstacle when implementing policies on local level is the compensations for private land use (financial compensations for easement can jeopardize financial feasibility of projects). The second problem is the discrepancy between national priorities and local capabilities in terms of potentials and local needs. This issues need support from the national level.

2. Description of your work

Summary of the main ideas developed: [work description](#), including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- On-going urban developments
- Information source

Slovenian decision makers in the field of sustainable policies cover broad working area. These include: mobility and transport, development of Slovenian Spatial Development Strategy, elaboration of guidelines, energy manager for municipalities, implementation of Energy Act tasks, urban planning.

Their main planning objective on national level is solving the problem of small scattered settlements. On local level the main objective is to upgrade local level planning to the regional context. Other tasks include education, awareness rising, and coordination of national, cross border and EU projects.

Decision makers face different problems when dealing with sustainable issues. National strategies have to be supported by concrete implementation and action plans. Conflicts of sectorial interests require a group of mediators - interdisciplinary experts.

They are also facing restraints, like lack of financial sources, which directly impacts their work, especially the implementation of policies and availability of external experts. Because of the broad working area related responsibilities, external experts support is essential for development of quality urban models.

3. Application of European legislation

Summary of the main ideas developed: [European regulation and transposition/implementation at national and local level](#)

Decision makers follow EU policies and guidelines. They find EU legislation on spatial planning insufficient. They miss common approach like policies already implemented in the field of environment, water, RES.

They fear that goals set in sustainable EU strategies will not be feasible / achievable due to a lack of financial resources (i.e. near zero public buildings in 2018). Some environmental legislation directly impact urban development (directives on birds and wild animals etc. – Natura 2000). The implementation of EU directives in Slovenia has another obstacle; as Slovenia is approximately the size of 1,5 average EU region, the legislation cannot be transposed to the regional level (considering the size of the country, bureaucratic organization); country specifics have to be considered.

The EU trends (indicated in directives) can be introduced through transnational projects – pilots, focusing on Municipalities and private enterprises, financed through EU regional programs.

One of the problems related to legislation issues is the insufficient transposition of directives into the national legislation (Lost in translation).

4. Barriers about sustainable urban policies

Summary of the main ideas developed: [barriers](#), including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Sources of financing
- Unexpected effects

There were three types of main barriers identified: administrative, political and financial.

On **administrative** level policy makers face different problems. There is a lack of competent staff on operational level which directly impacts implementation of policies. Administrative staff is as well dealing with expert issues - they would need additional experts supporting the decision making process. In past conflicts of sectorial interests led to inconsistency of implementing regulations. Consequently this leads to a passive assistance of public servants (if I don't do anything I cannot make a mistake). Because of nonexistence of regional level, there is a lack of bureaucratic staff dealing with regional issues.

Public/civil initiatives can present a big barrier. These initiatives are dealt in a different manner. Usually they act from a position "not in my back yard". If handled right they can be beneficial to the successful sustainable urban planning.

Administrative authorities dealing with EU and other national development funds prepare non-consistent national calls for energy efficiency investments (subsidies/grants). This leads to uncertainty of project funding.

Public calls face complicated procurement procedures. There is as well a lack of clear evaluation criteria (especially LCA approach missing).

Some sustainable activities are financed through EU regional projects. These projects face long and time-consuming controlling procedures by the national FLC.

On **political** level there is a lack of long term commitment on strategic common priorities. Currently sustainable issues are dealt on a short term sectorial level with political agenda. An independent authority with long term commitment is needed.

Most of the barriers on **financial** level relate to existing financial crisis (all big construction projects have stopped). All sectors, especially public sector and SMEs are, are having financial problems. Public sector (especially municipalities) is dealing with strict austerity measures. SMEs are dealing with liquidity problems and inadequate financing from banks.

During the interviews some **other** specific topics and their barriers were identified. There is a problem of illegal buildings (mainly family houses), oversized family houses, high percentage of owner-occupied housing, degraded areas due to past industrial urbanization etc. In energy sector there is also a problem (legislative and lack of staff) with third party financing (TPF).

5. Needs and expectations about sustainable urban policies

Summary of the main ideas developed: [needs and expectations](#), including relevant ideas expressed in the questions of this section:

- Issues to improve or focus better
- What needs
- Additional financing
- Tools
- Organizational and participative instruments
- EU and next programming period

Main issue outlined by all interviewed decision makers was the selection of common priorities and realistic targets when dealing with sustainable urban policies – these should be backed by long term (political) commitments and bind to programming periods. Long term commitments and backing by EU programmes can give necessary stability and assurance to link public and private sector (combination of ESCOs and public funds). It also creates new opportunities for SMEs.

Due to lack of regional level in Slovenia, there are needs for better Regional planning and support for cooperation of municipalities in the region. One of already applicable tools to remedy this situation is cross border cooperation (i.e. mutual public transport in neighbouring municipalities: cities Nova Gorica in Slovenia and Gorizia in Italy).

One of the sustainable urban policies focus should be on regional self-sufficiency with better link between urban centres and rural background. This link must be integrated into sustainable urban model as it can enable additional potentials for local economy.

On local level there is a need to promote/develop “mixed” urban areas, where different functions of life are merged (living area, work area, sports and recreation, education facilities, culture...).

On operational level, EU programmes and derived projects serve as a good base for exchange of experts (personnel) and good practices (transnational) and should be further build upon. What is missing is monitoring (statistics included) - lack of monitoring clouds the efficiency/results of past actions/work and development of future policies is thus hindered.

One of the recognized threats is so called “Two-speed Europe” – it may be necessary to set up a special fund for certain countries to assist them in the execution of climate change mitigation projects, thus enabling all EU countries to reach its environmental targets.

Analysis

a) Are there some issues considered as important/ problematic unanimously by the decision-makers (within each decision-making level and including all the levels)?

On **national** level, the following issues were highlighted:

1. Good urban development concepts exist, but there is a lack of implementation;
2. We are facing short term priorities and targets which are set in “one political mandate” – there is a lack of long term commitments;
3. Long term commitments with defined responsibilities are needed to overcome sectorial conflicts;

On **regional/local** level, the following issues were highlighted:

1. Long term commitments needed for sustainable urban development plan (10+ years) are not the priority in one Majors mandate (4 years);
2. There is a need to link municipalities on regional level (missing in Slovenia);
3. Sustainable urban policies must include rural area with the goal of creating self-sufficient regions;
4. Administrative and legislative barriers on the relation between municipality and state;

Common to **all** levels:

1. Problem of Financing;
2. Rigidity of administration;
3. Lack of experts/competence of staff;

b) Do you see a link which can be made between the needs/barriers and the results capitalized within URBAN EMPATHY? How could URBAN EMPATHY results respond to these needs and barriers?

There were several issues raised by interviewed decision makers which relate directly to the results capitalized within URBAN EMPATHY:

- *Cooperation of municipalities/regional cooperation*
Methodological Chart for Sustainable Urban Models of project **CAT-MED** – Tool on regional level, where municipalities can cooperate on the same grounds (model);

- *Need for Monitoring*
Indicator system of project **CAT-MED** can be applied for monitoring of progress in urban development;
- *Set of good practices*
Cities for Mobility and **Teenergy** projects have a set of good practices on two specific fields dealing with urban sustainability issues;
- *Need for Life Cycle Analysis*
Capitalized results of **EFFECT** and **ZeroWaste** projects tackle the issue of Green public procurement implementation including LCA;
- *Common priorities*
Policy Paper of **ELIH-Med** capitalization process is introducing a set of priorities for policy makers (energy efficiency in buildings);
- *Regional self-sufficiency / link between urban centres and rural background*
Project **Hybrid Parks** is focusing on how to include rural area;
- *Link between public and private sector*
Project **MARIE** is elaborating on tools to aid public/private relationship in building retrofitting;

c) What are the expressed ideas you consider should be taken into account in priority in the elaboration of the SUMO tool kit?

There were several ideas expressed by decision makers which are considered essential for successful and sustainable urban development.

On **national** level:

- Nonpolitical supervising body is needed to find balance between sectorial priorities – group of experts;
- Implementation of monitoring;

On **regional/local** level:

- Easier access to funding (elimination of administrative barriers) with clear long term commitments;
- Mandatory life cycle assessment in calls and tenders (green procurements);
- International cooperation to exchange experience;

Common to **all** levels:

- Promotion through EU programs/projects - opportunity for introducing common sustainable urban model – sustainable urban development can be proceeded independently of EU directives implementation in national legislation;
- Use of EU programs/projects as driving force to introduce EU directives and national transpositions on local level;
- Use of EU programs/projects as experience exchange platform:
 - Available/public results (studies) which can be reused;
 - Exchange of experts;

- Exchange of good practices;

d) Other comments/ suggestions