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Excerpt from the recommendations for decision makers from the workshop on "Raising the capacity of employees in the public sector in the use of solar energy" held as part of the Balkan Solar Roofs project

The workshop on "Raising the capacity of employees in the public sector in the use of solar energy" that was held as part of the project "Balkan Solar Roofs" on July 5, 2023 in Kragujevac. It was organized by the project team for the implementation of the project. The workshop was attended by representatives of 10 local self-governments (energy managers, heads of municipal administration, employees in project management, urban planning, representatives of the office for local economic development, etc.), as well as employees in the city administrations of the City of Kragujevac and public enterprises.

During the round table that has been held as part of the workshop, representatives of local self-governments exchanged opinions and experiences regarding the work of the line ministry and national legislation. As conclusions from the held round table, some key recommendations can be extracted, which in the coming period, through the Permanent Conference of Cities and Municipalities, the National Alliance for Local Economic Development, etc. institution could be addressed to decision makers.

Key recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Mining and Energy has been implementing calls for energy rehabilitation of family houses and apartments for 3 years with joint funds with local self-government units. Funds for these purposes are increased every year, and from year to year the interest of local self-government units and citizens in these calls is increasing. In addition to this program, there is also a program of energy rehabilitation of public buildings. Bearing in mind that LGUs have little money in their own budgets for these purposes (energy rehabilitation of schools, kindergartens, cultural institutions and the application of renewable energy sources in these facilities), it would be good if tenders for public facilities, which the Ministry of Mining and Energy is currently announcing once a year, to

be announced at least twice a year, that is, that the funds for these purposes should be increased. The new way of implementing the Program for Energy Rehabilitation of Family Houses and Apartments, which the Ministry of Mining and Energy has been implementing together with the World Bank since this year, seems to give better results than previous tenders. That funds will be more accessible to a greater number of citizens, and that a greater number of business entities will be interested in carrying out the works, which will significantly contribute to the development of local economies, that is, to the creation of new jobs.

2. The Ministry of Mining and Energy, together with the Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities, as well as cities and municipalities that are examples of good practice, should motivate and educate local self-governments that have not yet gotten involved or have gotten involved to an insufficient extent to allocate (larger) financial resources necessary for co-financing and participation in the Energy Rehabilitation Program in the coming years.
3. The Ministry of Mining and Energy should, together with local self-governments, implement a continuous promotional campaign so that information about available subsidies and benefits about their use reaches as many citizens as possible.
4. The Ministry of Mining and Energy, together with local governments, should implement more innovative and interesting promotional campaigns, using modern communication channels, in order to reach young people, to promote the use of renewable energy sources and the importance of energy savings.
5. The Ministry of Mining and Energy should design and implement programs aimed at rehabilitation of residential buildings, because there is a great interest of citizens in them. It is necessary for the Ministry of Mining and Energy and foreign donors to provide funds for these purposes. Bearing in mind that citizens living in residential buildings are interested in installing solar panels for the production of electricity for their own needs on their buildings, it is necessary to provide them with information about the implemented project in Niš and the possibilities for the implementation of similar projects on their residential buildings.
6. Support for civil society organizations is needed, since innovative and proactive ideas often come from the civil sector.
7. The Ministry of Mining and Energy should make additional efforts in order to achieve better inter-institutional/ inter-sector cooperation, primarily with the largest energy company in

Serbia – “Elektroprivreda Srbije”, and in order to resolve cases more efficiently and obtain the necessary permits.

8. Bearing in mind the importance of the topic of energy efficiency and the increasing availability of European funds in this area, the Ministry of Mining and Energy, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and/ or the Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities should initiate an initiative or, even better, a type of commitment local self-governments to establish secretariats/ departments for energy efficiency as part of their systematization, in order to improve the capacities of local self-governments, pay enough attention and direct enough energy to deal with this topic, which is of crucial importance for the future of every citizen.
9. At the end of last year, the Minister of Mining and Energy passed the Rulebook on closer conditions for the appointment of energy managers ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 137/2022) which prescribes the obligation that "Municipalities and the city municipality as Obligors of the system appoint at least one energy manager", we believe that it is extremely important to apply this Rulebook in practice and that each local self-government appoints an energy manager.
10. Representatives of local self-governments dealing with energy efficiency should join the public discussion and direct their comments and suggestions to the Proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Serbia for the period up to 2030, including the perspective up to 2050, and thus contribute to the quality of this important strategic document in the field of energy.
11. Bearing in mind the potential of energy communities and the interest of citizens, but insufficient knowledge, in the coming period it is necessary to design workshops and trainings on this topic at the national level for as many citizens as possible, in order to develop this association model in practice.