RENREN Renewable Energy Regions Network

...for a cleaner,
greener energy future.

The RENREN network's project 2010-2012:

Supporting regions to accelerate the implementation of renewables

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
REGIONS OF EUROPE SHARING SOLUTIONS

Table of contents

Imprint

This leaflet was published in November 2012 on behalf of the RENREN project consortium by EREN, the Regional Energy Agency of Castilla y León (Spain), assisted by the Welsh Government and the Schleswig-Holstein Land Government.

Editorial

The EU's Climate & Energy Policy adopted in March 2007, committed it to a leading role in contributing to a key international climate change objective, limiting global average temperature increase to a maximum of 2°C above pre-industrial levels. One key plank for the EU is attaining a 20% minimum share of renewable energies (RES) in its overall energy consumption by 2020. Each EU Member State is bound to contribute to this as of 2009 according to mandatory targets set out in the EU Renewables Directive. By the end of 2012, it is already time to reflect on more ambitious targets for the period beyond 2020.

Implementing these ambitions and policies needs to go beyond the national and EU level however. Regions are key in encouraging the deployment of renewables through measures tailored to their natural resources, environment and economy. In 2010, 14 regional partners from across Europe launched the **Renewable ENergy REgions Network (RENREN) INTERREG project**. The group of regions represents a broad range of geographical and climatic conditions, various forms of legal status, differing land areas, and diverging stages of experience in using Renewable Energy Sources (RES). The common goal, however, is to increase the use of RES in their regions and to support other regional governments in further developing their own RES oriented policies.

Having finalised the thematic project work, the RENREN partners remain committed to continuing cooperation. This leaflet sets out the project's major outcomes.

Wolfgang Schulz, Project Coordinator

RENREN: The initial idea …

The RENREN network is investigating how regional governments can help accelerate a shift towards renewable energy and so support the EU aspiration for a greener, cleaner energy future. Initially, RENREN started out with six regions committed to playing their part in developing RES in their own regions, and simultaneously supporting climate action and security of energy supply. In April 2007 they signed the RENREN Charter in Brussels, in the presence of the EU Commissioner for Energy, Mr Andris Piebalgs.

Rather soon, it became evident that this co-operation network aspired to more concrete work through exchange of detailed good practice. With a view to both accelerating deployment of RES and enhancing the capacities of regional authorities in this sector, a project application was jointly drawn up and submitted to the EU's INTERREG IV C programme. In early 2010, this application was approved.

… and its major project results in an overview

The **RENREN INTERREG project** aimed at identifying policy choices to improve regional frameworks for renewable energy expansion. 14 regional authorities and organizations from across Europe jointly explored the enabling conditions for RES which a region can influence and manage.

To this end, the RENREN partners collected their own Good Practice case studies and explored whether they

could be transferred to other regions. This was done with reference to four major fields of political/administrative action, covering all major renewables technologies (wind, hydro, solar, photovoltaic, geothermal and biomass).

The partners identified more than **50 Good Practice examples** and a good number of **bottlenecks**. Based on these, the RENREN network designed a comprehensive set of **Policy Recommendations** intending to support regional governments in further developing their own RES oriented policies. These recommendations are addressed to "learning regions" as well as to "experienced regions". They are not only about RES as such and how to develop best a regional energy & climate strategy. They also underline that RES may help advance a region's economy by creating jobs and driving innovation.

This work was underpinned by a **Comparative Analysis** on framework conditions and measures at the each of the partner regions. This analysis comprises basic regional RES data as well as existing potential and decision-making powers. Additionally, a regional **"Renewable Energy Monitoring Tool"** was developed, a data-based IT tool allowing analysis of progress and a comparison of RES status across the partners.

The results of the RENREN project were presented at the **Final Project Conference**, held in Brussels at the Committee of the Regions on 18 October 2012. In the **"RENREN Declaration"**, presented at this Conference, the network's longer term commitment to facilitating the deployment of RES through pro-active regional level measures was set out.

Good Practices: case studies and transfers

Good practice case studies were central to the RENREN project. As a first step, the partners collected and explored a broad range of bottlenecks and good practices based on their own domestic experiences. Bottlenecks often consist of tools existing as a good practice at some regions, whereas lacking at other regions, such as missing or incomplete regional strategies. This work was mostly done in three thematic working groups, covering all major RES technologies (wind, hydro, solar, photovoltaic, geothermal and biomass).

At thematic Project Workshops, the partners looked at these technologies in relation to the following political and/or administrative tasks:

- ➢ Strategic planning for RES at regional level
- ➢ Permits and compliance
- ➢ Fostering job market, RTD and innovation
- ➢ Finance and incentives

These **bottlenecks and Good Practice case studie**s encompass e.g.

- regional energy & climate strategies
- practical approaches to reduce complexity of the permitting process and to increase transparency
- spatial planning strategies on designating land or offshore areas for RES

- tools for communication and education supporting economic development of RES and related industries, e.g. clusters, centres of excellence or vocational education and training courses
- the integration of existing research & development facilities into regional energy strategies
- financial and non-financial incentives provided by regional governments, including as well comparably simple measures, such as “free parking for green cars” or “awarding forerunners”.

Also an ambitious study on the “socio-economic impact of renewables” for enhanced public awareness and acceptance was presented by one partner.

In a second step, some of these good practice case studies were checked as regards their **transferability to other regions**. Sometimes only selected elements of a good practice could be transferred, taking into account the differing conditions given in the “beneficiary” and the “donor” partner region.

Nonetheless, it turned out that a good number of transfers became more complex than initially expected and met a more intense need at the benefitting partner region. Resulting from this, several RENREN partners decided to continue transfer and implementation of good practices beyond the project’s time frame.

Since this transferability exercise is done on a bilateral basis, the project work has also resulted in **longer term bilateral cooperation commitments** between the partners.

RENREN Policy Recommendations

A major objective of the RENREN project was to design a comprehensive set of policy recommendations to support regional governments in further developing their own RES oriented policies. This comprehensive document, completing the project's thematic work, was adopted at the final RENREN project workshop.

The RENREN Policy Recommendations are **experience-based**, reflecting both good practices and bottlenecks. They are not solely directed to the partners of the RENREN project. Rather, they are **open for consideration by all regions** wishing to reflect upon their potential and capacities to foster the development and use of RES.

These Policy Recommendations are aimed at two groups of regions:

- regions with little or no experience in establishing and expanding the use of RES in their regions through regional action **("learning regions")**;
- regions with existing longer term experience and success in expanding the use of RES in their regions through regional action **("experienced regions")**.

Whether a region considers itself learning or experienced can certainly differ depending on the RES in question and – in absence of widely agreed indicators – is based on a region's self-assessment.

The RENREN Policy Recommendations are structured under five headings, all of which are addressed to both the political and the administrative level at regional authorities:

1. Institutionalise Renewable Energy

RES needs leadership. Institutionalisation of RES in a region is about leadership, knowing and managing resources and connecting to economic development. This follows a continuous management cycle of action and reaction, of review and adjustment.
First and foremost, however, it is about commitment:

- Commit to RES by setting goals and objectives
- Provide a guiding framework: develop a regional energy and climate strategy
- Establish regional RES management structures
- Establish regional RES communication structures, including e.g. a central platform of information, RES branding, stakeholder dialogue, and engage citizens

2. Increase the success rate at the project development phase

Today, many energy technologies are disputed, deployment delayed, posing problems and risks for investors. Crucial to reducing risks are clear rules. Other tools are on hand to help with better project development and fewer disputes.

- Use spatial planning as a strategic tool for RES development, including its role in balancing (competing) interests

- Provide information & guidance for developers
- Reduce the complexity of the permitting process
- Increase transparency of the permitting process

3. Use RES as a motor for jobs & driving innovation

RES are not only about providing an energy supply to run an existing (regional) economy. RES themselves are at the centre of business developments and innovation, providing jobs in many fields. RES have the potential to advance a region's economy, to increase regional added value and to make the economy more efficient at all stages of the RES value chain. Unlocking this potential requires know-how and the power to innovate:

- Qualification and skills are key to keeping and attracting jobs in a region
- Create and use cooperation opportunities within and beyond a region, including stakeholders and citizens
- Foster innovation by integrating existing and/or new research facilities in your regional energy and climate strategy

4. Incentivise the use of renewables in your region

The aim of incentives is to make RES technologies more attractive than conventional technologies. Incentives can be, but are not necessarily monetary:

- Apply and demand standards for the use of RES
- Provide incentives to use RES by demonstrating their benefit and added values

- Review specific RES use for transport & mobility
- Award forerunners

5. Financing is available - create access

Growth of RES today is strongest when the policy-makers in charge have established favourable conditions. This includes a long term framework of stable basic principles. Being able to compete with established technologies requires a financial framework to help bring new technologies to the market. Feed-in tariff systems and similar financial schemes have proved to be a key approach, but other means are also available:

- Mobilize EU funds & programmes for regional renewable energy projects
- Create demand - use public procurement as a (strategic) tool
- Leverage private money via engaging in Public-Private-Partnerships, leveraging private investments or via participatory models

Comparative Analysis

"To date information on quantitative figures for regional RES development are scarce. Whereas in countries that have a feed-in-tariff or quota, data is at least available for electricity fed into the grid, the data for heat or transport fuels based on renewable sources, as well as the data on reduced energy demand, on a regional level is hard to obtain. Gaps and incomplete data series are a fact."

This quotation from the "Comparative Analysis", which an external experts' group was tasked with drawing up, underlines the difficulties a region may face when trying to generate a region's own energy strategy.

The experts' analysis took stock of data available, existing potentials and the competencies of RENREN partners. Even though this analysis cannot be representative by nature, it provided a basis for RENREN Policy Recommendations.

The conclusions of this Comparative Analysis are available from the RENREN website.

RES Monitoring Development Tool

In order to support the above and to help regional administrations generate and/or further develop a targeted RES strategy of their own, a data-based IT tool was developed. It shall help regions explore their RES potential, measure the progress of RES use and compare it with the developments in other regions.

The way RENREN worked

Three thematic **Working Groups** were established, covering all major renewables technologies (wind, hydro, solar, photovoltaic, geothermal and biomass). Their work was coordinated at six thematic **Project Workshops**, where the partners investigated as many cross-sectoral considerations as possible.

This work was complemented by eight **thematic on-site visits** focussing on RES technologies prominent at the hosting partner region and gathering experts from RENREN partner regions.

Learn more about RENREN and find all documents at: www.renren-project.eu

Contacts:

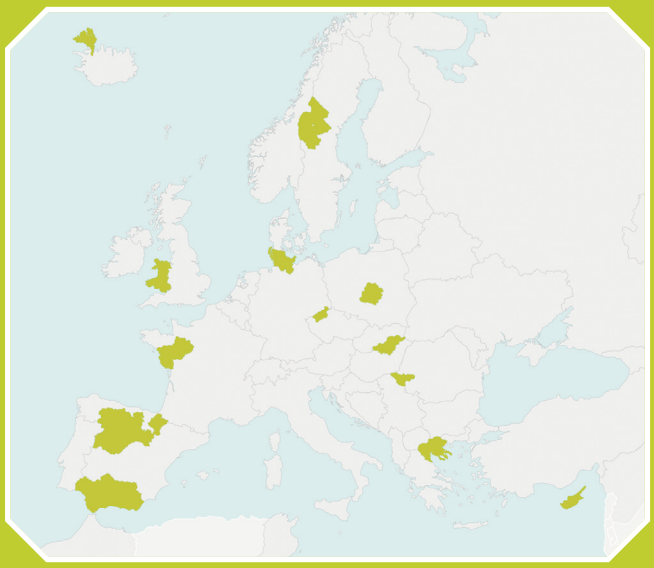
Project Coordinator: Mr Wolfgang Schulz, Senior Adviser on Energy Policy, c/o Ministry of Economic Affairs, Employment, Transport and Technology of Schleswig-Holstein Land Government (wolfgang.schulz@wimi.landsh.de)

Financial Officer (and support to Project Coordinator): Ms Alexandra Oboda, c/o Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (alexandra.oboda@ib-sh.de)

Communication & dissemination:
Communication Officer: Ms Puy de Dominguez Pérez, c/o EREN – Regional Energy Agency of Castilla y León (dompermi@jcyl.es)
Deputy Communication Officer: Mr Björn Nilsson, Jämtland Regional Council (bjorn.nilsson@regionjamtland.se)

RENREN partners:

- Schleswig-Holstein Land (Germany, Lead Partner)
- Welsh Government (United Kingdom)
- Jämtland Regional Council (Sweden)
- The Association of Municipalities in the Westfjords (Iceland)
- Cyprus Institute of Energy (Cyprus)
- Government of Navarre (Spain)
- Regional Energy Association of Castilla y León (Spain)
- Pays de la Loire Region (France)
- Agency for Social & Economic Development of Timiş County (Romania)
- Lodz Region (Poland)
- Ústí Region (Czech Republic)
- Central Macedonia / Decentralized Administration of Macedonia-Thrace (Greece)
- Andalusia Energy Agency (Spain)
- Bay Zoltán Nonprofit Ltd. for Applied Research (North Hungary)



www.renren-project.eu