

## Energy Efficiency and RES – Southeast Europe in focus (Conference Proceedings)

As part of the project Energy policy, EU and the Western Balkans: challenges of reforms and accession - Republic of Macedonia as a case study on June 14<sup>th</sup>, Analytica and SOLTEC organized a conference on the topic of “Implementing Energy Efficiency through Renewable Energy Solutions – are Southeast European Countries on track” financed by the European Fund for the Balkans.

Present at the conference were representatives from the Energy Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, EU Delegation in Skopje, MACEF, professors from the Faculty for Electrical Engineering and information technologies, heads of the departments for energy efficiency in the municipalities, as well as representatives from the non-governmental sector in Macedonia and other Balkan countries. Postgraduate students also had the opportunity to present their research papers in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Besides presentations of the opportunities to use geothermal energy as renewable energy source that can save up to 80% electricity use as in the case of Kosovo, number of the presentations was focused on newly developing technologies in RE and EE, like nanotechnology, distant management system for street lightening, etc.

Few of the presentations by Macedonian and foreign experts have raised the question of tardiness: Why the Balkans is always lagging behind Europe? And why the abundant renewable energy sources in this part of Europe are not exploited in economic and efficient way? The panelists have agreed that the latter is a result of inconsistency of policies. The conclusions were that EU institutions should take the lead in financing projects of renewable energy and EE, as the banks in this region and wider are still reluctant to start with financing of projects on a non-commercial level, seen as investments with high risk. On the other side new credit lines with lower interest rates should be made available for the private sector – for development of the EE and RE market. Through this kind of financial support developing countries (or no-OECD countries like Macedonia) will witness different benefits: creation of new jobs, support to the local economy, increase of the share of electricity produced by renewable energy sources in the total electricity production in the country, etc.

Another conclusion of the conference discussions is related to the overall situation in the energy sector in the Western Balkans in the last two decades. It was underlined that there are certain political actors and structures that do not see any benefit from investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy and therefore they hinder their development. Resistance to these structures requires good organization, persistence, and big pressure by the CSO sector and the media. With a joint action and positive propaganda, through legislative amendments, organization of public discussions, and increasing of public awareness, the civil society and all interested parties should put a great pressure on the state institutions to prioritize RE and EE. Lobbying also should be directed towards EU institutions that should take in consideration the needs of the non-EU countries in the final European energy agenda, particularly when it comes to new investments in RE and EE.

The success of the conference of Analytica and SOLTEC is in the attempt to bring together decision-makers, policy executors, academia, CSOs and students on a same table, where many provocative questions were raised: Why despite the enormous need of increasing the share of RE in final energy consumption and decreasing energy intensity in the countries of the region (Western Balkans), so far insignificant progress has been done in this area?

Some answers were given, but it is an area that is yet to come on the headlines of the energy policy of the governments in the region. Solutions are available, the political will and momentum needs to be created. The most valuable fact is that there are motivated young people who are ready to be the engine of changes and the leaders of the “renewable revolution”, to work for sustainable development of their societies and environment protection.

This newsletter is part of the Think and Link Project: Energy Policy, EU and the Western Balkans: challenges of reforms and accession – Republic of Macedonia as a case study, funded by the European Fund for the Balkans