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Localizing clean energy targets in the GCC: A challenging opportunity

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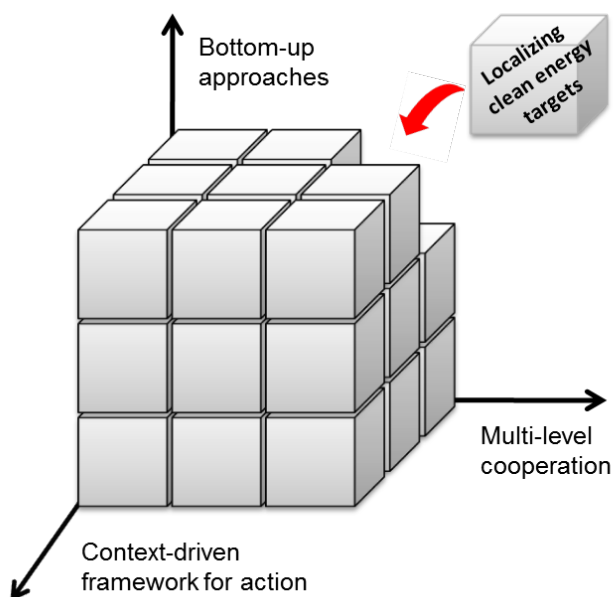
LOCALIZING CLEAN ENERGY TARGETS IN THE GCC: A CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITY

Recent developments indicate that past attitudes have started to change rapidly in the GCC region. Interest in renewable technologies, predominantly solar, is growing fast in various GCC countries, as a number of projects is already implemented or underway, local and regional actors are developing impressive RES plans and activities and local capacity is growing. In addition, in recent years several GCC countries have been launching various demand side management (DSM) and energy efficiency initiatives. Moreover, in some cases, integrated policy planning at a city level has been formulated, with ambitious targets on sustainable development.

However, attaining such ambitious plans will not be possible unless citizens are also actively engaged in this effort.

Indeed, engaging communities for the promotion of rational use of energy and fostering citizens to adopt sustainable energy patterns, remains still a challenge. The key words is "active citizenship", partnership and cooperation – sectors and stakeholders work together for the common good, the sustainable energy development.

How can this be realized in the GCC? Are there other related initiatives? The EU has launched almost a decade ago, in 2008, the **Covenant of Mayors (CoM) for Energy and Climate** initiative, which brings together thousands of municipalities and regions that voluntarily commit to meet EU clean energy targets at the local level. This commitment is the mainstream European movement involving local and regional authorities, having so far over 7,500 signatories, promoting voluntarily energy policy planning at the local/ regional level. The success of the initiative quickly went beyond expectations inside and even outside Europe. The CoM East was launched in 2011 and now operates in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. In 2012, the European Commission extended the CoM to the European Neighbourhood South Region by launching the "Cleaner Energy-Saving Mediterranean Cities" (CES-MED) project, with offices in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. The CoM has continued its global extension with the launch of the CoM Office for Sub-Saharan Africa in 2016. The **Global CoM** was launched on 1st January 2017 and during the first quarter of 2017, regional Covenant offices in North America, Latin America & the Caribbean, China & South-East Asia, India and Japan have been set up to complement the existing ones. The GCC region can capitalise on the CoM experience gained over the years of operation in Europe and beyond, and therefore can build upon the key success factors of the initiative: its bottom-up approach, its multi-level cooperation model and its context-driven framework for action. The lessons learnt from the CoM initiative can piece together the jigsaw of how clean energy targets can be effectively localized.



Respective tools that could be also appropriately customized in this respect for activating local citizens include:

- The establishment of cities planning partnerships;
- The development of personal learning plans for the promotion of sustainable energy and environmental awareness;
- The establishment of working groups for the promotion of clean energy in a local basis;
- The ICT tools for the creation of a "vibrant" virtual space where local government authorities, citizens and business interact and collaborate.

However, the above mentioned activities and tools are not «plug and play». They must be analysed/customized based on the GCC citizens' real needs and priorities.

Can the GCC take advantage of one of Europe's flagship actions and the "world's biggest urban climate and energy initiative" to materialize the ambitious targets set in a local/ city level?

The EU GCC Clean Energy Technology Network can facilitate this knowledge and experience transfer, through the exploitation of already available ICT tools, targeted training workshops, webinars, twinning activities among EU and GCC cities as well as appropriate customization of the developed methods and techniques for the GCC region.