

Empowering local and regional authorities to design clean **EN**ergy
TRANSition plans through **Ca**pacities and **Kn**owledge building actions

Strengthening Local Capacities for a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition

Authors: Federica Ragazzo

Contributors: Giulia Viero & Jeremy Cléro (IEECP)

» What local authorities' self-assessments reveal about rural just energy transition challenges

In the rural pilot areas of Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain of the ENTRACK project, citizens face significant and additional **barriers** to adopting sustainable energy practices. These include **high upfront costs, administrative complexity, and limited awareness of energy policies or support mechanisms**. These challenges are further exacerbated in **rural areas**, which often suffer from lower visibility and weaker involvement in national strategies, resulting in reduced awareness of available energy policies and support opportunities. Local authorities also report **capacity gaps** in designing, implementing, and monitoring socio-energy and climate-related plans.

This misalignment between policy intentions and citizen's lived experiences risks deepening energy vulnerability and undermining national and EU energy and climate targets. With the recent revision of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), urgent action is needed to ensure that local strategies are inclusive and responsive.

» Key findings

- 🔍 ENTRACK's self-assessment activities across Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain revealed a **shared perception among local policymakers of significant energy transition implementation barriers**, including limited funding, bureaucratic complexity, and low citizen awareness.
- 🔍 Despite existing initiatives, **citizen participation in local energy plans is perceived as low in all pilot areas**. Policymakers acknowledge that better outreach and communication are needed to activate community engagement.

- 🔍 Local officials across countries **expressed uncertainty and a lack of confidence** in key areas of socio-energy planning/policies, particularly in monitoring, intersectoral coordination, and long-term strategic design.
- 🔍 When asked to evaluate existing plans, municipalities rated **“monitoring” and “cross-sectoral integration”** as the weakest points of the plans, indicating a need to strengthen coherence across policy domains.
- 🔍 **Training needs identified** include project and budget management, stakeholder coordination, and communication strategies, suggesting systemic gaps in administrative capacity at the local level.

➤ Policy Implications

Why it matters for policy?

Local authorities are willing to drive the socio-energy transition but are limited by a lack of resources.

Municipalities lack the tools, capacity, and confidence to effectively design, implement, and monitor inclusive energy plans.

This matters because **local governments are central to delivering a just energy transition**

- they are closest to communities, understand local needs, and are key to engaging citizens. Yet without proper coordination, training, and support from national and EU levels, their actions remain fragmented and often ineffective.

➤ Recommendations: Making local energy planning inclusive through social goals, targeted support, and streamlined access

Strengthening Local Capacity for a Just Energy Transition

ENTRACK's findings show that municipalities are central to delivering the energy transition but remain under-equipped for effective action. Social dimensions such as energy poverty, citizen participation, and territorial equity, are still weakly integrated into local planning. This risks excluding vulnerable communities from the benefits of climate action and undermining the EU's ambition for a just, inclusive transition.

To bridge this gap, local energy plans should systematically include social objectives

and be supported by clear guidance and dedicated funding.

Municipalities need targeted capacity-building to improve planning, coordination, and citizen engagement. Finally, access to national and EU support schemes must be simplified, with streamlined administrative procedures and technical assistance to ensure that even small or rural authorities can participate fully in the transition.



Actionable Steps

Embed social equity in local energy planning

Make the inclusion of clear objectives on energy poverty reduction, community participation, and fair access to clean energy mandatory in all local energy plans.

Build municipal capacity through targeted support

Fund structured training and technical assistance to strengthen local skills in planning, monitoring, and citizen engagement.

Streamline funding access and coordination

Simplify procedures and ensure local authorities can easily navigate and benefit from national and EU energy transition funds.

» Next Steps / Call to Action

Local authorities are encouraged to pilot these recommendations in their communities by:



The upcoming meetings with the pilot municipalities of the ENTRACK project will aim to co-design local socio-energy policies.

Lessons learned will be collected and shared across the ENTRACK network to inform future action and support peer learning among municipalities facing similar challenges.



Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment executive agency (CINEA). Neither the European Union nor the European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment executive agency can be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by
the European Union

ABOUT ENTRACK

ENTRACK is an EU-funded project under the LIFE programme, providing technical support for clean energy transition plans and strategies in municipalities and regions. It aims to accelerate the shift toward climate neutrality by strengthening the energy policy capacities of eight small to medium-sized rural municipalities in the Mediterranean.

The role of local and regional authorities is pivotal to energy transition, as real implementation must occur at the local level. These institutional bodies should act as facilitators and enablers of change.

In this context, ENTRACK supports local authorities in co-designing social energy policies that address the specific and real needs of citizens, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. The project equips regional and municipal policy actors with scientific-technical knowledge, capacity, and a methodological framework to develop and implement inclusive energy strategies, engaging citizens throughout the process and integrating their input into local agendas.

Project information:

Duration: 1/11/2023 - 31/10/2026

Project coordinator: AISFOR SRL

Contact information:

ragazzo@reteassist.it



Stay Updated!

info@entrack-project.eu
www.entrack-project.eu



RETE ASSIST



ecoserveis



Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment executive agency (CINEA). Neither the European Union nor the European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment executive agency can be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by
the European Union