

The “European Energy Award” for sustainable communities

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Abstract

In many communities energy is a low-priority policy field and a cross-department topic not easy to tackle. For many cities and towns it's hard to assess the effectiveness of their activities and projects in the field of energy-efficiency and renewable energy. Many communities actually do have an overall long-term concept concerning environmental and transport policies, but fail to translate their long-term targets into implemented measures and activities.

The European Energy Award® (EEA) is a quality management system developed in Switzerland, Austria and Germany to overcome these barriers and to establish a long-term targeted sustainable energy policy.

The main features of the EEA are:

- initiating a process in the community for regular evaluation and updating an energy action programme as well as the systematic implementation of measures,
- including all energy-related fields: development & planning, buildings & facilities, transport, energy supply, internal organisation, communication & co-operation,
- accredited advisers are coaching the municipalities along the whole process,
- setting up internal structures, suitable for steering the process including all relevant players in the community (politics, administration, citizens, private sector etc.) and last but not least,

- an auditing and certification scheme to award the communities according to the degree of implementation of possible measures,
- a network of communities for the exchange of experience and know how.

In six years the EEA (also known as Energiestadt and e5) has proven its usefulness and effectiveness in about 170 cities in Switzerland, Austria and Germany by showing a steady progress in their energy performance.

Making the step from single projects to a long-term process

In most European countries, energy legislation has been advanced and significant knowledge of technologies is available. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of systematic and effective implementation of those measures. The European Energy Award® (EEA) helps to overcome these barriers with a certification scheme, effective management tools, training and communication measures.

Since several years the European Energy Award® (EEA) and its precursor programme (Energiestadt and e5) has proven to be one of the most successful, comprehensive and systematic approaches for communal energy activities. With the EEA communities get the tools and support to define and achieve their energy and climate protection targets step by step. Along the participation in the programme the involved persons in the communities will qualify to steer and promote such a long term process.



The EEA process, a typical quality management process

The visible mark of the programme is the certification successful communities will be awarded with: the European Energy Award® in Silver and Gold.

WORKING WITH THE EEA

To illustrate the EEA programme a typical process within a community will be shown below.

Start-up phase

A representative of the community signs an agreement with a regional trustee, agreeing to the terms and the “rules of the game”. In return the community will get technical and organisational support from the regional trustee and EEA advisors.

The Energy Team is formed within the community to carry out the necessary steps involved in the EEA programme. The Energy Team consists of representatives from the community administration and politicians. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the Energy Team.

The first action is the initial energy review, an as-is analysis assisted by EEA tools. With the results the community has a rough idea about the status of energy efficiency in their sphere of action and an overview about strengths and weaknesses. This will help to process a communal energy policy and action programme.

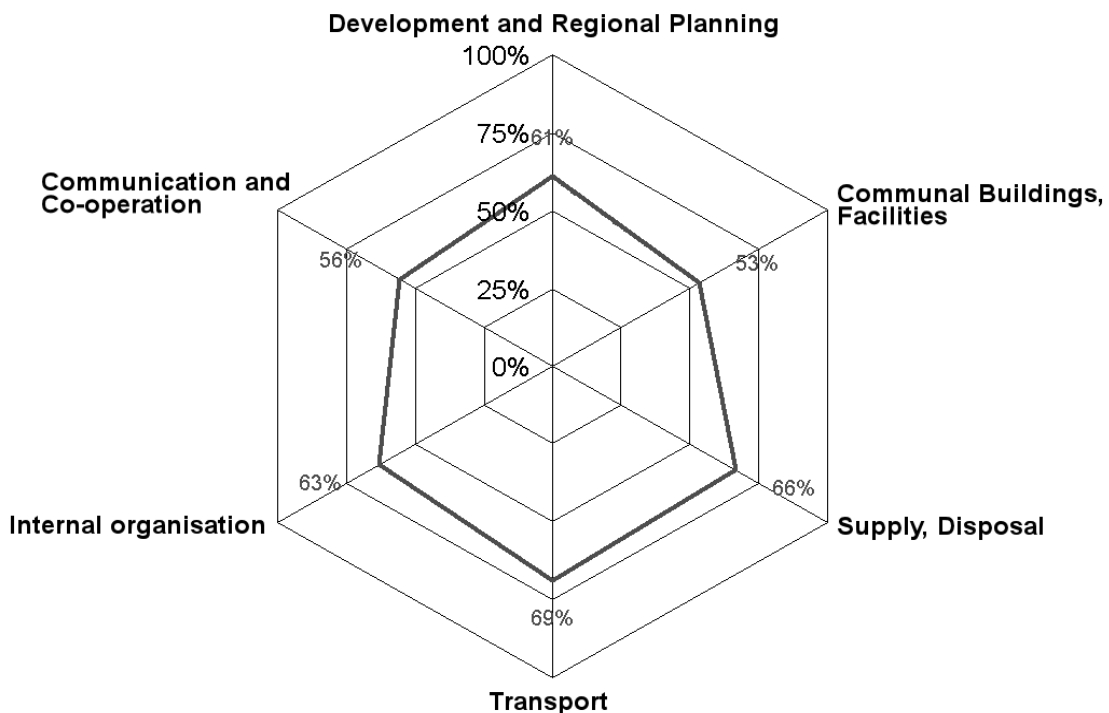
The continuous programme work

After the start-up phase the community will begin with a continuous process where real energy efficiency activities will be carried out. The Energy Team is responsible for steering the process: the projects will be planned and decisions will be prepared and finally implemented. Activities and progress will be evaluated annually and – if necessary – update the communal energy policy and action programme.

With the help of the provided EEA tools the community can assess and visualize its own strength-weaknesses profile and select among a broad variety of fields of action to set priorities and estimate their effectiveness.

External Audit and Certification

The community is then audited by an independent commission. According to the degree of implementation of ener-



Example of an energy profile of a community

gy measures the community can apply for certification in two categories:

- When a community attains 50% of possible points the European Energy Award® is awarded by the regional trustee.
- When a community attains 75% of possible points the European Energy Award® Gold is awarded by the European EEA Office. This can be seen as the European Champions League of energy efficiency.

The community is again audited at least every three years by an independent commission.

THE EUROPEAN ENERGY AWARD – A SUCCESS STORY

With the EEA programme communities can make the step from single energy efficiency projects to a long term, target and action oriented programme. According to the principles of total quality management (TQM) all steps follow a feedback loop of planning – implementation – evaluation. One of the strengths of the EEA is supported by standardized tools that also consider community-dependent factors (inhabitants, geography, legal and economic framework). Another novelty of such systems is the possibility to assess the effectiveness of soft-measures (non-technical measures, like awareness raising).

Some of the indicators are proving EEA to be a successful approach:

- currently about 170 communities in Switzerland, Austria and Germany participate in the programme, of which about 60 have been awarded with the European Energy Award® Silver and most others have been awarded been awarded with precursor programmes (Energienstadt and e5) before 2003,
- so far, six communities have been awarded with the European Energy Award® Gold so far: Langenegg (Austria) and in Switzerland: Cham, Lausanne, Richen, Schaffhausen and Zurich.

In Austria's 40 member communities

- about 1 100 energy related projects have been implemented within the last 3 years,
- about 400 Energy Team members are actively involved in the programme,
- about 50 thematic manuals and tools for communities have been developed and distributed,
- about 50 meetings for exchange of experience between communities have been organised,
- about 10 000 hours of energy related training and education have been consumed by Energy Team members.

OUTLOOK

In the three well-established participating countries Switzerland, Austria and Germany the EEA programme is spreading to new regions and new cities. On the other hand, the member communities are continuously improving their performance which can clearly be seen by an increasing level of implementation and by the growing number of top



European Energy Award® in Silver and Gold

communities certified with the European Energy Award® Gold.

In an EC (SAVE II) funded project, seven European regions started to work with the EEA in pilot communities. This project will be completed in early 2005 and the programme will hopefully continue and expand in these countries: Basque Region (Spain), Ireland, Liguria (Italy), Lithuania, Slovakia as well as Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saxony (Germany).

An other EC funded project (Interreg IIIA to develop transborder cooperation between France and Switzerland) has been recently launched to implement the EEA process in 8 pilot French local authorities; it will last 3 years and set up the foundation to develop EEA in France.

Further Reading

www.european-energy-award.org – EEA's international, multi-language web site

www.e5-gemeinden.at – Austria's national web site (in German)

www.energiestadt.at – Swiss national web site (French, Italian, German)