



Just Transition Platform – Policy approach:

REGIONAL ACTION PLAN TOWARDS NETZERO 2045

Ireland, Irish Border Midland & West region

This document is part of a series presenting information and lessons learned on policy approaches at national, regional or local level supporting a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The Just Transition Platform (JTP) assists EU Member States and regions to unlock the support in this transition. Visit the JTP website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Member State:

Ireland

Region:

Irish Border Midland & West region

Sector:

Infrastructure/Housing

Total budget (€):

No information on total budget

Financing conditions (co-financing rate):

No further information on financing conditions

Sources of funding:

EU funding: ERDF (2014–2020) / ERDF (2021–2027): Interreg funding

National funding:

No further information on national funding

Regional funding:

No further information on regional funding

Duration:

2 years (for development of plan)

Responsible Managing Authority/Agency:

ERNACT

Summary

The aim of the action plan is to (i) provide accurate data for future assessments; (ii) educate communities, commercial and government stakeholders; (iii) improve energy efficiency in public sector-owned buildings; (iv) promote the use of local renewable energy sources in line with the Regional Energy Strategy to 2045; and (v) contribute to the formulation of monitoring framework indicators. Among the actions,

the community will benefit through informational seminars designed to inform and empower citizens to change their energy behaviour. This policy instrument seeks to add value to wider investment programmes in targeted high growth and innovative sectors to help create new quality jobs through innovation.

Type of policy measure/activities:

The aim is to support a shift towards a low-carbon economy in the Border Midland & Western (BMW) region by supporting effective energy, intelligent management systems and the use of renewable energy in public infrastructure and housing. It also promotes the development of low-carbon emission strategies. The main outputs of the strategy are 1) a regional energy-usage open data repository and 2) approaches to address fuel poverty.

Goals and approach:

The overall aim of the plan is to reduce carbon emissions of public infrastructure and housing in the Border Midland & Western region in Ireland. Two main outputs have been identified as central contributions to achieve this objective: providing reliable and accessible energy data for the region and addressing fuel poverty. To identify the main needs of the region, the drafting of the plan involved several regional stakeholders.

The open data approach of the plan is expected to allow a more rapid implementation of energy policy due to the accessibility of relevant energy data. Before, energy data on a regional level was scarcely available and was often outdated. With the open data approach, all interested stakeholders and communities can access the data, leading to greater visibility of the energy consumption, the improvement of energy management, and the facilitation of research and solution testing.

The second output is closely related to the first as it is based on the open data portal. Information on fuel poverty is expected to contribute to better planning and development of targeted policies and investments. Through spreading information, developing methods to address fuel poverty with stakeholders, and conducting seminars, the output is expected to have a positive influence on fuel poverty in the region.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

The main outputs will include the development of a regional energy-usage open data repository that is centralised, reliable, accurate, complete, and accessible. This data will facilitate a drive toward establishing accurate baselines, informed decision making, regional policy development and innovative energy efficiency research. The plan will also introduce novel approaches to reduce fuel poverty through analysis of the open energy data collected. These results will be used to devise and orchestrate the possible and constructive strategies to reduce fuel poverty and the uptake of renewable resources in the region.

The community will benefit through informational seminars designed to inform and empower citizens to change their energy behaviour.

The regional action plan had also an impact on the development of the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) 2021–2027 of the Border, Midland & West Region, especially on priority 2 – low-carbon and climate resilience. ERNACT envisages to further influence the implementation of the ROP.

Scalability¹ and transferability²:

The regional action plan addresses challenges that are not only relevant for the Border Midland & West region but also for many other regions in Europe. A lack of reliable and available data and the risk of fuel poverty are issues that are increasing in relevance Europe-wide, worsened by the current energy crisis. Consequently, the approaches presented in the regional action plan can be quite easily transferred to other regions. Moreover, as the plan was inspired by other European good practices, the plan already considers different settings.

In addition, the plan is scalable to any other level, as scalability was at the forefront of the development process. It was central for the stakeholders to develop a plan that can be used in multiple regions. In Ireland, the plan is already envisaged to be fully scalable to the national level. It is hoped that the national authorities and regional actors will take up the plan and develop it further. The plan is also scalable to the European level.

¹ Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.

² Transferability entails that a policy approach can be applicable to a similar setting and replicated.

Key success factors and lessons learnt:

For the development of the plan, it was essential that the overarching project, CLEAN, gathered several good practices on open data initiatives from different regions (e.g. Sweden, Italy and North Karelia, Finland) that helped draft the plan. For instance, North Karelia has served as an example for the action targeted at fuel poverty. The first action is based on the good practice from Västernorrland where it was recorded that a starting point is needed when the reduction of carbon emissions is targeted.

In general, the fact that many regions in Europe are facing similar settings (limited availability of relevant data, risks of fuel poverty) enabled great learning effects.

Key challenges:

The central challenge for drafting the regional action plan was the scarcity of information on energy consumption in the Border Midland & West region of Ireland. For the team developing the plan it, was extremely difficult to obtain reliable and up-to-date data. Consequently, they had to conduct challenging baseline research and then compile the information. Closely related to the scarcity of information was finding out which actor had what information, and with which actor the team needed to consult with. Additionally, the team needed to convince those actors to support the collection as stakeholders.

Those activities were needed in order to gather all relevant stakeholder and conduct seminars, etc. The exchange between the actors was relevant for the further development of the action plan.

Central framework conditions³:

The regional action plan by ERNACT is part of the Interreg-project CLEAN. CLEAN is funded by the ERDF and ran from 2017–2021. ERNACT is the lead partner of the project with eight partners from Sweden, Spain, Romania, Italy, France, Slovenia, Finland, Greece. The project addresses the challenge of how to fulfil the EU targets for energy efficiency in buildings. The main goal of the project is to increase energy efficiency in housing and public infrastructure by 4 % between 2017 and 2022. This will be targeted through improving the capacity of policy instruments in the nine regions.

Before the regional action plan was drafted, several good practices were collected from different regions in Europe, to identify which approaches might also be of relevance for the BMW region. The exchange of good practices was pursued by staff exchanges, study visits or interregional seminars/meetings.

Outlook:

As a next step, the energy portal will be rolled out. Moreover, the ongoing talks to stakeholders remain essential as well as the need to get national authorities on board. The access to funding for action two needs to be addressed but also the need for general funding for the implementation of the plan remains crucial. The drafting of the plan revealed how crucial the right funding is: originally, the plan should have encompassed 10 different actions, however, due to limited funds and time, the actions were restricted to two actions. With the right amount of funding, many more options would have been possible.

The collaboration with the partners in the CLEAN project will continue.

³ Framework Conditions encompass the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.

Partners & contacts:

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Developed in cooperation with:

- North West Regional Assembly (BMW Managing Authority)
- Donegal County Council (Local Authority in Ireland) • Derry & Strabane District Council (Local Authority in Northern Ireland)
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (Ireland's national sustainable energy authority)
- SONI -- System Operator for Northern Ireland (electricity system operator for Northern Ireland)
- Climate Action Regional Office (Irish Government offices to help drive climate action at both regional and local levels.)
- Eirgrid and NIE Networks (electricity distributors & providers)

- Letterkenny Institute of Technology (university)
- SSE Enterprise (supplier of energy infrastructure construction services)
- Siemens (supplier of energy systems)
- Atlas World Energy Management and Renewable Energy Solutions (energy consultants)
- WSP (energy consultants)

Website:

<https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/clean/news/news-article/9320/shift-towards-a-low-carbon-economy/#:~:text=Shift%20towards%20a%20low-carbon%20economy%20CLEAN%20project%20lead,emissions%20in%20a%20move%20towards%20NetZero%20in%202045>

Sources:

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- CLEAN Interreg Europe (2020): Shift towards a low-carbon economy. Online available: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/clean/news/news-article/9320/shift-towards-a-low-carbon-economy/#:~:text=Shift%20towards%20a%20low-carbon%20economy%20CLEAN%20project%20lead,emissions%20in%20a%20move%20towards%20NetZero%20in%202045>.
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- Interview with representative of ERNACT, 25 August 2022.

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