



Annex 1 – Action plan template

Produced by each region, the **action plan** is a document providing details on **how** the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be exploited in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within that region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs (if any) and funding sources (if any). If the same policy instrument is addressed by several partners, only one action plan is required.

Part I – General information

Project: S3UNICA

Partner organisation: Regional Council of South Karelia (PP7)

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): LUT University (PP8)

Country: Finland

NUTS2 region: Etelä-Suomi

Contact person: Laura Peuhkuri

email address: laura.peuhkuri@ekarjala.fi

phone number: +358 40 631 5970

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact: x Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
European Territorial Cooperation programme
Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Osaava ja uudistuva Suomi 2021-2027 (Finnish OP for regional and structural funds)

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1: Improved evaluation criteria for energy efficiency investments

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

As the previous ERDF programming period has ended and a new period starts, the new ERDF policy instrument to be proposed is the Finnish OP for regional and structural funds. There is specific content in the thematic priority 2 “Carbon Neutral Finland”, specific object 2.1 for Energy efficiency. Also the thematic priority 1 “Innovative Finland” and its specific objective 1.1 can be included. In this SO all projects must adhere to regional smart specialisation strategy. Only the policy instrument will change but the expected outcomes will stay similar to the original instrument proposed. Also the name and the targets of the policy instrument differ slightly. Anyhow our selected PI is still ERDF programme.

Greenreality Network is a business-oriented network of energy and environmental actors. Lappeenranta is the capital of South Karelia and Lappeenranta is the main actor in the Greenreality Network. Greenreality Network operates in the South Karelia region in Finland and creates growth and new business opportunities for its members. Greenreality Network was established to generate mutually beneficial partnerships and product innovations. A shared desire leads to concrete results. While there are many well-established and good practices in traditional collaborations, thinking about the future demands to innovation. They cannot be solely built on the tried and tested business models of the past. Sometimes there is a need to think outside the box in order to develop sustainable practices and new ways of thinking about business which lead the way in exploring uncharted territory.

The companies involved in the Greenreality Network attend events together, market their know-how, jointly offer their services, and generate new business opportunities in the region. This collaborative approach generates new customers — both in- and outside the network. Through the network, companies have also found new markets for their products and services. Networking promotes new partnerships and getting involved with different kinds of projects and initiatives. It also leads to innovation. The network gains access to information about national and international opportunities through the involvement of its public sector stakeholders.

During the preparation phase of the new ERDF programming period Regional Council of South Karelia is re-establishing its position as an intermediary of regional and structural funds. The Greenreality Network, other stakeholders and their knowledge and experience were exploited when the Regional Council drafted the

new 7-years programme. The main ideas could be included and added to the national level OP, too.

Stakeholders involved in the development of the action have been taking part in the process of S3UNICA. Smart specialisation strategies for 2021-2027 are required to involve sustainability aspects in a more crosscutting way and the South Karelian S4 plan (2022-2025) includes as a target to “enhance regional, cross-regional and international RDI-cooperation in order to advance fast CO2 emission reductions on the building and use of buildings sector.”

Lessons learnt at interregional level

The presentations during the project meetings organized by the project partners have emphasized the importance of collaboration of local stakeholders in the process of implementing and developing the policy instruments for enhancing energy efficiency of buildings, for example:

Spanish Partners:

- Exchange of Experiences; Jan 27, 2021 & Campus Technical Meeting; May 21, 2021
 - The Andalusian Energy Agency presentation emphasized the importance of regional co-operation in promoting the use of autochthonous renewable energy sources, energy saving and efficiency actions and demand management as measures to increase energy self-sufficiency, economic development and environmental protection in Andalusia. Similar approach can be applied in South Karelia.
 - The crucial role of a robust electricity transmission in achieving the objectives of the National Energy and Climate Plan in Spain was also recognized. The same applies also to Finland, maybe even more so.
 - The importance of development of renewable energy solutions, smart grids and high capacity energy storages has been recognized, and included in the Smart Specialisation Strategy on Energy.

Italian partners:

- “Innovative solutions in Friuli Venezia Giulia”; June 24, 2021
 - In the presentation “Local added value from international networking”, it was stated that international co-operation is important in discovering and transferring the best ideas, instruments and initiatives already in use in other countries. Combined with the sharing of best practices from all regions, this produces added value for all parties. During the EE event we learnt that our ambitions in the field of improving energy efficiency in buildings are in line with Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, although South Karelia is located much more North. Hence, it is possible that we can utilize similar technologies and approaches to improve EE in South Karelia and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Romanian partners:

- Exchange of Experience “Supporting local authorities in implementing the low carbon emissions strategies”; October 27 2021

- In Romania the AP will be elaborated based on the input and conclusions stemmed from the interregional and regional experience exchange. We have applied similar approach in Finland, this verifies also our approach.
- Increase of the capacity of Romanian Universities in improving EE of their campus buildings is based on experience exchange and know how sharing. All universities feel the need of developing EE works in their campus buildings. We have had a long successful collaboration in South Karelia between LUT University and companies. It was nice to hear, that the same kind of approach has been recognized important also in Romania.
- The importance of Capacity building measures for the potential beneficiaries in planning the activities, elaboration of plans / strategies / territorial studies at regional level, in correlation with the Urban Integrated Development Strategies was emphasized. This is something that we have tried to implement in South Karelia during the preparation of the now ongoing funding season.

Furthermore, the presentations on different innovative energy solutions have confirmed our ideas and experiences of benefitting from local networking between universities, companies offering energy efficient solutions, building owners and policy instrument developers.

The feedback from the S3UNICA project partners during the project on our local Greenreality Network (presented during the Exchange of Experience meeting on June 17, 2020) has confirmed us we have a good local process in operation. Furthermore, the Action Plan proposal draft of the Italian partners has encouraged us to utilize further the Greenreality Network in enhancing the energy efficiency project validation process, related to the policy instrument.

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

The need of funding is always higher than the resources and there is always a competition of funds. Therefore, it is highly important to select the projects which give the best and sustainable results to regional development. As the role of intermediary of regional and structural funds sets new requirements to the selection of projects, **the action relates to the assessment and evaluation of projects**. The S3UNICA project involves stakeholders with a wide range experience in interregional and EU RDI project experience. South Karelia is a relatively RDI intensive region with a small regional funding budget (national and EU regional funds combined). There is a clear need to sharpen the processes and competences in order to succeed better to utilize EU competitive funding possibilities.

The action is an **improvement of evaluation criteria and methods when assessing project proposals and results** of finished projects in **energy efficiency and renewable energy** related investments. Now the Regional Council uses

general criteria for all project proposals and in some cases experts if needed. The aim of the action is to establish **specific criteria to evaluate project proposals and to assess** energy efficiency and renewable energy related investments.

All relevant actors will be gathered to exchange experiences and to produce a mutual understanding on the subject. Especially the experience of the Greenreality Network will be used. Despite of lack of events due to Covid -19 pandemic during EE meetings online we have received information that inside the S3UNICA project many partners have tools for assessment (e.g., LP, PP2, PP3). They will be restudied, compared, and considered if they are relevant to our needs.

The focus will be on understanding **what criteria is relevant and specific** for this type of projects in order to select the best project proposals to be funded and implemented and to achieve pre-eminent results. The focus is also on **an easy and simple method**. Too complicated or too timeless methods can hinder and slow down the whole selection and assessment process.

As an outcome, a new innovative and efficient **evaluation criteria and method** for energy efficiency investments will be developed and introduced. And hopefully it will be taken into use in several policy instruments if it appears to be adequate. However, firstly it will be used in **ERDF projects**.

Schedule of ERDF calls is defining the progress of the action. The first call of ERDF closed on 10th April 2022. At the beginning of phase 2 in August 2022 PP7 and PP8 will convene with stakeholders and Greenreality network and start the evaluating process. There will be meetings and workshops aiming to develop the subject. Improvements and adjustments will be implemented when opening new ERDF call in autumn 2022. Similar process will be executed after the closure of the autumn call. When opening the ERDF call in spring 2023, the evaluation criteria and method for energy efficiency investments have been examined twice by experts. At the end of phase 2 there is an opportunity to make more advancements to criteria, if needed.

Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

When selecting the players involved, **the Quadruple Helix Model** has been used.

Science: Educational institutions (knowledge)

Technology providers, service providers (project consultants)

Policy: Regional Council

Industry: Relevant enterprises and societies, both private and public
(interest, knowledge)

Building owners (possible investors / decision makers)

Building managers (service providers, representing building owners)

Society: Municipalities (interest, influence, improvement of local knowledge
and decision-making)

Greenreality Network (knowledge and experience)

PPs who have suitable assessment tools

3. Timeframe

12 months

Start August 2022 and End July 2023

- establishment of an evaluation criteria for project proposals, with the partners and stakeholders, who have experience of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments 08/2022
- the new evaluation criteria in use when opening new ERDF call 08/2022
- feedback and needed adjustments after the closure of autumn call 10-11/2022
- adjusted criteria in use when opening spring ERDF and feedback and needed adjustments after the closure of spring call 03-07/2023

All the three evaluation cycles include at least two workshops; one for stakeholders and one for Greenreality Network. Gathered ideas and findings have to be analyzed, conclusions and recommendations made. Implementation of evaluation criteria, improvements, implementation and recommendations to PI are part of the process, too.

Results of the accomplished projects will be evaluated whenever there is one or more completed projects as an ongoing process.

4. Costs (if relevant)

- Staff costs: 14.400 € (2 persons working 10 % during 12 months)
- Organisational costs: 1.000 € (workshops, catering, material)

5. Funding sources (if relevant):

The Regional Council of South Karelia is a managing authority of the ERDF. The implementation of the action plan will be included into the description of the task assigned to the regional council's funding experts and there is no need for external funding. The co-operation with LUT university, municipalities, Greenreality Network and other stakeholders is an ongoing process and won't require any funding. The implementation of the action plan will be set as a target of this co-operation during phase 2. The organisational costs are part of day-to-day expenses in the regional Council.

Date: 31.5.2022

Signature:



Jami Holtari, Director Vitality
Regional Council of South Karelia

Stamp of the organisation (if available):



Contact person updated 31.5.2023

