



National Observatory of Athens



1st Working Meeting of the Regional Policy Network for Low C Policies and Climate Change in South East Europe

3 October 2014, Central Hotel, Athens-Greece

The National Observatory of Athens organizes at the Central Hotel in Athens-Greece, on October 3, 2014, the **1st Working Meeting of the Regional Policy Network for low C policies and climate change in South East Europe (Regional Policy Network - RPN)**, within the framework of the transnational project LOCSEE (Low Carbon South East Europe). A key starting point in the organization of this first meeting is to **examine the barriers that exist for a large-scale penetration of low carbon policies** (e.g. promotion of renewable energies, improvement of energy efficiency, etc.), **but also the opportunities that arise from these**.

Having the collaboration as its central component, LOCSEE brings together **10 countries in South East Europe** (Austria, Albania, Greece, Italy, Croatia, Montenegro, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia). The project aims to promote effectively actions leading to low carbon emissions in countries of this region. LOCSEE is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, and the National Observatory of Athens is the Greek project partner in this project. The **Regional Policy Network (RPN)** was created in order to provide a permanent forum for cooperation in South East Europe (SEE) on policies aiming at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The meeting will examine actions that started and had problems (such as PVs), as well as cases that proceeded successfully (e.g. energy conservation) in countries of the SEE region, and will analyze the factors that are crucial the outcome of these actions.

South East Europe, where Greece is located as well, is a special case in the European territory with regard to **climate change**. On the one hand, as noted in the recent (2014) report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change will have serious **negative effects on a number of key productive sectors in this region** (energy, water resources, agriculture, tourism). On the other hand, although many countries in the region have a significant potential to reduce their GHG emissions as a result of the application, for a long time, of obsolete energy technologies and non-rational management of natural resources, they **face difficulties in adopting effective policies to reduce their emissions** because of their difficult economic situation. At the same time, **their organizational structures to support the penetration of such policies are often weak**.

*"The economic dimension is crucial and is a key point in the evaluation of low-carbon policies, especially when talking about a large-scale penetration of these policies. However, the economic consideration **must not be shortsighted**, looking only at the direct costs of implementing policies and measures, but **must include the accompanying economic benefits**: cost reduction of imports, energy security, energy savings, reduction of health care costs due to reduction air pollution",* says Mrs. Elena Georgopoulou, Senior Researcher at the National Observatory of Athens.

Barriers faced are affected by the type of policies and measures chosen by decision-makers, but also by the ways in which these issues are communicated to local communities, and they are often underestimated, leading to poor results or even failure of policies and measures. **The development of photovoltaics and wind energy in Greece are examples of these obstacles**. On the same time, opportunities arising from low carbon policies such as the creation of new jobs and businesses are also underestimated. Moreover, 'smart' ways of financing are crucial for the economic success of such policies, and they go hand in hand with the need to develop **effective legislative and regulatory tools**.

Notably, 10 days ago, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called the political and economic world leaders at a meeting to address Climate Change, and asked for **an immediate start of the effort to achieve a low-carbon global economy**. More than 100 heads of state agreed to this, and more than 800 heads of

international organizations, social organizations and businesses committed to seek the necessary funding schemes for this transition. **Five areas of action** were discussed and agreed: reduce emissions, exploit investment opportunities and market mechanisms, determine the value of each ton of GHG emissions reduced, strengthen the resilience of communities, and achieve a global political binding agreement. This initiative of the UN Secretary General went unnoticed in Greece, but not in the rest of the world where large events were organized and attended even by President Obama.

The 1st Working Meeting of RPN in Athens will provide the opportunity to present and discuss these issues, as well as to seek further ways of cooperation between the countries of South East Europe.

The programme of the Working Meeting, which includes a press conference, is attached.

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