

BEST PRACTICE ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY - SLOVENIA

Networking for Biomass Energy Breakthrough

1. BIOMASS – AN IMPORTANT ENERGY SOURCE IN SLOVENIA

Approximately 4,5 % of Slovene primary energy consumption is derived from biomass. Woody biomass use has a long tradition in Slovene industry, having installed ca. 300 MW boiler capacity. Presently 28% of all households use wood as the only source of heating.

Biomass energy policies and programs have been executed in Slovenia since mid of nineties. Based on these results the GEF project was launched to create new impetus in development by removing stated barriers. The project work has been incorporated into current activities of government ministries and municipalities, striving to reach goals of the National Energy Plan that would make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Kyoto targets for Slovenia.

The GEF project **Removing Barriers to the Increased Use of Biomass as an Energy Source** (2002-2006) has promoted the increased use of biomass as an energy source in Slovenia by: a) removing barriers to, and reducing the implementation costs of biomass based district heating projects in local communities; b) improving the energy efficiency of the existing boilers and individual fireplaces using biomass; and c) increasing the use of biomass for co-generation and in small individual boilers. Important aspect of promoting this renewable source of energy and reducing the environmental impact has been the integration of different actors, dealing with biomass energy development.

2. Description of the best practice

Department for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning has been assigned as the executing and implementing agency for the project, taking overall responsibility for project implementation. Slovene Ecofund has taken care for the project's financial component and will serve as a Fund Manager also after termination of the GEF project. A Project Implementation Unit (PIU), was established, consisting of a full time project manager and technical adviser. Other partners involved were Slovene municipalities and private entities as proposers of biomass district heating (BDH) projects, forestry and agricultural agencies, energy consultants and designers, communal enterprises as well as research institutes and universities.

Coordinated work on capacity building and information increase of all actors concerned has been one of core activities of the GEF project. PIU has accompanied the financial support to biomass energy investment projects, receiving also regular state grants, with broad specter of promotional and educational activities, attracting all relevant actors in the field and networking them through various events. Biomass energy has become very frequent topic in Slovene media. As a result the recognition of wood biomass in public has improved considerably and the number of trained experts has increased.

3. Mainstreaming/sustainability of the best practice

Knowledge on biomass energy potential among the public has increased substantially in last three years due to the appearance of wood biomass in media , reporting on individual trainings, demonstrations and progress of investment projects. Strong cooperation with NGOs has been established. Mass-media , energy companies, municipalities, equipment suppliers, consultants, public relations companies, are focusing attention to biomass energy because of this project and get involved. The PIU has conducted multiple meetings with local communities and industry representatives to raise public awareness and providing information and support to project developments. Promotional brochures have been prepared to support proper development of public acceptance of BDH projects.

- The quality of biomass consultancy market in Slovenia has increased via executed trainings for consultants, dealing with BDH projects development. Additionally the quality assurance system at planning and execution of wood biomass energy systems (QM-Holzheizwerke) has been introduced to designers and consultants.
- Trainings for installers, chimney-sweepers and planers in the area of small-scale boilers were organized in co-operation with Slovene and Austrian biomass societies.
- Trainings for the network of regional advisers of the Forestry Service, the Agricultural Advisory Service and the Energy Advisory Service have brought synergies that will support a biomass supply market.
- The PIU has compiled materials on state-of-the-art biomass energy technologies, their technical and economic characteristics, etc. in Slovene language. The web site: <http://gov.si/aure> offers continuously upgraded information on biomass energy developments. The site is providing resources and training for Slovenian consultants in the biomass area, and consequently strengthening their capacity.

The GEF project has succeeded to link in informal way the key stakeholders in biomass energy field in Slovenia. It could become the nucleus for a specialized team, dealing with acquiring and disseminating knowledge, building and maintaining knowledge networks, monitoring progress, supervising processes, advising on policy and implementation and implementing subsidy programmes.

4. Replication

The project, offering the support for investments in BDH projects, accompanied with coordinated promotional and educational activities, has proved its ability to start or to foster organized activities in biomass energy field.

The practice is replicable also in other countries, provided that skilled PIU is selected by executing agency and assigned to appropriate support.