

Energy Agencies in Europe

Results and perspectives

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Table of contents

Figures and tables	5
Figures.	5
Executive Summary and Overview	6
E.3.1 Organisational aspects of energy agencies	8
E.3.2 Sustainability of energy agencies.	9
E.3.3 Activities led by energy agencies	10
E.3.4 Political commitment and engaging stakeholders	11
E.3.5 Needs and expectations of energy agencies	12
E.3.6 Collaboration and networking between energy agencies and public authorities.	13
1. Introduction	14
2. Methodology	18
3. Results from quantitative survey	21
Introduction	22
Legal Status of energy agencies.	23
Size of energy agencies	24
Age of energy agencies.	25
Budget composition of energy agencies.	26
Energy agencies and EU funds.	26
Energy agencies' Target Groups	27
Energy agencies' management board	27
The influence of establishing new energy agencies.	28
An evolving situation for energy agencies.	29
Sustainability of energy agencies	29

Activities of energy agencies . . . . .	.31
Capacity Building . . . . .	.32
Energy agencies and the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) . . . . .	.33
Networking activities . . . . .	.34
The opportunity of EU funding . . . . .	.36
4. Key findings from quantitative and qualitative surveys	38
4.1. Operational aspects of energy agencies . . . . .	.39
4.2. Support and commitment from decision makers . . . . .	.40
4.3. Multilevel governance coordination . . . . .	.42
4.4. Contractual structure promoted with IEE funding for establishment . . . . .	.44
4.5. Activities led by energy agencies . . . . .	.45
4.6. The needs of energy agencies . . . . .	.47
4.7. EU and international collaboration . . . . .	.49
5. Summary and conclusions	50

Figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1 – Variety of operational level of energy agencies in the IEE programme area . . . .	.22
Figure 2 – Proportion of responding energy agencies according to their operational level . .	.23
Figure 3 – Legal status of energy agencies . . . . .	.23
Figure 4 – Satisfaction rate of IEE and SAVE-funded energy agencies in terms of legal status. .	.24
Figure 5 – Proportion of energy agencies according to their number of expert employees . .	.25
Figure 6 – Year of establishment of the 120 responding energy agencies . . . . .	.26

Figure 7 – Budget composition of the responding energy agencies (average of the last 3 years) . . . . .	.26
Figure 8 – Energy agencies’ Target Groups . . . . .	.27
Figure 9 – Proportion of responding energy agencies for each category of board representative . . . . .	.28
Figure 10 – Energy agencies declaring their establishment influenced the creation of new energy agencies. . . . .	.28
Figure 11 – Number of energy agencies informed about the creation of a new energy agency . . . . .	.29
Figure 12 – Number of energy agencies being informed about other energy agencies having closed down or becoming inactive in their country . . . . .	.29
Figure 13 – Opinion of energy agencies on whether they are big enough to operate in their area and to involve their target groups . . . . .	.29
Figure 14 – Opinion of energy agencies on the need for more energy agencies near to their geographical area of responsibility . . . . .	.30
Figure 15 – “Do you foresee your organisation being sustainable in the next 3 years?”. . . . .	.30
Figure 16 – The 5 most important activities of energy agencies . . . . .	.31
Figure 17 – Capacity building provided by energy agencies for stakeholders . . . . .	.32
Figure 18 – Proportion of responding energy agencies having developed EU financing activities in the past . . . . .	.32
Figure 19 – Proportion of energy agencies having convinced 0 to 50 municipalities to sign Covenant of Mayors . . . . .	.34
Figure 20 – Proportion of energy agencies having developed between 0 to 50 SEAPs . . . . .	.34
Figure 21 – Proportion of responding energy agencies which participate in networks. . . . .	.35
Figure 22 – Proportion of responding energy agencies having developed EU financing activities in the past . . . . .	.36
Figure 23 – Proportion of responding energy agencies wanting to develop new EU financing activities in the future36

Table

Table 1 – Impacts from a sample of 62 Agencies33
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Executive Summary and Overview



E.1 Background

This report presents the results of the third assessment¹ of local and regional energy agencies in Europe which has been carried out under the Intelligent Energy Europe programme.

The results of this assessment are expected to be of use to policy makers and to decision makers with responsibilities for sustainable energy related issues at European, national, regional and local levels.

The Intelligent Energy - Europe Programme (IEE) was the main EU instrument for supporting collaborative projects aimed at tackling non-technological barriers to the efficient use of energy and to the use of new and renewable energy sources in Europe in the period from 2003 to 2013. It is managed by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises (EASME) on behalf of the European Commission, DG Energy. The IEE programme also supported actions aiming to facilitate the practical implementation of EU energy policies and legislation, including the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, Energy Efficiency Directive and Renewable Energy Directive, as well as policies and legislation related to energy using products and sustainable transport. It supported projects on creating more favourable market conditions, capacity building, exchanging experience and know-how, local/regional policy development and implementation, awareness raising, education and training, as well as on the creation of new local and regional energy agencies.

In order to encourage the development of expertise in tackling energy policy implementation challenges at local and regional levels, the European Union has contributed to the establishment of more than 250 local and regional energy agencies in the EU, first via the SAVE programme from 1991 to 2002, and then through the IEE programmes I and II from 2003 to 2013 (with 2008 being the last year in which the IEE calls for proposals included a priority for the creation of new local and regional energy agencies). The total budget allocated to the establishment of new energy agencies under IEE I and IEE II amounted to € 42.073.529 with an EU contribution of € 18.127.214, and 79 new agencies were established with this funding. In 2013, 402 local and regional energy agencies were still operating in Europe, of which 368 were operating in the participating countries of the IEE programme².

Energy agencies contribute to the implementation of sustainable energy policies by working closely with public authorities and with small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) and citizens at regional and local levels. They are typically small bodies (usually from 2 to 15 staff), which have been established at the initiative of local or regional public authorities. Those agencies, that were created with EU support, were required to work at local or regional levels on promoting energy efficiency (rational use of energy resources), new and renewable energy sources, and energy efficient transport.

1 Ref. study led by ECUBA: <http://www.managenergy.net/download/EA%20Study.pdf>
Ref. study led by Matrix: http://www.managenergy.net/lib/documents/29/original_final_report_2010.pdf

2 EU 28, Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia

E.2 Scope of this report and methodology used

This report presents an analysis of the results and impacts achieved as well as the on-going needs of local and regional energy agencies or equivalent structures in the EU, including those which creation was funded by the IEE programme and those that were established without such EU funding but are nevertheless operating today with similar scope. This analysis has enabled the EACI to draw some overall conclusions related to the activities which are being carried out by local and regional energy agencies today, and to explore how these are changing in response to the evolving energy policies, and related legislative and financial frameworks.

As a first step, a quantitative analysis of the activities led by local and regional energy agencies was performed, based on an online survey which was sent in May 2013 to 306 local and regional energy agencies, that were known to be operating in the eligible countries of the IEE programme. Contacts were also made with public authorities that do not have their own energy agencies but are nevertheless active in tackling sustainable energy issues. In total, 120 local and regional energy agencies and/or local authorities actively took part in the quantitative survey, that is to say more than 36% of all of the energy agencies consulted. All data were treated confidentially³.

As a second step, a qualitative analysis was carried out based on interviews / case studies for a sample of energy agencies, which were selected with the help of the Covenant of Mayors' team, as being representative of different local backgrounds in Europe.

E.3 Key findings

Based on the quantitative and qualitative surveys and analyses performed, some of the key findings and needs of local and regional Energy Agencies are summarized below.

E.3.1 Organisational aspects of energy agencies

The IEE initiative for the establishment of new energy agencies has given an important impulse at local and regional levels, and has helped to engage decision makers in tackling energy and climate issues on the ground. It has also enabled the spreading of expertise on energy management issues and techniques across the EU.

The legal status of an energy agency, which was promoted by the IEE programme, was a "not-for-profit independent/autonomous organisation, which receives a mandate and support from public authorities to provide information, advice and technical assistance to energy users and contribute to the development of local sustainable energy markets». Such agencies are headed by a Director who reports to

3 in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 8, 12.01.2001, p. 1)

a management board which may include private sector representatives, but has a majority drawn from the public sector. Based on this approach, the administrative structure of each new energy agency was adapted to suit its national context and national legal frameworks. There are also other types of organisation, which offer similar services to those offered by energy agencies, but have a different legal status and structure (eg: energy departments within local authorities, NGO's that offer similar services, etc.).

The independence, which was recommended by the IEE programme, varies between countries. One weakness of the approach, which occurs when an energy agency works under the control of just one local authority (usually the one which supported its establishment in the first place), is that the responsible authority can limit the choice and hinder the development of new, independent technical projects. In contrast, a good number of energy agencies have acquired more independence by linking themselves to more than one public authority (multi-dependence), which has given them better security and more control over their activities and projects.

The communication activities, which had to be carried out by those energy agencies that were established using an IEE grant, were very much appreciated on the ground. These activities can contribute to the transparency of the actions led by the agencies and help those agencies to engage with decision makers by offering them

good visibility. Moreover, dissemination activities across Europe have been an important success factor for energy agencies, because they have led to their participation in various EU networks and initiatives.

To establish more energy agencies is not seen as a priority in all parts of Europe, but the need to support more local and regional energy activities, including raising awareness and engaging with decision makers on sustainable energy issues was emphasised by those energy agencies that responded to the surveys.

E.3.2 Sustainability of energy agencies

If political support is key to the establishment of new energy agencies, it is even more crucial for the sustainability of their activities in the medium-term. For an energy agency, being dependent on only one local authority is a risk because any political changes (elections) or even a local political quarrel can lead to a loss of support. Such problems have already led to the disappearance of a number of energy agencies, notably in Italy, Spain, UK and Greece, for example from 2012 to 2013, 42 energy agencies (possibly more) closed down or became inactive. A better solution seems to be to secure support from several municipalities, even though coordinating activities in a fragmented political context (possibly involving multilevel governance) can also be a challenge, especially when working to implement concrete actions.

Sustainability of funding is certainly a major issue for energy agencies, and many have expressed a wish to see a dedicated line in a public budget for funding their activities in order to provide them with more certainty. Options have been suggested in the form of mandates at national level for energy agencies to perform their activities and become official energy actors at local or regional level. In fact, some regions have already established such a mandate for their energy agencies, and this was reported to be very successful because it allows the agencies to be more proactive. For others, the evolution of their turnover shows that agencies, which began operating with support from only one public authority and then later secured additional support from other public authorities, are now healthier and less vulnerable as a result. Overall, after taking into account the various national contexts, it appears that energy agencies as independent structures, such as associations, are more prosperous.

A lack of recognition of energy agencies in national legislation appears to prevent a number of them from undertaking activities which can be carried out by other organisations, and can also make it difficult for them to be given access to energy data directly from energy providers. Several energy agencies claim that ambiguity regarding their status prevents them from operating efficiently, and they suggest that an EU certification scheme should be established for energy agencies in the EU.

E.3.3 Activities led by energy agencies

The activities of energy agencies have evolved in recent years from raising awareness on energy issues and project planning on their territory (i.e. Sustainable Energy Action Plans or SEAPs), to actively working with public authorities on project implementation. As a result, the needs of energy agencies have moved from political support to financial support, from both public and private funds. Indeed, although they are in principle technical experts, energy agencies are becoming more and more involved with financing and with ensuring the bankability of investment projects. Most energy agencies express a willingness to get more involved with new project financing schemes, and are interested in the Project Development Assistance initiatives (ELENA and MLEI), as well as in the development of ESCOs and Energy Performance Contracting (EPC).

On the other hand, some energy agencies have to look for contracts in order to be able to pay their staff salaries although in some cases, depending on national legislation, they are not permitted to compete on the market for providing regular energy services. In some cases, energy agencies have found their way by diversifying their activities, for example, after promoting new energy practices in their regions such as energy certification of buildings, or joint purchasing of (green) energy, etc., they have secured a mandate (and budget) from their public authorities to monitor the quality of these practices in their local area. Such services can be expanded to other public authorities and to other sectors

such as the monitoring of energy tariffs for public bodies (i.e. hospitals) or quality control of Energy Service Companies' (ESCO) activities (and/or other energy service providers).

The creativity and capacity to adapt of energy agencies is key to the survival of their activities, in particular for the development of new projects and of their local energy markets. For instance, some energy agencies have been involved in research activities with good results for their community, allowing new practical initiatives to be tried and tested, and helping local actors to learn about research activities and to embed them in normal practices. Such diversification of activities has also included holistic approaches for projects (eg in buildings, education, energy poverty, jobs aspects...⁴).

Energy agencies, which were pioneers in raising awareness on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources (RES), are still running education and training activities in order to achieve their goals. Activities to promote behavioural change are important in all Member States, while training on new energy concepts and technologies is also needed because these continue to evolve along the years.

E.3.4 Political commitment and engaging stakeholders

The operational level of energy agencies (local or regional) can be important. Typically, regional and provincial energy agencies are

big enough to generate economies of scale in their project activities, and can also employ experts on a wider range of topics than a local agency because of their larger size. However, some regions have established energy agencies at both levels of governance and ensure coordination between them. The need for this depends on the regional context, the availability of local competences and the relevant legislation, which can be very different from one country to another.

It is widely recognised that the success of such bottom-up initiatives very much depends on the responsible decision makers. In this context, the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) has become a very persuasive and efficient way to involve municipal decision makers in the energy challenge. More than 6000 municipalities have signed the CoM, which implies the development of a sustainable energy action plan (SEAP) by each municipality within one year after signature. Energy agencies contribute very widely to the development of SEAPs, as shown by the number of CoM signatories in areas having an energy agency.

Nevertheless, there is a significant time delay between the development of SEAPs and their implementation, which is largely due to the difficulties experienced by municipalities in mobilising investment financing (public and private) during this period of crisis. By co-funding technical assistance expenses, the MLEI (managed under the IEE programme) and ELENA (managed by the EIB) initiatives

4 Example: YEP and E-SEAP projects

are able to support the preparation of sustainable energy projects, but not all energy agencies have the skills required to do that preparatory work. Exchanges of experience are therefore still needed to develop the necessary skills in more energy agencies and to build greater confidence in the financial institutions. Indeed, according to the information provided by those energy agencies that responded to the surveys, only 10% of energy agencies count financial institutions as one of their four main target groups.

The development of pilot projects is usually a good way to engage with local politicians. Some energy agencies have provided examples of rational use of energy (RUE) or renewable energy sources (RES) projects, which have been seen as a great success by the general public and, therefore, also by decision makers. In Croatia, for instance, the renovation of a significant number of condominium buildings has generated a very high interest in both the media and the general public, and has therefore been welcomed by decision makers. In Italy, the construction of local cogeneration plants using biogas on farms has been very successful⁵ and was warmly welcomed by local decision makers. Indeed, by financing the implementation of innovative renewable power generation, the Italian project involved the agricultural sector and opened it up to new opportunities for business development. These examples highlight how projects with a holistic approach can win political support from decision makers with different allegiances.

E.3.5 Needs and expectations of energy agencies

Some energy agencies ask for the implementation of EU directives on Energy Efficiency and RES to be adapted in ways which would make it easier for energy agencies (fully or partly public) to implement cost effective energy actions in their areas. For example, energy efficient district-heating networks supplied by RES could be more easily implemented by local, provincial or regional authorities with the help of their local energy agencies than by central governments, but the existing legal and financial frameworks need to be adapted in some Member States in order to facilitate this.

In view of the delays which are occurring between the signing of SEAPs and their actual implementation, energy agencies are calling for more targeted training on new financial tools and services, such as energy performance contracting, and on how to mobilise public-private partnerships and ESCOs. They also call for more training on how to develop bankable project packages and how to prepare appropriate business models for local RES and energy efficiency related projects.

Structural funds will play a growing role in supporting the development of sustainable energy activities and in bringing them into the mainstream. Energy agencies recognise this and would like to become more involved in designing and developing policies and frameworks for using these funds for sustainable energy projects

5 FORAGRI project led by provincial energy agency AGIRE in Mantova successfully engaged local decision makers in a rural area and won Sustainable Energy Europe Award 2008.

in their areas, as well as in guiding the resulting project implementation. Some energy agencies are already using their technical skills to assist the responsible public authorities to some extent and those, which have a privileged relationship with their regional authorities, have already contributed effectively to the allocation of the structural funds in their regions. Despite these successes, many energy agencies are still struggling to become recognised as an appropriate source of expertise for contributing to the selection and implementation of energy projects using structural funds.

E.3.6 Collaboration and networking between energy agencies and public authorities

Those energy agencies which were established with the support of an IEE grant were required to collaborate with more experienced «mentor» agencies and to establish relationships with stakeholders in their own country and in other parts of Europe. Such cooperation was of course important in the short term, but has also proved to be beneficial in the longer term. Many of the most successful energy agencies and public authorities have benefitted from working together in multinational IEE projects and from participating in EU wide networks such as ManagEnergy or the Covenant of Mayors, which facilitate capacity building, training and exchanges of experience (peer to peer) and best practices related to the development of local initiatives and the promotion of sustainable energy.

The content and focus of collaborations and networking activities carried out by energy agencies and public authorities is naturally evolving in line with the sustainable energy policy agenda, but networking remains an important component of the work carried out by successful energy agencies and public authorities.

①

Introduction



1.1 Context

This report presents the results of the third assessment⁶ of local and regional energy agencies in Europe to be carried out under the Intelligent Energy Europe programme.

The aims of the assessment were :

- (i) to quantify the results and impacts of a selection of local and regional energy agencies funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme within its Calls 2003-2008 and to compare these with the initial objectives and priorities of the programme;
- (ii) to produce an updated “mapping” of the work carried out by local and regional energy agencies funded by the IEE programme, and
- (iii) to identify key lessons, best practices and recommendations for addressing the energy sector at local and regional levels, which could be fed into the current work of the European Commission services, notably into the future priorities of the Horizon 2020 programme.

The assessment targeted energy agencies or equivalent structures in Europe, with a special focus on those energy agencies which were funded by the Intelligent Energy-Europe programme (IEE I & II).

The results of this assessment are expected to be of use to policy makers and to decision mak-

ers with responsibilities for sustainable energy related issues at European, national, regional and local levels.

1.2 Creation of local and regional energy agencies with EU support

The Work Programme IEE I (2003-2006) supported the creation of new energy agencies, based on local needs and priorities, and required a clear commitment by each responsible local authority confirming that it would support its new energy agency for at least 5 years after the end of the EU funding. Priority was given - always upon qualitative criteria - to establishing energy agencies in the then candidate countries. The maximum EU contribution in the IEE I programme was 50% of eligible costs and up to 200.000€ per agency while there was a minimum of three partner countries - one agency per country in each grant agreement. The follow-up programme, IEE II, covering the period 2007-2013, incorporated some changes: increasing the maximum EU contribution to 75 % of eligible costs and to 250.000 euro for each local or regional energy agency created, and allowing proposals for the creation of energy agencies to be submitted by a single country. Energy agencies were thus created with the support of the European Commission in 26 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia,

6

Ref. study led by ECUBA: <http://www.managenergy.net/download/EA%20Study.pdf>

Ref. study led by Matrix: http://www.managenergy.net/lib/documents/29/original_final_report_2010.pdf



Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

Every year from 2003 to 2013, the IEE programme opened a call for proposals with a set of priorities ('key actions'), and awarded grants to a variety of stakeholders for tackling sustainable energy issues. In this framework, IEE calls from 2003 to 2008 included priorities for the establishment of new energy agencies. The evaluation of each Call was carried out on the basis of published quality criteria, and grant agreements were signed with the coordinators of the selected proposals. Most of these grant agreements

had come to an end by the end of 2013, though a small number did not finish until the beginning of 2014.

1.3 Objectives of IEE key actions for creation of local and regional energy agencies⁷

- To contribute to the implementation and future development of EU, national, local and regional policies, strategies and legislation for promoting actions by householders, businesses (especially SMEs) and the public sector to improve energy efficiency and increase

7

http://www.managenergy.net/meta_informations/516

use of renewables, especially in buildings and transport (including biofuels).

- To change citizens' behaviour and improve the quality of local/regional decision-making related to the implementation of energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.
- To create a critical mass of local activity and achieve local economies of scale in order to reduce the costs of energy efficiency and renewable energy systems.
- To increase levels of investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy services at local and regional levels.
- To promote the establishment, public financing and use of local energy agencies by public authorities (PAs) as a vital tool for achieving these objectives.

- In total, 129 proposals were submitted under the key action 'Creation of local and regional energy agencies' to the IEE Calls for proposals from 2004 to 2008. 32,5 % of proposals submitted to IEE were recommended for funding by the evaluation committee.
- 402 local and regional energy agencies were still operating in Europe in 2013 (with various funding sources), of which 368 were operating in the participating countries of the IEE programme.⁸

1.4 Key statistics related to EU support for local and regional energy agencies

- 79 new agencies were established with funding from the two IEE programmes (2004-2013).
- The total budget allocated to the establishment of new energy agencies under IEE I and IEE II amounted to € 42.073.529 with an EC contribution of € 18.127.214.

②

Methodology



Given the tight economic times and reduced access to public funds for local development actors, it was decided to collect an overview of the impacts, needs and insights of local and regional energy agencies, through a combination of written surveys and targeted interviews.

As a first step, an online questionnaire was sent, in May 2013, to 306 local and regional energy agencies, which were known to be operating in the eligible countries of the IEE programme. The list of operational energy agencies had been updated earlier in the year by the ManagEnergy and IEE team. The same questionnaire was sent to all energy agencies operating in Europe, whether they had been funded under IEE I&II or not. The questionnaire was designed to collect information from all types of organisation which are tackling energy issues at local and regional level, in order to see how they react to the evolving agenda, legislative and financial frameworks. This questionnaire therefore included a majority of closed questions, allowing the audience to respond in less than about twenty minutes. Energy agencies were requested to give general information about their staff (number and qualifications), turnover and sources of funding, areas of activity, legal status, needs, collaboration at EU level as well as the political commitment of the local authorities supporting them. They were also invited to mention any new energy agencies that had recently been established near to their area of responsibility.

In total, 120 local and regional energy agencies responded to the survey, that is to say more than 36% of all of the energy agencies consulted. All data were treated confidentially⁹, and are presented in this report in anonymized form, showing statistical overviews and trends only.

As a second step, a qualitative survey was carried out based on interviews and in some cases a second on-line questionnaire for 38 energy agencies, which were selected with the help of the Covenant of Mayors' team, as being representative of different local backgrounds in Europe. The 38 agencies were selected with the aim of covering as many eligible countries as possible, on the basis of:

- Energy agencies funded under IEE I & II, in particular relatively new energy agencies
- Energy agencies considered successful;
- Critical energy agencies,
- Their willingness to further discuss their activities after the first phase of the assessment
- Energy agencies in countries not well represented once the above criteria were applied,

These energy agencies were interviewed using different media and a second online questionnaire was sent out to those energy agencies that were willing to provide further information on their experience after responding to the first survey. The second questionnaire was

9 in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of 18 Dec 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 8, 12.01.2001, p. 1)

based on the same structure as the first one, but used open questions in order to collect more detailed insights. Face-to-face interviews were held with some of those energy agencies which had been established under IEE II and were still under contract. Lastly, some energy agencies were interviewed by telephone conference.

As a final step, the statements and information provided by the energy agencies were analysed, and the main findings and trends are summarised in this report.

A copy of the questionnaire used for the first survey is available on the ManagEnergy website: <http://www.managenergy.net>



③

Results from quantitative survey



Introduction

An online questionnaire was sent, in May 2013, to local and regional energy agencies, which were known to be operating in the eligible countries of the IEE programme. The list of operational energy agencies had been updated earlier in the year by the ManagEnergy and IEE teams. The same questionnaire was sent to all energy agencies operating in Europe, whether they had been funded under IEE I&II or not.

The questionnaire was designed to collect information from all types of organisation which are tackling energy issues at local and regional level, in order to see how they react to the evolving agenda, legislative and financial frameworks. This questionnaire therefore included a majority of closed questions, allowing the audience to respond in less than about twenty minutes.

In order to reach as many energy agencies as possible and to ensure the representativeness of the results, the starting point for the work was the list of energy agencies given in the ManagEnergy directory of 2013, which contained 402 energy agencies in 34 European countries.

However, in order to be consistent with the scope of the IEE programme, only those agencies in the eligible countries of the IEE programme were consulted and any national energy agencies or umbrella organisations were excluded. Out of the 368 energy agencies established in the eligible countries of the IEE programme, 330 were confirmed to be operating at regional, provincial or local level (including island governments). Finally, 120 energy agencies actually completed the survey, so more than 1/3rd of the relevant stakeholders are represented in the statistical presentations of this report.

Energy agencies are subdivided as follows:

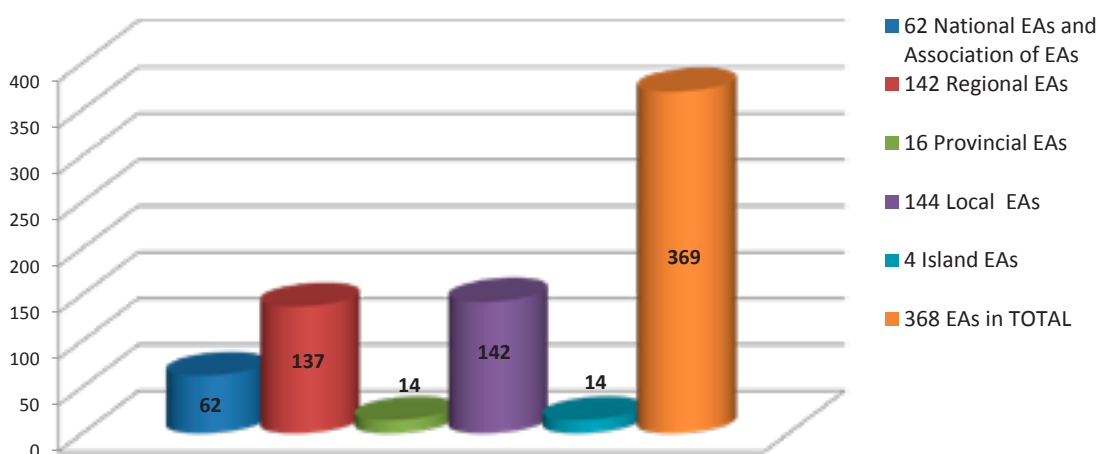


Figure 1 – Variety of operational level of energy agencies in the IEE programme area

All questions were not compulsory; therefore, should there be a total of replies below 100%, the difference corresponds to the number of agencies which did not provide answers.

Energy agencies which were established under the SAVE and IEE programmes responded quite actively to the survey, to the extent that over 47% of the responses were given by energy agencies which had received an EU grant for their establishment.

It is noteworthy that half of the questionnaires were submitted by regional energy agencies, as shown in Figure 2 (171 regional energy agencies out of the 330 energy agencies operating at regional, provincial and local level).

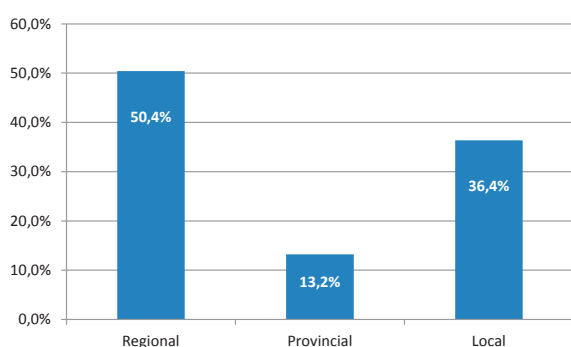


Figure 2 - Proportion of responding energy agencies according to their operational level

Legal Status of energy agencies

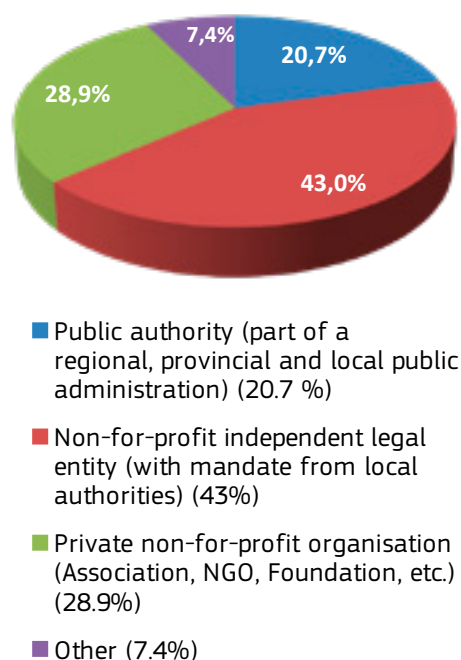


Figure 3 - Legal status of energy agencies

Most of the agencies which were established under the IEE Programme declared that the legal status recommended by the programme¹⁰ suits them and fits with local needs (see satisfaction rates in Figure 4), especially when it comes to raising awareness and other educational activities, which are of public interest. Such independency often enables energy agencies to focus on technical activities leading to a high operational capacity. However, in order to suggest policies or measures and to carry out different projects and programs, energy agencies very much need political support from a majority of public authorities operating on their territory, especially when these are

10 Non-for-profit independent/autonomous organisation, which receives a mandate and support from public local authorities to provide information, advice and technical assistance to energy users (status recommended by the IEE programme in the framework of its grant for the establishment of new energy agencies).

entitled to legislate on energy matters. For example, autonomous regions may be able to bring forward initiatives that are linked to other local policy objectives such as economic and employment goals, together with EU energy efficiency and RES objectives. To operate with such a status requires an adequate availability of public funds to run the agency, and this has proved to be a challenge for many agencies in the last few years. Moreover, on top of the impact of limited available funding from their local authorities, some independent energy agencies, notably private associations, are facing difficulties to get other public funds, in particular at EU level, where bank guaranties are requested in order to get advance payments. It follows that there is not one legal status which is appropriate for all energy agencies in Europe. However, the independency of energy agen-

cies has proved to be crucial for delivering objective technical advice and promoting replication of local and regional RUE and RES projects.

Size of energy agencies

The energy agencies were asked to estimate the number of employees (experts and support staff) that were working for them. The estimations shown in Figure 5 are expressed in full-time equivalent employees (FTE).

As previously mentioned, energy agencies are not always independent bodies and may employ very small teams depending on their workflow and the development of new projects. It can be seen in Figure 5 that 35% of the responding energy agencies count 1 to 3 experts as part of

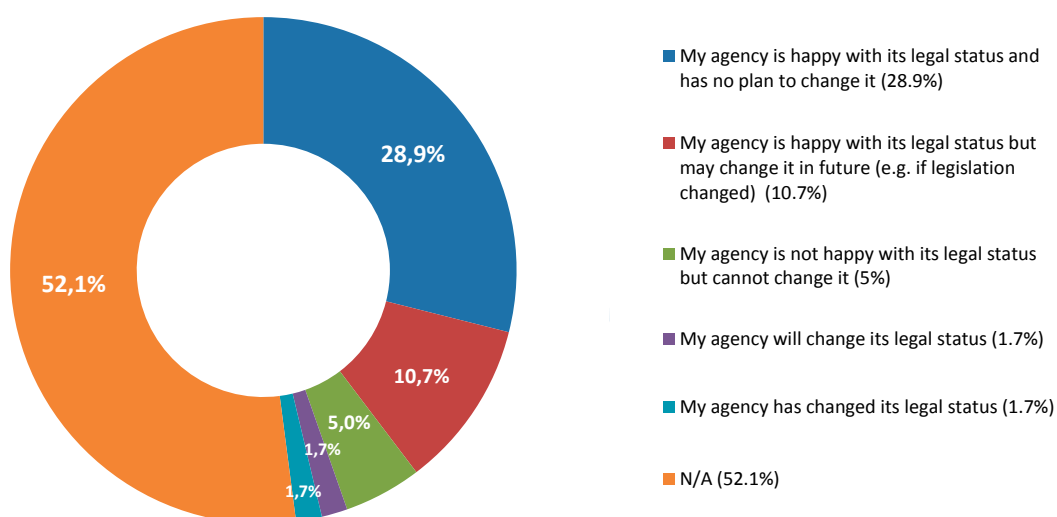


Figure 4 - Satisfaction rate of IEE and SAVE-funded energy agencies in terms of legal status

their team; and 30% count 4 to 7 experts as part of their team. Energy agencies may employ engineers (energy, electricity...), communication experts, economists, project developers or education experts to carry out their daily activities. A number of energy agencies seem to be well established, with more than thirteen expert staff and, sometimes additional consultants giving them assistance for specific projects. However, the more common trend is for energy agencies to employ less than seven experts in their team (i.e. 65% of the respondents).

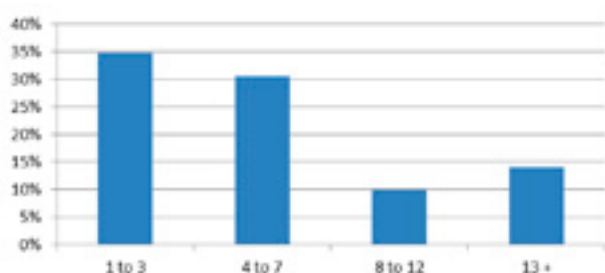


Figure 5 - Proportion of energy agencies according to their number of expert employees

61% of energy agencies reported only one to three employees a support staff (admin, secretary, accountant...). However, it is worth noting that a significant number of energy agencies appear not to count support staff in their team. Most of the time, small energy agencies receive in kind contributions from their local authority for supporting their activities, and this is particularly relevant for those energy agencies which have merged with their local authority in order to reduce their costs (particularly their overheads) in order to secure better sustainability.

The average number of employees, according to the declarations made by energy agencies in the first survey, is of 8.5 full-time equivalent employees. However, this figure must be treated with caution because many agencies did not provide the requested information on this issue.

NOTE: According to the declarations made by energy agencies for up-dating the *ManagEnergy* directory, all local and regional energy agencies taken together employed 2251 staff in 2013. Based on this, the average number of employees per local and regional energy agency is 6,8 (FTE).

Age of energy agencies

The age of energy agencies in the EU varies from over 23 years to 1 year (see Figure 6). About 38% of them were created in the 1990's and 40% between 2003 and 2008. Hence, an important number of energy agencies are well established on their territory and are able to face changes in the medium term.

Fortunately, almost 93% of the responding energy agencies have already survived beyond the critical age of 3 years, which is the age when the IEE programme ceases to co-fund the operation of an energy agency. However, some energy agencies, independently of their source of funding, have suffered from a lack of political support (usually following political changes), and have had to close their activities.

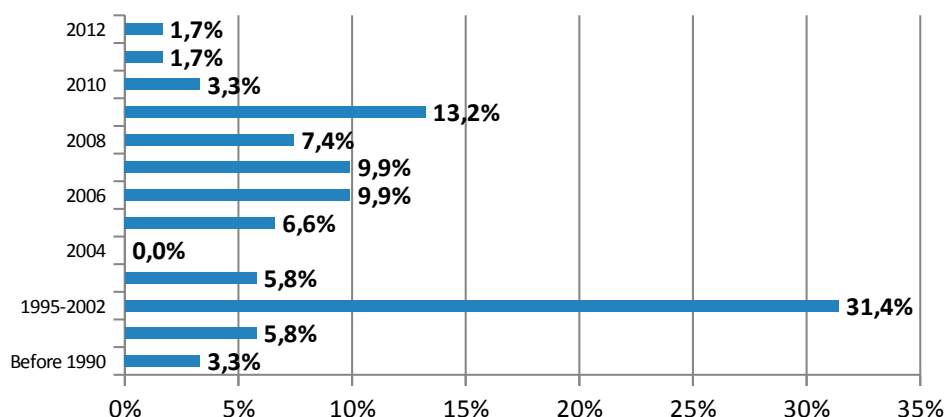


Figure 6 - Year of establishment of the 120 responding energy agencies

Budget composition of energy agencies

The definition chosen by the IEE programme for energy agencies implies that they should rely mainly on public funds to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in the most neutral way possible. Depending on their status, their legal context and the availability of public funds, different energy agencies count more or less on contracts signed for specific activities, at national, regional or local level.

As can be seen in Figure 7, on average, the responding energy agencies rely on remuneration of technical advice for about 24% of their budget. The 71% of the responding energy agencies declared that their ideal funding structure should be based mainly on public funding whilst only 8% of the responding energy agencies declared that the ideal funding structure for their organisation should be based mainly on private funds.

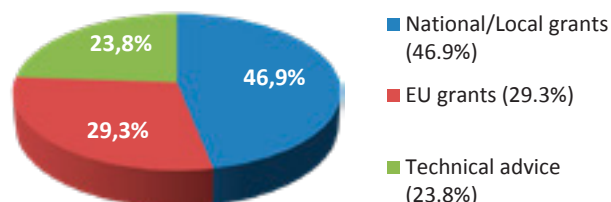


Figure 7 - Budget composition of the responding energy agencies (average of the last 3 years)

For the two coming years, the same trends should apply in terms of sources of financing, according to the estimations given by energy agencies in the first questionnaire (55 respondents).

Energy agencies and EU funds

Most of the energy agencies which responded to the questionnaire had received support from the IEE programme and/or other EU programmes (88%). 48% were established with the support of IEE.

Energy agencies' Target Groups

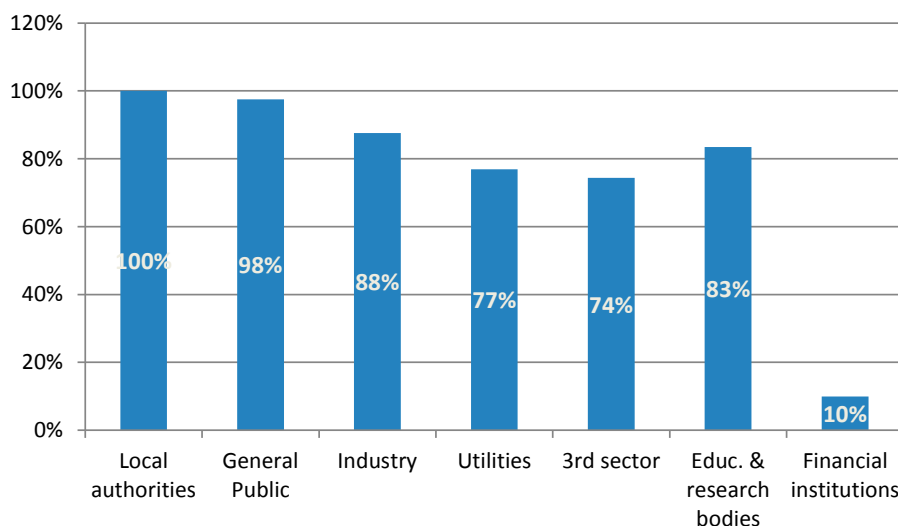


Figure 8 - Energy agencies' Target Groups

The energy agencies were invited to identify 4 groups of beneficiaries that they spent the most time working for. The results, which are presented in Figure 9, show six main target groups which are closely involved in the day-to-day activities of energy agencies. As one might expect, 100% of the energy agencies counted public authorities as one of their main target groups, and the general public are the second most important target group, which indicates that actions targeted to citizens are still an important part of the work of local and regional energy agencies.

It is noteworthy that energy agencies have still relatively little cooperation with banks, with only 10% of energy agencies counting financial institutions as one of their four main target groups.

Energy agencies' management board

Energy agencies should have their own budget and administrative board¹¹, which includes «representatives of a variety of players involved in energy management, and in particular local elected representatives and representatives of consumers and local companies». The independence of energy agencies depends to a large extent on having a good mix of representativeness on their management board, and especially on the number of public structures involved. The results of the survey, which are presented in Figure 10, show that most energy agencies have indeed achieved the broad mix of relevant representatives on their management boards, which is needed to ensure their neutrality in the market.

11 SAVE Energy Agencies Charter of Cork 1998 - <http://www.managenergy.net/resources/542>

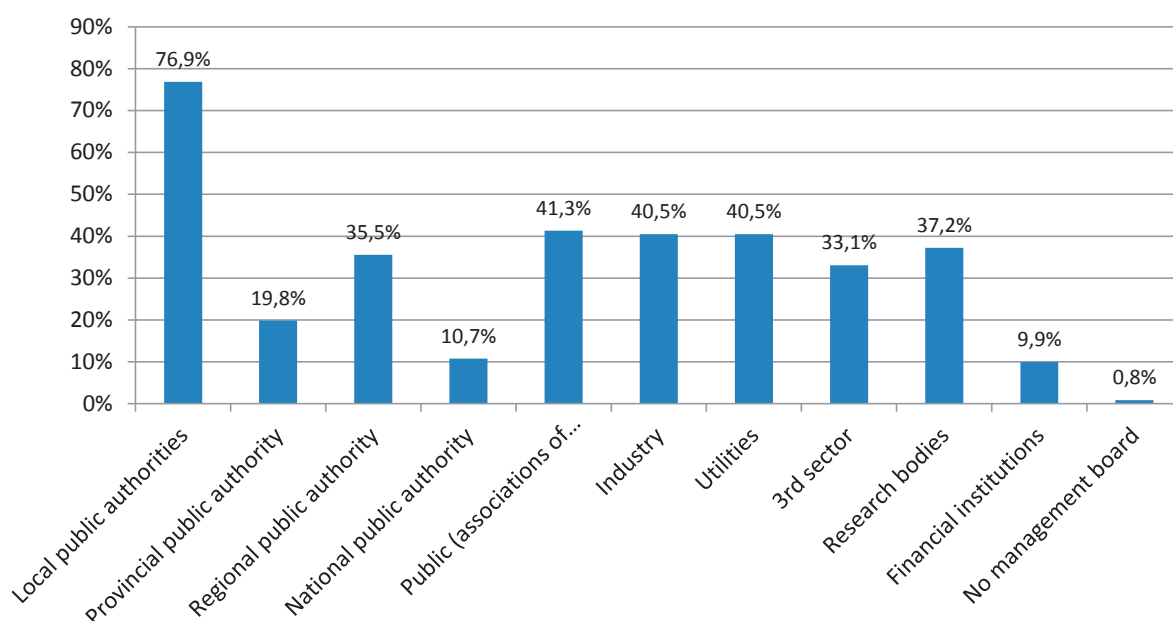


Figure 9 - Proportion of responding energy agencies for each category of board representative

The management board may be subject to change over time - 66% declared that the political commitment of their management board remained unchanged, whilst 34% of the responding energy agencies declared that it changed over time. Such changes have proved to be critical in the past, with some energy agencies disappearing due to a lack of political support, particularly after local elections. However, such risks can be reduced by arranging for energy agencies to depend on several public authorities at the same time.

The influence of establishing new energy agencies

The establishment of an energy agency was initially expected to encourage the creation

of more new energy agencies in the same region. Whilst this has been the result in some areas (see Figure 11), the political will to establish new energy agencies has proved to be shallow in other areas. This has also been demonstrated by a decrease in political support after the end of the relevant IEE grant agreement.

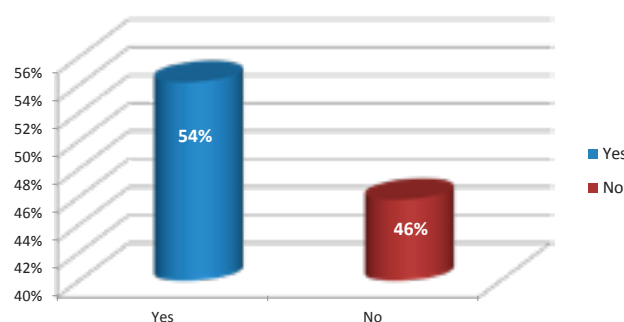


Figure 10 – Energy agencies declaring their establishment influenced the creation of new energy agencies

An evolving situation for energy agencies

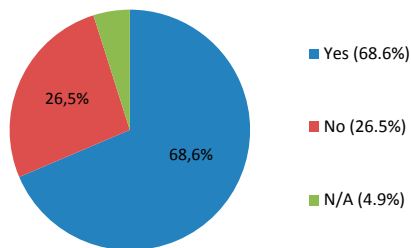


Figure 11 - Number of energy agencies informed about the creation of a new energy agency

About 68% of energy agencies declared that they knew of new agencies being created near to their area of responsibility (see Figure 12). On the other hand, about half of the responding energy agencies were aware of energy agencies that have closed down or become inactive in their country (see Figure 13). These results suggest that the development of energy agencies is still important in Europe, but also confirm that the sustainability of energy agencies remains a major challenge.

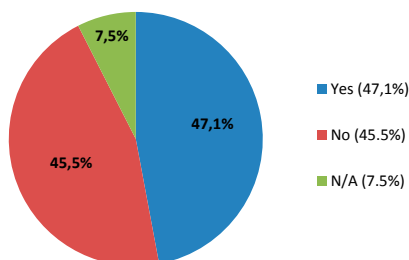


Figure 12 - Number of energy agencies being informed about other energy agencies having closed down or becoming inactive in their country

The ManagEnergy network, an initiative supported by the IEE programme, makes an inventory of all energy agencies in 34 European countries every year. Between 2012 and 2013, they found that 46 energy agencies closed down or became inactive. In fact, the number of energy agencies disappearing is likely to be higher, because some of the energy agencies listed as 'still active' reported during the assessment process that they were subject to closure. Two reasons were mentioned for this, namely local political changes and a lack of financial support due to recent budget restrictions. As a result, some energy agencies chose to be integrated into public authorities in order to rationalise costs, whilst a limited number were transformed into consultancies, sometimes only partly, in order to earn additional income.

Sustainability of energy agencies

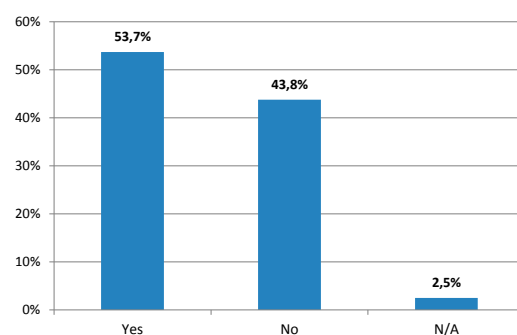


Figure 13 - Opinion of energy agencies on whether they are big enough to operate in their area and to involve their target groups

Some energy agencies seem to feel compelled to continue to offer the same range of services – or even more – to local stakeholders despite having reduced budgets, especially in areas where the crisis has hit the hardest. One may wonder whether there is a trend for energy agencies to aspire to extend their activities and team. Figure 14 shows that about 44% of the responding organisations consider that they have not reached a sufficient size to operate effectively in their area and to fully involve their target groups. However, Figure 15 shows that only about 30% of the responding energy agencies feel that there is a need for more energy agencies near to their area of responsibility. One reason why the majority of energy agencies consider that no more energy agencies are needed, contrary to the view of the majority of public authorities, is that new agencies would be likely to create competition between similar structures in the same or in neighbouring geographical areas. This message comes from a variety of countries, including those which have a fair coverage of regional and local energy agencies (i.e. France, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Germany or Ireland), and those in which energy agencies are unevenly scattered (i.e. Poland, Norway, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia and, to a lesser extent, Croatia). For more details, see the ManagEnergy map of energy agencies for 2013 in Annex.

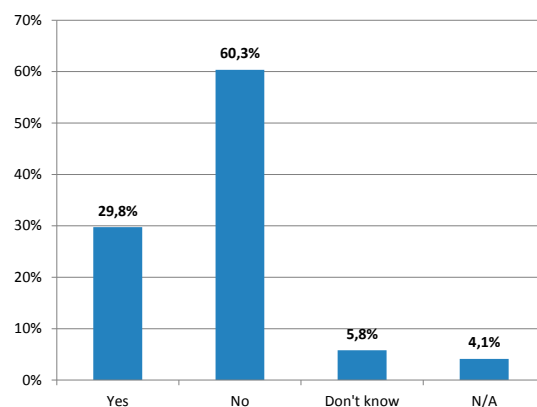


Figure 14 - Opinion of energy agencies on the need for more energy agencies near to their geographical area of responsibility

The finding, that the sustainability of energy agencies in the medium and long term is a challenge, is confirmed by the results presented in Figure 16, which show that almost 12% of the responding energy agencies openly declare the sustainability of their activities to be questionable in a three-year perspective.

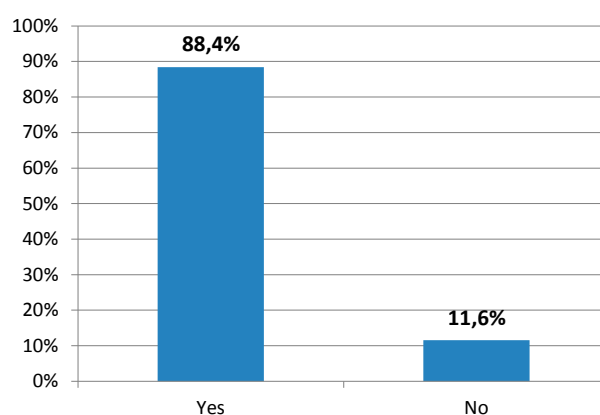


Figure 15 – “Do you foresee your organisation being sustainable in the next 3 years? »

Activities of energy agencies

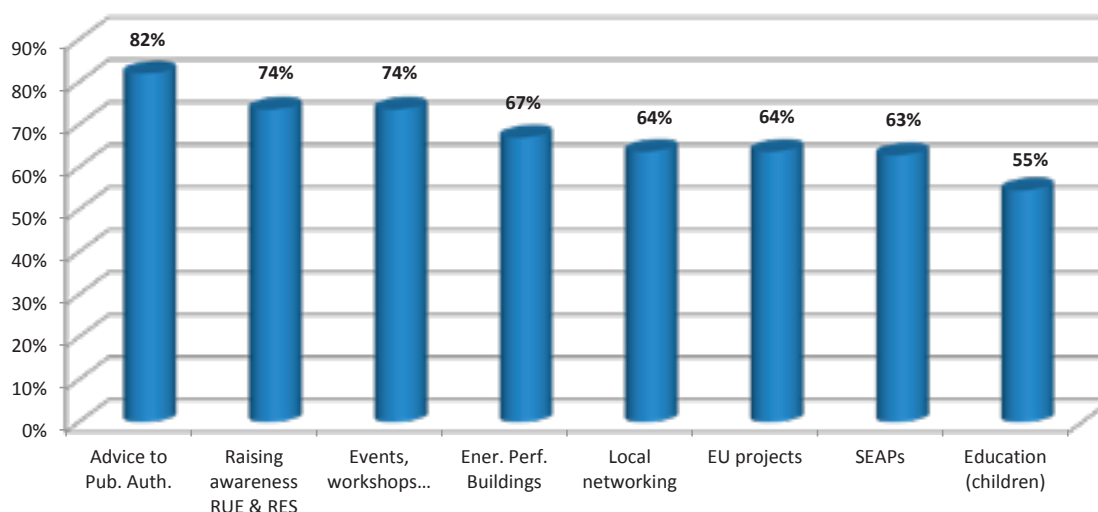


Figure 16 - the 5 most important activities of energy agencies

Figure 17 shows those activities on which more than 50% of responding energy agencies spend most of their time working:

- Advising public authorities
- Raising awareness on Rational Use of Energy (RUE) and/or on Renewable Energy Sources (RES)
- Organising events, workshops, seminars...
- Assisting with the improvement of energy performance in buildings
- Networking with local actors (businesses, local authorities)

- Assisting/applying for EU projects
- Assisting/developing Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP) or other similar plans or activities
- Raising awareness or educating children in schools.

However, the full range of activities carried out by energy agencies is very much wider, from organizing trainings for technicians or engineers to assisting with the development of ESCO-type activities.

Capacity Building

An important role of energy agencies is to open up the market for renewables and energy efficiency in their geographical area. To do this, energy agencies collaborate with local actors and thereby help to build their capacity, particularly in public authorities.

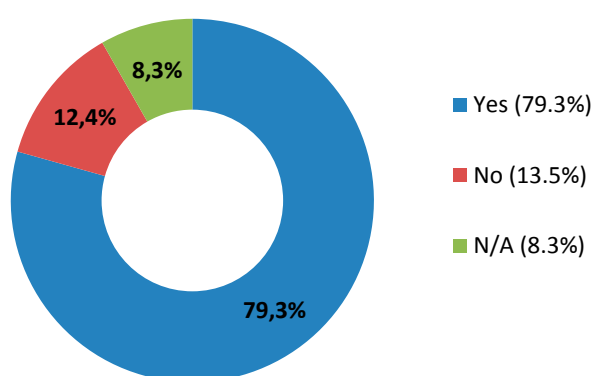


Figure 17 - Capacity building provided by energy agencies for stakeholders

More than 79% of the energy agencies replying to the quantitative questionnaire declared

that their activities actually lead to capacity building in public authorities and other local stakeholders (see Figure 18).

To a smaller extent, energy agencies claim to contribute to transferring knowledge to their local stakeholders by building Public-Private Partnerships or promoting Green Public Procurement (GPP) to Public Authorities. Some energy agencies face barriers (legislation regarding public procurement) which hamper initiatives from local authorities to promote Green Public Procurement. The same energy agencies ask for improved regulations related to GPP for public authorities.

A more restrictive number of Agencies (62) have quantified some of their impacts during their first 3 years of operation. Although these figures have to be considered with caution, given that not all of them may be attributed fully to the Agencies, they indicate significant tangible impacts.

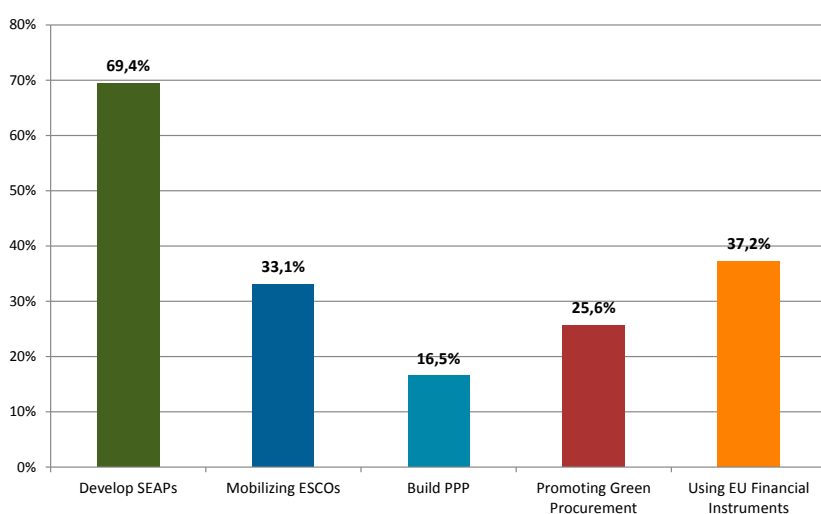


Figure 18 – Energy agencies which transfer knowledge / build capacity for local stakeholders

Table 1: Impacts from a sample of 62 Agencies

Investments triggered	Buildings audited	Renovated buildings	RES installed	Education	SMEs advice	Reduction of energy use	Share of RES
> EUR 350 million	Nearly 2500	> 500	About 4.000 solar panels; 3 desalination plants; 71 PV parks; 216 wind parks; nearly 800 biomass boilers; 4 district heating networks; 32 small hydro-electric plant; 1 Co-generation plant; 1 geothermal plant	Nearly 350.000 children and students and 300 building managers	> 3000	In building 30%, average 5%	4.5%

Energy agencies and the Covenant of Mayors (CoM)

The survey revealed (see Figure 20) that whereas 4% of the responding energy agencies engaged 50 or more municipalities in the CoM initiative, 21% have not engaged any municipality, and another 32% engaged only 1 or 2 municipalities, depending on their areas of competency and the number of municipali-

ties that they depend on. Those energy agencies which depend on only one municipality do not necessarily extend their efforts to engage further municipalities, and in those countries which have developed schemes which are similar to the CoM scheme, energy agencies are reluctant to get involved in parallel initiatives.

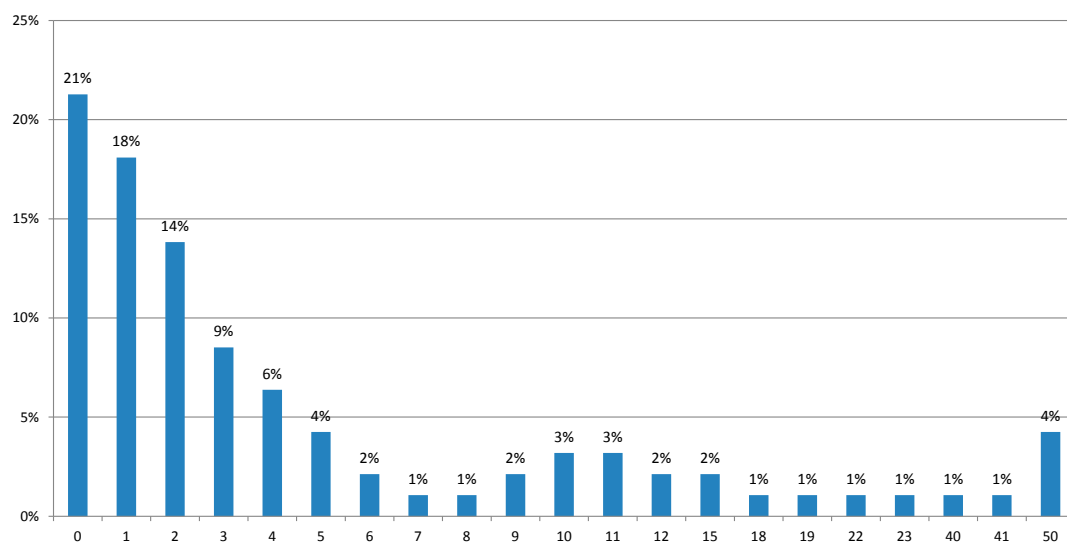


Figure 19 - Proportion of energy agencies having convinced 0 to 50 municipalities to sign Covenant of Mayors

Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors commit to submitting, within one year of signature, a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP)

which meets the Covenant objectives. Energy agencies play an active role in the preparation of those SEAP's (see Figure 21).

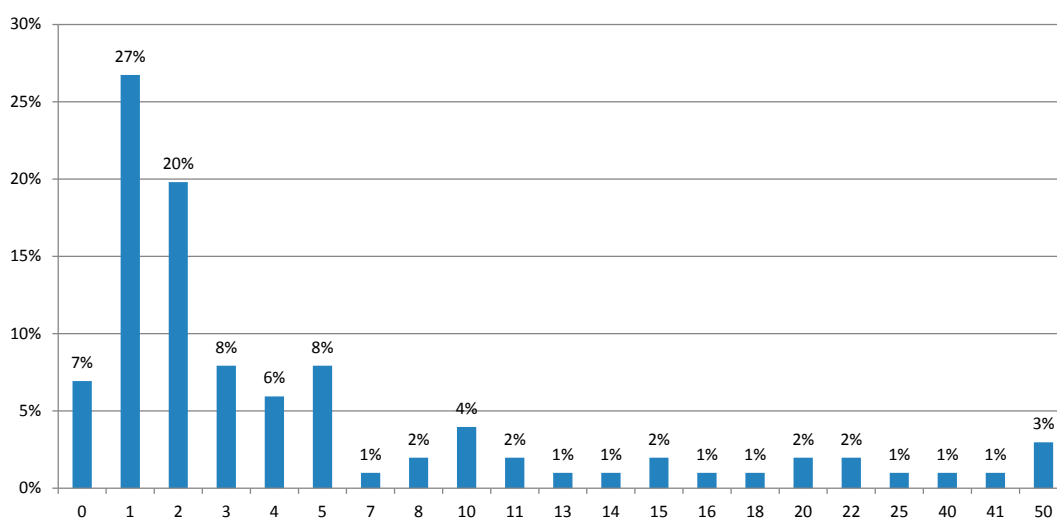


Figure 20 - Proportion of energy agencies having developed between 0 to 50 SEAPs

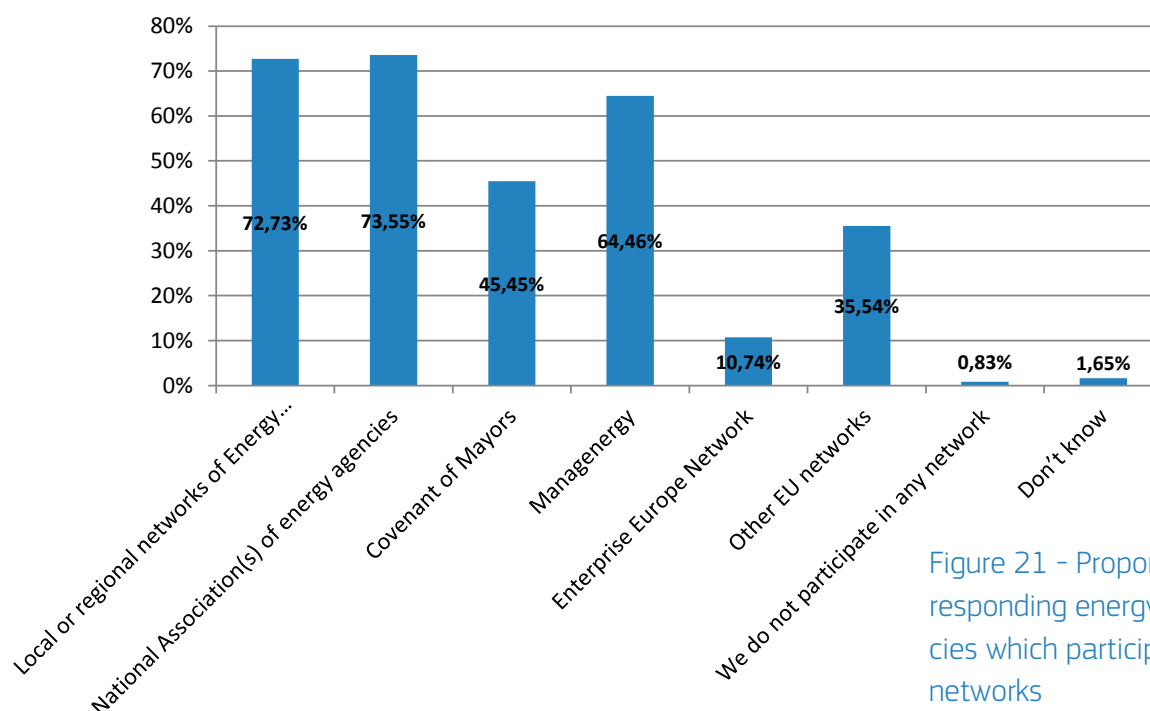


Figure 21 - Proportion of responding energy agencies which participate in networks

Networking activities

Collaboration is key for the improvement of skills through exchange of best practices in Europe. Thus, energy agencies were asked about their involvement in such networks. It appears that an important majority of them actually participate in networks - at regional, national or EU level - in order to develop their activities. The ManagEnergy and the CoM networks seem to be useful to a majority of the responding energy agencies - respectively 64,5% and 45,5% - (see Figure 22).

Energy agencies report that networks are important to them for the following activities :

- Exchange of experience/best practices/ study tours (90% of the responding EAs)

- Develop EU projects in common (80% of the responding EAs)
- Promotion of the city/region at EU level (53% of the responding EAs)
- Motivation of local stakeholders (48% of the responding EAs)
- Develop cooperation with SMEs - technology transfer (38% of the responding EAs)
- Influence decisions taken at EU level (34% of the responding EAs)

The opportunity of EU funding

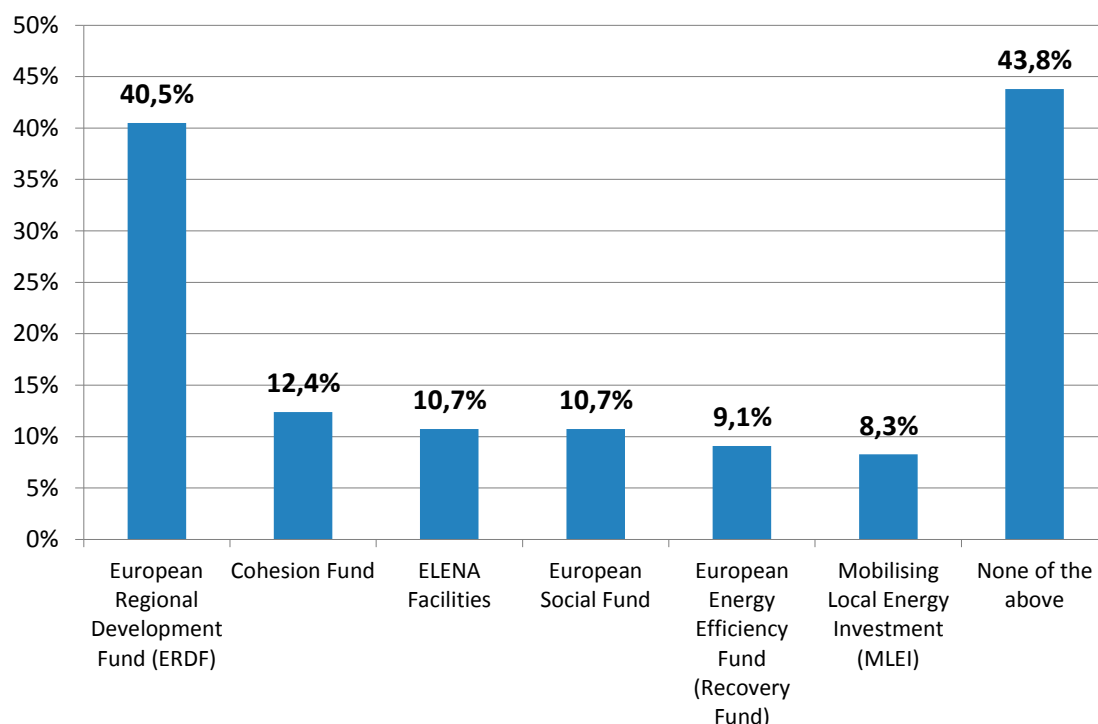


Figure 22 – Proportion of responding energy agencies having developed EU financing activities in the past

Most of the energy agencies that responded to the questionnaires for this report emphasized the important contribution of EU funds in their budget. Indeed, most of them are involved in Intelligent Energy-Europe projects, whilst 40% of them have worked with European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the development of RES schemes and EE improvements in the past few years, and a similar number continue to do so. The information shown in Figure 24 is coherent with the feedback from energy agencies in

general, which clearly expressed the will and the need to trigger investment – in particular in buildings – through the development of ELENA and MLEI projects. The European Energy Efficiency Fund (EEEF) is also widely considered, and many energy agencies reported on the lack of such a fund at national level. Many energy agencies mentioned the opportunity that IEE offered for meeting their objectives. Although some agencies have worked in EU research projects, market uptake in the energy sector represents their core activities.

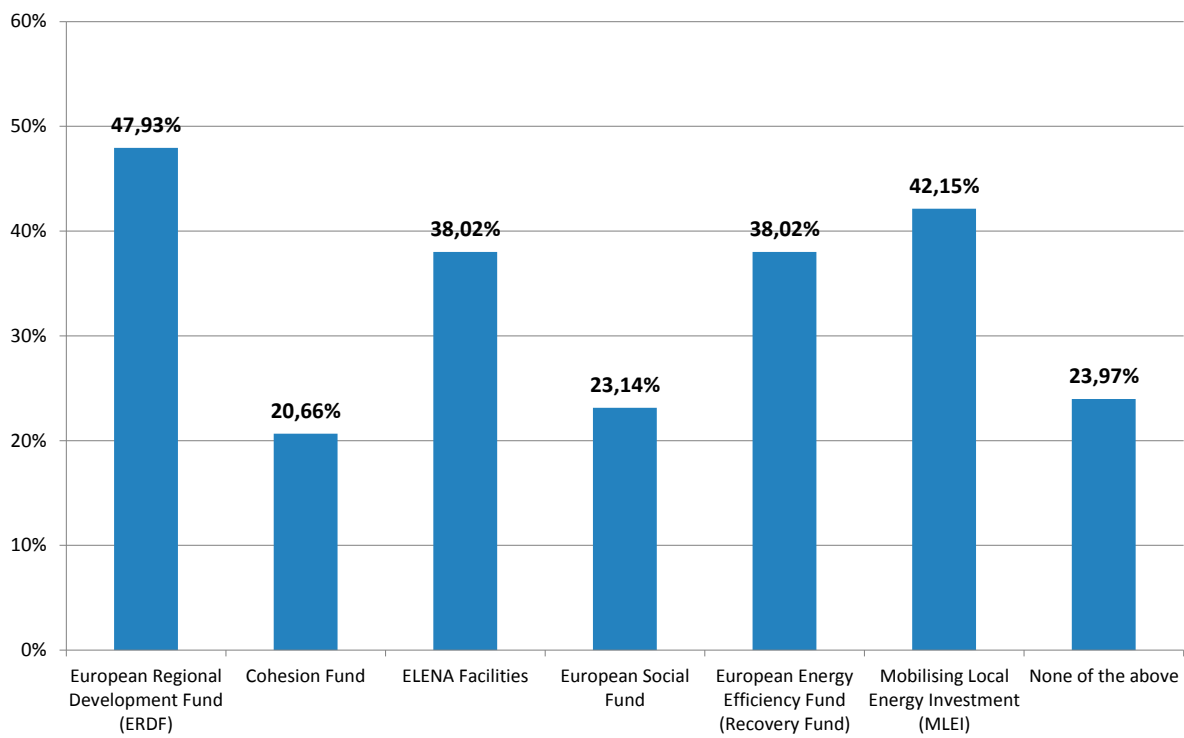


Figure 23 - Proportion of responding energy agencies wanting to develop new EU financing activities in the future



④

Key findings from quantitative and qualitative surveys

4.1 Operational aspects of energy agencies

The results of the survey, which are presented in section 3, showed that energy agencies mainly operate at local and regional level. National administration models being different from one country to another, competencies for each level vary depending on the countries concerned. In Spain, for example, regional energy agencies tend to make inventories of the energy structures and needs in their areas, whilst provincial energy agencies develop SEAPs – the elaboration of joint SEAPs is common practice, and local authorities implement SEAPs. In some other countries, a single energy agency, independent of its operational level, may make the inventory, develop the SEAPs and implement them. Thus, it is not easy to generalise regarding the activities of energy agencies operating at different levels.

43% of the energy agencies that responded to the questionnaire were ‘non-for-profit independent legal entities’ which had received a mandate from a local authority to carry out their activities. Overall, it seems that this legal status is appropriate for energy agencies to carry out their mission, although the administrative requirements or other accounting certifications are more complex and require a lot of additional efforts. Nonetheless, this status seems to be of help, in terms of procedures, when it comes to hiring staff. On the other hand, the recruiting of new staff is adversely

affected in the case where public funding is limited or even blocked for public authorities or for those entities depending on them. This can have a negative impact on the enlargement of agencies which depend on public budgets, so the development of new projects can then be at stake. For some energy agencies, the best solution is to act as a private non-for-profit organisation and receive contributions from both the public and the private sector, with diverse contributors, in order to protect themselves from the potential impacts of political changes or future budget restrictions.

In some of the countries which have been most affected by the economic crisis, energy agencies have lost some or all of their funding from local authorities because of budgetary constraints, and this has directly affected the activities led by those energy agencies which depend on local authorities. Whilst one opportunity for energy agencies in such a situation might be to use their knowledge and expertise to bring about energy savings for their local authorities and to be compensated from the savings generated, this kind of activity could also be performed by ESCOs from the private sector, and so local authorities would normally be obliged to open their calls to competitors. Hence, even in times of financial crisis, such a solution may only be applicable to those energy agencies which have a special arrangement with their local authority or which are able to compete successfully in the local energy market.

It is also important to note that the added value of an independent local energy agency can be reduced by forcing it to compete with private energy service providers in their area, because after competing with those local actors that it was previously working to help, the agency will no longer be trusted by those local actors, and will find it more difficult to work with them to build and develop sustainable energy activities in the future.

Of the energy agencies which responded to the quantitative questionnaire, 29% were ‘private non-for-profit organisations’ (associations, NGOs, Foundations, etc.) and, although such a status may seem appropriate in many cases, these agencies often lack recognition by local authorities and other institutions. Moreover, such a private sector status can be a barrier to getting support from local authorities and to obtaining energy data from energy companies. Furthermore, it can inhibit energy agencies from working to create better local market conditions for the development of local/regional sustainable energy schemes and their associated SME’s.

As all Member States have their own definition of public interest, some energy agencies with the status of an association can have more or less flexibility according to the countries. For instance, in the UK, having the right status enables energy agencies to be independent of commercial targets and direction, as well as political influence, and therefore better placed to survive political changes. It

can also open up links with, for example, health and social care, as well as environmental and anti-poverty groups and programmes. Last but not least, having the right legal status can offer the possibility for energy agencies to apply for exemption from corporation tax in several countries. At the same time, an important drawback encountered by some energy agencies that do not ‘belong’ to any local or regional authority is that they have no core funding and must compete for funds in the same way as any other independent organisation.

4.2 Support and commitment from decision makers

As mentioned above, almost 12% of the responding energy agencies declared that the sustainability of their activities could be threatened in a three-year perspective, and that the key to their sustainability lies in the support that they can get from decision makers at local and regional level. Such political support may be driven by binding constraints (eg: in cases where energy agencies have a contractual role to manage energy obligations) or from a genuine commitment to foster energy efficiency and RES.

A number of energy agencies have persuaded decision makers to tackle the energy challenge actively, more or less successfully and with different means, as demonstrated by the statements below:

«As per our experience, decision makers [want to] see the benefits that they will obtain in terms of saved energy [and] cheaper energy bills. [Lately] it has been a bit more difficult for RES as there is always a concern about the price of green energy technology.» In some areas, in particular in touristic areas and in countries which have opened an energy transition process, local authorities need to reduce their energy bills and/or to make contributions to ambitious energy commitments. Here, support for energy agencies from local authorities seems not to be a problem.

«We successfully proposed in a major Government tender to operate using subcontractors thereby sustaining local jobs in local communities for local people alongside social clauses and using low CO2 vehicles to deliver the contract. We lobbied the Government and successfully secured a contract for providing an impartial energy advice service to householders.» Job creation is a powerful driver for persuading politicians, and projects which include environmental and social aspects (re-integration projects) have proved to be very effective for engaging politicians as well as citizens. On the other hand, some decision makers like to keep a distance from energy agencies, because they perceive them as companies. However, if energy agencies prove that they can be innovative, and offer some shining examples, then decision makers are more likely to decide to get involved and to support them.

Energy agencies which offer visibility to local politicians (in particular through important events) seem to be well supported, especially when innovative projects are involved. Indeed, decision makers are more likely to offer support for innovative projects, even if the results may not be tangible at first. Since the visibility of energy agencies is key to getting support from local governments, communication activities are important, even if they are one of the first items to be cut in times of budgetary constraints.

Given the changes that have to be faced at all political levels, one energy agency decided to make an opportunity out of political change by developing guidelines for decision makers who are experiencing political changes. This initiative focused on the kinds of project which could be promoted in their area, and led to the development of new projects as well as to the abandonment of old promises.

Likewise, promoting pilot buildings seems to be an effective means of replicating EE and RES activities by new local authorities. In Croatia, for example, renovation projects in condominiums including EE and RES technologies have attracted media attention, and this has resulted in citizens asking their local decision makers to replicate / build similar schemes. The availability of funds at national level and the institutional knowledge about how to raise funds from the European Investment Bank both benefitted from the success of such activities.



«We have informed and convinced several municipalities to join the Covenant of Mayors». The Covenant of Mayors (CoM) is widely accepted as a convenient way to bring regional and local decision makers into the energy challenge. It also offers the opportunity for energy agencies to become supporting structures for the Covenant in their areas of competence as «technical partners».

«In Lithuania, 25% of Lithuanian municipalities are CoM signatories and half of the Lithuanian population is [concerned by] the process.» Some energy agencies which have received support from public authorities from their establishment onwards, have been involved in the preparation of strategic plans for the use of RES and EE at regional level (Regional Development Plans). Although a gap exists between most local / regional energy agencies and their national energy agencies, some national consortia of energy agencies

(eg: in Slovenia) cooperate on the preparation of national plans and programming periods. Some other energy agencies (eg: in Poland) have been able to participate in the preparatory work for the next programming period of the structural funds in their region. Such practices are not yet common in all Member States, especially for local and provincial energy agencies, which are not closely involved in energy policy making.

4.3 Multilevel governance coordination

Energy agencies are affected by local and regional political changes, especially when a new local government withdraws its support or becomes more willing to cooperate. Energy agencies can also feel the impact of changes between members of the same party – especially those agencies which depend on very few local authorities, if not only

one. Some energy agencies have succeeded to avoid such difficulties by involving companies in their management board, but for those energy agencies which are heavily dependent on a small number of public authorities, this may not be feasible.

Multilevel coordination is managed in different ways from one country – or even from a region – to another. As mentioned above, while a country like Spain has a set of competencies which are well defined for each level of energy agency, other Member States have much less energy agencies per inhabitant (one agency for 1 million people), and energy agencies established in such countries work directly with public authorities from different political levels. Some agencies embrace more than 100 municipalities (local level) but are mostly owned by their provincial government. In this case, the provincial government has the last word in addressing the activities of their energy agency.

Multilevel coordination can work well for local energy agencies, especially when the main stakeholders are also members of the board and work through the general assembly to set priorities for the agency. Energy agencies depending only on one local authority often stay in constant communication with the latter, and thus generate their work through inquiries and suggestions of decision makers. Some energy agencies, which are organized as associations, include each member municipality/organization in their management board, granting them one vote each to achieve a balanced multilevel cooperation approach.

Some energy agencies operate as incorporated companies (or Ltd) attached to a public authority. Their management boards typically contain private stakeholders such as company directors or university teachers. Such organisations have proved to be very active and proficient in developing new markets to foster RES and EE, but then have to compete with other companies in those markets later on.

Energy agencies that are responsible for a fairly large geographical area (provincial and regional energy agencies) have the advantage that they can bring a certain force of persuasion to the local level for tackling energy issues, perhaps before local political will has been established or local actions have started. In fact, many energy agencies operating at provincial or regional levels are solicited by municipalities to support them in tackling energy issues because the larger agencies can offer economies of scale when addressing energy challenges in several municipalities at the same time. However, this does not necessarily reduce the need for a bottom-up approach to establish independent local energy agencies which will contribute to the delivery of EU energy targets.

Some experienced energy agencies have come to the conclusion that implementing local SEAPs is a challenge in terms of political will, especially in case of political change because, although it gives a sense of responsibility to local decision makers, it requires a high degree of governance and this can often be fragile. Several regional energy agencies have proved to work effectively

with Regional Energy Plans, and have contributed usefully to the allocation of structural funds in the energy field at regional level.

Unfortunately, competition can emerge between regional energy agencies and local or provincial energy agencies in the same geographical area, which of course is not always favourable to local development. This can be fuelled by the greater capacity of regional energy agencies to obtain (regional) funds, thus preventing local energy agencies from developing activities for their local authorities. Similar situations can occur in some autonomous regions, where local energy agencies are established and where regional priorities differ from those of specific local communities. However, the aim should be to establish regional energy agencies which contribute to the prosperity of all energy agencies in their area, for example by generating economies of scale and fostering networking at all levels of governance.

4.4 Contractual structure promoted with IEE funding for establishment

Most of the organisations that benefited from the SAVE and IEE funding for the establishment of new energy agencies think that the IEE rules were appropriate in terms of administrative structure. Unsurprisingly, it

appears in many cases that the IEE grant for establishment of new energy agencies was the necessary impulse for the administration to decide to create an agency dedicated to energy issues. The structure promoted by the terms of the IEE contract led to enough independency from local authorities to act in their area of responsibility. However, as independent bodies, these energy agencies often lack authority with regard to other stakeholders (electricity suppliers, etc.) who can be reluctant to cooperate with energy agencies – because of their independent status – for instance to communicate energy data. As long as this independent status is not recognized, staff from energy agencies have to rely on the support of civil servants from local authorities for some activities which are actually within the competence of agencies. Furthermore, in some countries where the legislation has changed, it is no longer possible for some agencies to keep their status – they must work as associations, losing their authority in their local environment.

Depending on the national context, energy agencies are more or less independent, for example some energy agencies which only get support from one local authority cannot be considered as autonomous as others which benefit from several funding sources. Situations where energy agencies are not free to develop new actions on their own initiative, can be counterproductive when it comes to developing new projects – in particular EU projects – which could be a source of inspiration and further development for energy agencies.

It appears that, in some Member States (e.g. UK), the independent status fostered by the IEE programme was not well understood or implemented. Nevertheless, some agencies in those Member States managed to work successfully as an autonomous NGO, charity or association and, by focussing on technical issues, was able to plan autonomously, make fast decisions and deliver good results.

In terms of monitoring, the respondents to this study suggested that a grant for the establishment of a new energy agency should require an approach to self-monitoring that agencies could take forward and continue to use in the future, and that this should include both operational details and results of activities. One idea was to focus on carbon emissions for self-monitoring of operations.

The communication activities fostered by the IEE programme seem to have been perceived as a very positive way for energy agencies to network at EU level as well as at the local level which they need in order to get political support. For agencies, which are supported by various local authorities, the organisation of communication events or activities is a good way to get politicians involved. However, such activities should be prepared with caution, taking into account the different political priorities of the local authorities involved. In this regard, most energy agencies have been successful in adapting their messages to suit their different stakeholder groups, and in promoting renewables, energy efficiency, protecting the environment, and boosting the economy.

In summary, the administrative structure fostered by the IEE programme appears to have suited most contexts, and has enabled most energy agency teams to work freely and to provide independent advice, especially to citizens. On the other hand, the sustainability of energy agencies has proved to be vulnerable to the scarcity of public funds, and there is an on-going need for targeted financing tools to facilitate the implementation of innovative energy projects on the ground.

4.5 Activities led by energy agencies

Most energy agencies have confirmed that their activities have changed in the past few years. They have had to adapt to the evolving needs of their target groups, therefore not only focusing on raising awareness, but also on implementing concrete actions in order to meet the expectations of their stakeholders. Public authorities, rather than hearing what they could possibly do, are more interested to learn how they can actually drive the change.

«Because of the demand of the territory [we now focus on] co-ownership in buildings.» (France) Most energy agencies continue to work on advising public authorities, raising awareness on EE and RES, organizing events and workshops, improving the performance of buildings, applying for EU projects, developing

SEAPs and educating children. However, within these topic areas and depending on the political will and demand, the energy agencies now focus on particular topics (eg. improving buildings or developing biomass plants) or on particular sectors (eg: energy efficiency in the tourism industry).

«The current economic situation hasn't resulted in a better collaboration with the private sector for joint projects.» (Spain) During the interviews held for this study, energy agencies emphasised the need to put their efforts into new financing approaches to promote EE and RES more effectively because of the current economic situation. They stated that one of the changes which has occurred in their daily activities is a greater involvement in project financing on behalf of their public authorities.

The quantitative results of the survey show that energy agencies are very much inclined to trigger investment through the development of public-private partnerships and other third party financing. In particular, the Elena initiative is seen as an opportunity according to the declarations received. However, a number of energy agencies mentioned that the conditions for accessing such grants for technical assistance are not well adapted to small entities, for example stakeholders consider that a 1:20 leverage ratio and 3 years for implementation represent too much risk. This is probably why energy agencies operating on a wider basis are more prepared to

trigger large investments using other EU tools, as shown by the fact that a majority of regional energy agencies have declared a past involvement in such projects.

As far as energy service companies (ESCOs) are concerned, some barriers on the ground were reported. Firstly, since financial capacity is a key factor for third party interventions, the ESCO scheme can hardly work at the moment where the financial crisis has hit hardest - *«access to financial resources is too hard and long payback times (10-15 years) are not welcome by private companies and banks»* nowadays. A solution for overcoming this barrier could be for energy agencies to demonstrate more clearly that ESCOs can generate energy and therefore cost savings for their clients as well as revenue for the financing institutions. Structural funds are expected to support such initiatives and some energy agencies are actively promoting such schemes at national and regional levels as part of the preparations for the next programming period 2014-2020. *«Originally, [we] concentrated emphasis on how to save Carbon and Climate Change. Now we place emphasis on saving energy and money.»* (UK)

An interesting «good practice», which has been identified during the survey, is financing of the monitoring of energy building certificates by the certifiers themselves. In a region, which is entitled to legislate on building certificates, the regional energy agency, which was set up as a Limited company mostly owned by its region, has been put in charge of monitoring the energy

certification of buildings. The certifiers pay a 20€ fee for each energy certificate produced. With these fees, the regional energy agency is able to manage a database of energy certifiers in the region and to monitor their work. This ensures a high quality of energy audits in buildings, without interfering with the market. Revenues are automatically generated by the certifiers and the energy agency is able to diversify its activities while contributing to the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).

In some countries, the impacts of auditing local authority buildings have been limited by the fact that the local authorities have underestimated the costs of audits when setting their CO₂ objectives and, together with the budgetary constraints which have resulted from the financial crisis, it has not been possible to carry out all of the planned energy audits. Moreover, even where energy audits have been carried out (often by their energy agencies), the local authorities have not had the budget needed to make the recommended renovations and/or to invest in the recommended EE and RES systems.

More generally, some energy agencies have successfully diversified their activities by carrying out energy monitoring activities on behalf of their local authority, for example looking into the energy tariffs, energy services, and sustainable energy practices used in ESCO interventions. As experts, some energy agencies are also involved in the management of

structural funds, where they analyse energy project proposals and provide feedback to the managing authorities. By bringing their expertise to the management of the ERDF grants at regional level, energy agencies make important contributions to the sound management of these funds. However, this is only possible in areas where the managing authorities for structural funds put their trust into the energy agencies.

Some energy agencies actually manage national or regional funds on behalf of their public authorities, and are responsible for evaluating the applications received, as well as for monitoring their technical implementation.

4.6 The needs of energy agencies

The responses of energy agencies to the surveys demonstrated strong support for the IEE programme and the issues which it tackles. Given the difficult conditions that energy agencies are facing in terms of financing, many of them took advantage of this study to put forward a request for a preferential channel for energy agencies in any future calls for proposals. Although energy agencies are well represented in many of the consortia which are co-funded by the programme, they regret the high level of competition for funds, and emphasise that a dedicated budget for energy agencies within

the funding programmes could help them to diversify their activities and to promote good practices from all over Europe.

Although a number of energy agencies have disappeared in the past few years, the answers provided by energy agencies show that the need for more energy agencies is not obvious in most countries. Indeed, over two thirds (71%) of the responding energy agencies either think that there is no need for more energy agencies in their area or do not have an opinion on this issue. For those energy agencies which do consider that there is a need for new energy agencies in their area (France, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Germany or Ireland), the establishment of energy agencies is already quite widespread. Nevertheless, there are some Member States (i.e. Poland, Norway, Romania, Hungary, Latvia and, to a lesser extent, Croatia), where the need for more energy agencies is much clearer, especially when the geographical

spread of energy agencies within these countries is taken into account. In summary, the need for more energy agencies is not uniform across all EU countries.

In view of the general role and mandate of public authorities, it seems obvious that financial support for energy agencies should come from them. However, the survey reveals that such support is shrinking, and many energy agencies are being forced to compete in the market with other providers of energy services in order to maintain their activities. Depending on their legal status, some energy agencies are not legally entitled to compete with consultancies and other energy service providers, and therefore these energy agencies can focus on setting the right local conditions to open up the market and on developing pilot projects which can be supported by structural funds together with the private sector. The involvement of the private sector can help with access to investment funds because the private sector is aware and familiar with the



bankability of projects for addressing energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, and the involvement of the private sector can also lead to greater sustainability.

4.7 EU and international collaboration

European projects are invaluable to energy agencies for the replication of good practices and for the spreading of knowledge across the EU. In particular, they enable energy agencies to network and to improve their knowledge from each other's experience through shared actions. EU projects funded by IEE and INTERREG have led to very active networking activities amongst project partners, and a continued contribution from the EU to such exchanges of best practices seems essential to energy agencies, regardless their origin or the conditions of their establishment.

Whilst the diversification of activities has improved the success and sustainability of energy agencies, their involvement in research projects also seems to be a good way to answer local needs in terms of sustainable energy. Some energy agencies have already taken part in research projects, which have allowed them to improve their competencies and to better understand the state of the art in smart grids and renewables.

The ManagEnergy network was reported to meet the expectations of energy agencies by

providing support for networking and for exchanging best practices between local and regional stakeholders tackling energy issues. It was also found to be a valuable tool for the development of new innovative projects across the EU. Energy agencies and municipalities also appreciated the support provided in the framework of the Covenant of Mayors. Nevertheless, energy agencies and municipalities requested that the following activities be continued and further developed:

- Technical Assistance – including trainings – for energy agencies to promote RUE and RES,
- Peer exchanges (exchanging best practices and sharing knowledge),
- Direct communications with energy agencies on events organized for their attention,
- State of the art information on energy issues

Collaboration patterns in the EU and with third countries are difficult to define, because energy issues and cultures vary from one region to another.

⑤

Summary and conclusions



This assessment of energy agencies, which was carried out mainly in 2013, 5 years after the last call for the establishment of new energy agencies by the IEE programme, gives an overview of the current status of local and regional energy agencies.

From 1991 to 2008, the SAVE and IEE programmes successively selected and supported a number of public authorities in the establishment of not-for-profit independent/autonomous energy agencies which aim to promote sustainable energy in view of the European Union's energy and climate targets. They provide information, advice and technical assistance to energy users and contribute to the development of local sustainable energy markets.

To establish more energy agencies is not seen as a priority in all parts of Europe, but the need to support more local and regional energy activities was emphasised by both energy agencies and public authorities.

In 2013, 368 local and regional energy agencies operated in the participating countries of the "Intelligent Energy-Europe" programme¹². In the period from 2012 to 2013, approximately 46 energy agencies closed down or became inactive, largely in Italy, Spain and UK. An additional 10-12 disappeared during 2014.

Over time, more and more energy agencies have built up the experience and confidence needed to tackle energy challenges on their

own, and have implemented a growing number of successful and exemplary projects, sometimes without support from public authorities.

Overcoming the barriers to energy efficiency and to the large scale deployment of renewable energies remains a significant challenge. Energy agencies as technical experts are becoming more and more involved with financing and with ensuring the bankability of investment projects. Access to finance is still a major barrier, especially during the on-going financial crisis. Since energy is an important strand in structural funds, energy agencies are an appropriate source of expertise that could be used for selection and implementation of energy projects.

Energy agencies are calling for more targeted training on new financial tools and services, on how to develop bankable project packages and on how to prepare appropriate business models for local renewable energy and energy efficiency related projects. Capacity building and exchanges of experience and best practices related to the development of local initiatives and the promotion of sustainable energy are also needed.

Sustainability of funding is certainly a major issue for energy agencies, and many have expressed a wish to see a dedicated line in a public budget or recognition in national legislation in order to provide them with more certainty. The capacity to adapt of energy agencies is key to the continuation of their activities.

12 IEE participating countries: EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In 2013, energy agencies reported that they were employing **more than 2251 full-time equivalent staff**. Such information can be found for each energy agency in the ManagEnergy Directories and on the ManagEnergy website: <http://www.managenergy.net>.

On average, energy agencies have contributed to the elaboration of a little more than 5 SEAPs per million inhabitants¹³.

The information presented in this report, is based on inputs from many different energy agencies, and should therefore be particularly useful to decision makers in regional and local authorities, who need to understand the challenges to be faced when working to implement sustainable energy projects in their area. It provides insights into the challenges faced by energy agencies and confirms their creativity and their potential to achieve positive impacts through the development and implementation of sustainable energy action plans (SEAPs).

Last but not least, the information presented in this report provides valuable feedback to EU policy makers on the local and regional implementation of sustainable energy policies, which is a process that is not yet very well documented in many Member States.

Acronyms and abbreviations

CoM:	Covenant of Mayors
EA(s):	Energy agency/ies
EACI:	Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation
EE:	Energy Efficiency
EIB:	European Investment Bank
ELENA:	European Local ENergy Assistance
EPBD:	Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
EPC:	Energy Performance Contracting
ESCO:	Energy Service Company
EU:	European Union
GPP:	Green Public Procurement
ICT-PSP:	ICT Policy Support Programme
IEE:	Intelligent Energy - Europe
MLEI:	Mobilising Local Energy Investment
PPP:	Public Private Partnership
PA(s):	Public Authority/ies
RES:	Renewable Energy Sources
RUE:	Rational Use of Energy
SEAP:	Sustainable Energy Action Plans

13 Estimated from Covenant of Mayors

ManagEnergy European Energy Agencies 2014



This map is based on information provided by energy agencies until 10 June 2014 and presents Intelligent Energy and SAVE Agencies, as well as other European local, provincial and regional agencies at this time. To keep your information up-to-date, please login via www.managenergy.net or request new credentials via this e-mail address. To add your agency to this map, please create a new online profile via www.managenergy.net/actors/new. Full details for all energy agencies and further information on ManagEnergy

