



FINAL DOCUMENT

from

NATIONAL CONFERENCE „ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, AND GREEN ECONOMY”

ORGANIZED BY: ASSOCIATION OF BULGARIAN ENERGY AGENCIES, ENERGY AGENCY OF PLOVDIV, INTERNATIONAL FAIR – PLOVDIV, ASSOCIATION FOR PLOVDIV, CLUSTER GREEN SYNERGY

A debate on municipal energy policies, priorities, and best practices took place on March 30th 2012 at International Fair – Plovdiv. 185 representatives from municipalities, business, and energy agencies participated in the debate.

For more than 10 years the Bulgarian energy agencies have been actively working to support municipalities on their way to sustainable development. During that time strategies, programmes, and municipal plans have been drafted and multiple projects concerning energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and mobility have been implemented. The best energy practices across Europe have been promoted through a number of meetings, seminars, and conferences.

The Association of Bulgarian Energy Agencies (ABEA) started the procedure for becoming a supporting structure to the Covenant of Mayors initiative that aims to meet the EU's 20/20/20 objectives: improved energy efficiency, increase of the share of renewable energy sources, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. ABEA considers municipalities as core partners for the implementation of local sustainable energy policies and for applying for European funds for projects and campaigns regarding innovative energy saving technologies.

The emphasis in the discussions was placed around the following topics:

- 1) The use of coal, briquettes, and wood in old combustion units for residential heating is the main reason for air pollution with particulate matter in the big cities. Through the international project “BioRegions” large scale solutions to this problem have been proposed. They are based on municipal energy policies, planning, and efficient use of local energy sources at reasonable prices;
- 2) Fuel oil for heating in public buildings is the most expensive heating source to use and this has been an unresolved issue at national level for years. The fuel switch from oil to local energy sources has been implemented in a number of places in Europe and even in few Bulgarian municipalities. This is a priority for local energy planning that also has implications nationally. Making modern biomass and innovative

technologies price competitive and thus, reducing the market share of fuel oil and electricity for heating, could significantly optimize the energy balance of the municipalities and the country in general;

- 3) The use of biomass and other RES is a win-win solution that will simultaneously improve air quality in cities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- 4) The rural and mountainous regions have significant bioenergy potential. In addition to the environmental benefits, developing bioenergy contributes to the creation of jobs, local development, and tourism. The establishment of logistic centers for the utilization of local biomass and the production of biofuels is a necessary solution for the implementation of the technical characteristics for heating with 90% COP;
- 5) The new Forest Law that introduces innovative management of forests, including municipal ones, gives the opportunity for efficient environmental and social policies regarding the adoption of RES in municipalities. In addition, the objective of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan for Bulgaria until 2020 is 16% share of RES in the final energy consumption, out of which 54% of this target is earmarked for RES heating and cooling.

The participants in the forum got introduced to currently running projects, analyses, and concrete suggestions such as:

- BioRegion “Sredna Gora” – grand pilot plan for sustainable utilization of local biomass until 2020
- Funding mechanisms for financing municipal and business EE and RES initiatives
- Best practices and innovations in the areas of EE and RES such as: establishment of the cluster “Green Synergy”, planning for sustainable use of energy in municipalities, energy and climate competitions, trainings for installers of small photovoltaic systems, methods and actions of the energy agencies when cooperating with municipalities, etc.

A separate topic of the conference was modernization and development of sustainable urban transport. Reports on the following matters were presented:

- Strategies for alternative modes of mobility;
- Public transportation quality improvement system – project ENERQI;
- Increasing access for handicapped people;
- Mobility management in business areas.

The forum and the following discussions showed that in the past few years a number of municipalities are following models from other European cities and working towards air quality improvements, efficient energy use, sustainable transport, and modern ways to ensure mobility.

SUGGESTIONS:

The shared experiences and best practices from across Europe and Bulgaria show that there are significant unutilized opportunities for energy efficient and sustainable development through:

1. Changing the means of heating of **households** who use low quality coal and wood, burning them with low COP. The solution is RES sources of heating to be adopted and especially wood briquettes and pellets with over 85% COP.
2. Widespread switching of fuel oil used for heating in **public buildings** with modern efficient bio-fuels;
3. Increase the number of **district heating** users in the big cities, as well as widespread connection to the **gas grid** of factories, public buildings, and households (where this is economically feasible);
4. Establishment of a common set of **indicators, policies, and mechanisms for sustainable development** at municipal level. These will become integral part of the national energy strategy and national climate change action plan;
5. Establishment of **logistic centers for the production and distribution of modern bio-fuels for households and municipalities** as an alternative to inefficient ways of heating. Successful market competition of biomass and innovative technologies with heating with fuel oil and electricity will assure cheaper means of heating and optimization of the country's energy balance;
6. Applying the lessons learned from the **international project "BioRegions"** into national solutions for energy policies which ensure the country's energy independence at affordable price. The development of bioregions that make use of innovative technologies is a new field that is not only in line with European requirements regarding climate change, but also is the main solution for improving local air quality and health of the population. The bioregion "Sredna Gora" in particular could be considered the start of a national programme that could spur the utilization of biomass for energy. The adoption of such practices will provide the missing link between forest management and the bio-fuel and modern heating installations' business.
7. Providing **incentives for adoption of RES on the part of the final energy consumer** – households and municipalities who could maintain competitive environment for the energy business. Examples are: the preferential programme "1000 solar roofs" in Germany, financial assistance for households to purchase biomass combustion units in Austria, Czech Republic, and Slovenia, ban on fossil fuels for heating in Sweden, cooperatively owned wind parks in Denmark, etc.).