

NEWSLETTER



Word of the editor

Dear readers,

In this edition, we celebrate the growing momentum of climate action and innovation across the Danube Region. Our partners continue to show how collaborative efforts can translate ambitious EU Missions into tangible local progress. The BiodIVerSe project stands out as a powerful example of how renewable energy expansion can go hand in hand with biodiversity protection, offering new pathways for multi-functional, innovative photovoltaic solutions. Meanwhile, RDA Banat's work on integrating climate resilience into Zrenjanin's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan demonstrates how cities can transform mobility systems to better withstand floods, heatwaves, and other climate-related pressures.

Equally inspiring is the City of Košice, where the introduction of structured municipal energy management is already delivering measurable benefits, proving how data, coordination, and long-term planning can reduce both emissions and energy costs. Capacity building also remains central to our mission: REDEA's two-day Horizon Europe training equipped regional stakeholders with practical skills to design strong, competitive project proposals that support EU climate objectives.

Together, these initiatives reflect a shared commitment to building a greener, more resilient, and forward-looking Danube Region—one where innovation empowers communities to thrive in a changing climate.

IMTM

● Announcements

TWO-DAY TRAINING PROGRAM STRENGTHENED THE COMPETENCES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE HARMONMISSIONS PROJECT

Within the framework of the **HARMONMISSIONS project**, the **Public Institution for the Development of Međimurje County REDEA** organized a **two-day training program** focused on EU Missions 1 and 4, aimed at strengthening capacities in the preparation of project proposals under the **Horizon Europe Programme**. The training, entitled "How to Write a Successful Project Proposal for the Horizon Europe Programme?", took place on **5–6 November** at the **Knowledge Centre of Međimurje County**.

Around twenty participants from **Međimurje, Varaždin and Krapina-Zagorje Counties** gained valuable knowledge and practical skills for the successful preparation of Horizon Europe project proposals – a programme primarily dedicated to fostering research, innovation, industrial competitiveness and the development of innovation ecosystems across Europe.

This activity contributes to the main goals of the **HARMONMISSIONS project** – to build knowledge, strengthen cooperation and encourage joint action towards the implementation of **EU Climate-Oriented Missions** across the **Danube Region**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Deep Tech for Climate Adaptation

Developing and commercially scaling timely solutions needed across Europe to adapt to key climate risks.

EIC and the EU Mission on Climate Adaptation are investing €50M to scale breakthrough solutions for heat-resilient cities, climate-smart agriculture, water security and flood protection. Start-ups and SMEs can receive up to €2.5M grants plus €10M equity, along with tailored coaching and access to EU innovation networks. Explore full scope and how to apply:

Conference agenda and registration:

https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/eic-accelerator/eic-accelerator-challenges-2026/deep-tech-climate-adaptation_en

Aauthor:Regional Agency for Socio-Economic Development – RDA Banat

Linking EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change with Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning

The EU Mission 1 “Adaptation to Climate Change” aims to support European regions and communities in building resilience to the growing impacts of climate change, contributing to delivery of the European Green Deal, which sets out a plan to transform Europe’s economy, energy, transport, and industries for a more sustainable future. Cities are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events such as heatwaves, floods, and heavy storms, which increasingly affect infrastructure, public health, and urban mobility systems. In this context, Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning (SUMP) plays a key role in translating adaptation goals into practical, city-level mobility actions.

SUMP promotes an integrated and long-term data driven approach to urban mobility that prioritizes sustainability, accessibility, and resilience, balancing environmental, social, and economic objectives. By embedding climate adaptation principles into mobility planning, cities can ensure that transport systems remain functional and safe under changing climate conditions. For example, climate-resilient road and public transport infrastructure can reduce the disruption caused by flooding, while green infrastructure and nature-based solutions can mitigate heat stress and enhance comfort for all users. Furthermore, SUMPs can contribute to adaptation through modal shifts towards active and low-carbon transport modes. Encouraging walking, cycling, and public transport reduces greenhouse gas emissions and urban heat, while improving air quality and public health. Also, smart mobility systems and improved data monitoring can help identify climate risks and optimize transport efficiency, especially during extreme weather events.

By aligning with the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, cities implementing SUMPs can become living laboratories for climate resilience, demonstrating how integrated mobility policies not only reduce emissions, but also enhance adaptive capacity and quality of life. Together, the Mission 1 and SUMP frameworks could provide a coherent pathway for European cities to transition toward safe, inclusive, and climate-resilient urban futures.

Benefiting from the transnational cooperation and knowledge exchange on HARMONMISSIONS project, RDA Banat currently working on the SUMP for the City of Zrenjanin (Serbia) and will try to integrate climate resilience measures into local mobility policy, which will not only strengthen Zrenjanin’s capacity to cope with future climate challenges but also enhance its attractiveness, liveability, and contribution to a greener and more resilient Danube Region.



Author: City of Košice

Strengthening Municipal Energy Governance

In the European Union, the building sector plays a central role in energy use, accounting for around 40 % of total energy consumption and about 36 % of greenhouse-gas emissions. Heating, cooling and hot water represent the majority of household energy demand.

Municipal buildings are significant consumers, but they also hold strong potential for improving efficiency. However, cities face several challenges. Many public buildings—especially schools, offices, cultural venues and sports facilities—are decades old, with poor insulation and outdated technologies. Modernization is further constrained by limited budgets and small energy teams, causing even cost-effective measures to be postponed. Another major obstacle is the lack of reliable data. Without systematic monitoring of consumption, municipalities struggle to identify inefficiencies or assess the impact of measures. Moving toward data-driven energy management is therefore essential, but requires tools, skills and organizational support that many cities are still building.

Energy management began to be systematically introduced in European cities in the 1990s, expanded significantly after 2000, and became standard practice for most cities after 2010, when European projects (for example Covenant of Mayors od 2008) and key European directives on energy efficiency came into force.

The aim of municipal energy management is to organize all relevant internal administrative processes to consistently reduce energy consumption, lower operating costs and improve the performance of public buildings. When introducing energy management, it is essential to create an organizational structure with clear responsibilities and the ability to coordinate all energy-related activities. Its core tasks include monitoring and analysing energy consumption and costs to identify inefficiencies, and optimising the operation of building technologies such as heating, ventilation, sanitation, and lighting. It is also responsible for training janitors and building operators to apply energy-saving practices, as well as ensuring efficient and sustainable energy procurement. Further duties involve improving the use of buildings by adjusting occupancy and operational schedules, planning investments in renovations and technological upgrades that support long-term savings, and raising awareness among building users to encourage responsible behaviour. Regular communication of energy reports supports informed decision-making and drives continuous improvement.

Many municipal administrations across Europe are increasingly embracing structured energy management in their buildings and operations. A study of European municipalities found that professional energy management systems have resulted in cost-reductions of up to 20 % for energy and water in public premises.

Case of City of Košice, Slovakia

The City of Košice owns more than 200 buildings, 18,000 public lighting points, and hundreds of smaller energy-consuming devices such as public transport shelters, fountains, and traffic lights. Over the past three years, the city's energy-efficiency efforts have focused primarily on improving public lighting, implementing measures such as window replacement, façade and roof insulation, and preparing selected buildings for more extensive modernization.

These buildings and facilities are managed by various departments of the city council or by municipal companies. Energy purchases are made independently by each administrator, and different measures are implemented based on their individual priorities—most often in response

to reduced user comfort and when financial resources happened to be available. High energy costs, various isolated solutions, lack of funds, and the slow pace of building renovation led city management to seek a comprehensive solution to this situation.

The City of Košice introduced energy management in the summer of 2024. A new administrative unit an “Energy Unit” was created within the organizational structure, building on previous activities in public lighting and expanding its responsibilities to include additional facilities as well as the city’s buildings. The greatest challenge, however, is posed by the municipal buildings themselves.

The Energy Unit currently consists of 9 staff members working directly at the Košice City Hall. This unit closely cooperates with an additional 13 energy and facility managers from other departments and municipal companies, who help set up energy-management processes so that a unified municipal ecosystem is created and the proposed measures can be applied across all city enterprises. This group is called the “Community of Practice,” and in addition to ongoing individual communication, it meets as needed, but at least three times a year.

First and foremost, the energy unit focused on monitoring energy consumption. In cooperation with the managers of other municipal buildings, an inventory of buildings was prepared with an emphasis on their energy parameters, and the existing energy supply contracts are being reviewed with the aim of moving toward joint energy procurement. At the same time, a technological system for collecting monthly data on consumption and payments was introduced (Figure 1). This system enables administrators not only to monitor energy consumption trends and react to emerging anomalies, but also to generate data for evaluating implemented measures and planning new investments.

Based on this, work has begun on preparing a long-term investment plan aimed at improving the energy efficiency of buildings. In addition to setting up processes in the field of energy management, efforts are also being made to raise awareness and provide training for energy managers and building administrators.

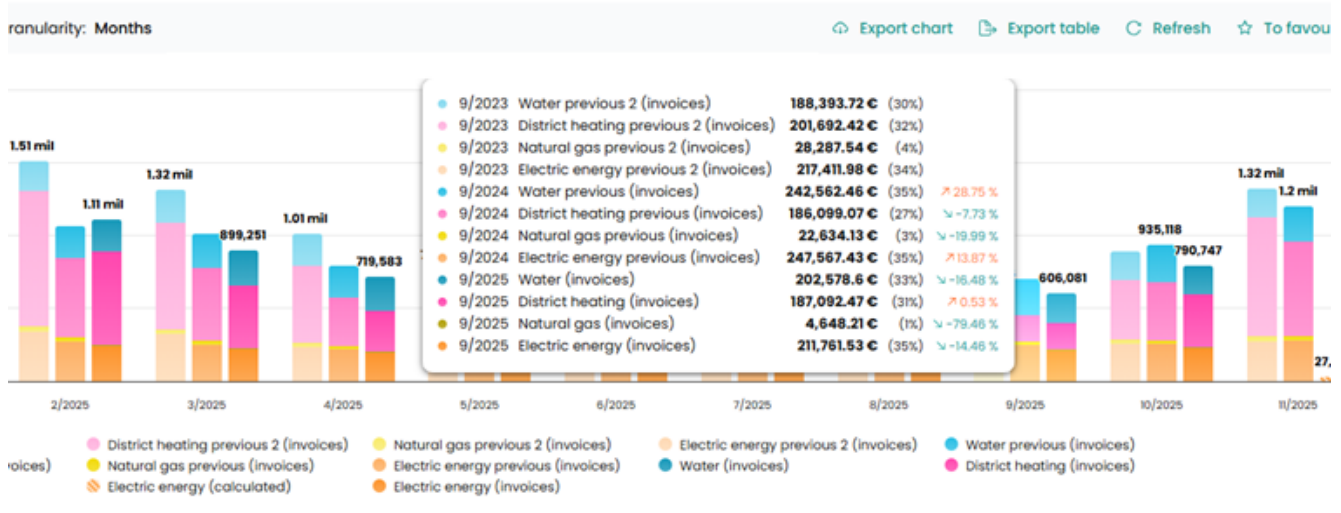


Figure 1 Energy City Dashboard, City of Košice

Although more significant results in reducing energy consumption and emissions are expected in the long term, the municipality already recording an 8% year-on-year decrease in total energy payments

The introduction of energy management in the City of Košice has been supported by EU funding through the Pilot Cities Programme as part of the project “Building Power: Reducing Building Emissions and Energy Use in Bratislava and Košice.”

References:

José L. Hernández, Ignacio de Miguel, Fredy Vélez, Ali Vasallo. Challenges and opportunities in European smart buildings energy management: A critical review. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032124001953> (accessed on: 20 November 2025)

Belinda Bäßler, Oliver Ritter. Energy Management in Municipalities in the EU and Germany, <https://www.euki.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Energy-Management-in-Municipalities-in-the-EU-and-Germany.pdf> (accessed on: 20 November 2025)

BiodlvErSe - Accelerating Multifunctional Innovative Photovoltaic Energy Systems through Biodiversity Sensitive Assessment

Project summary

Sustainable spatial development can only be implemented in accordance with international & EU law if the interests of climate protection & biodiversity protection are considered. Effective legal instruments & methods must be further aligned to harmonise accelerated energy transition & biodiversity protection by provision of a sound legal basis for assessment-based decisions support to planning & approval authorities within the EU. To achieve 2050 EU climate neutrality &, according to the latest drafts of the national energy & climate plans of the participating regions, solar energy plays a decisive role in this transition. Increased PV implementation leads to increased land use, a challenge for nature & landscape protection & public acceptance. Therefore, the EU Strategy for Solar Energy focuses on innovative PV (I-PV) for multiple land use. This shall generate synergies by strengthening the climate resilience in agriculture, on moors & for water bodies, as well as to preserve nature conservation. To date, responsible authorities have gathered little or no experience planning, permitting & implementation procedures on the accelerated deployment of I-PV. Main challenges are methods to assess (negative, neutral, positive) environmental concerns. As some regions play a pioneering role in preparing their administrative framework ready for specific I-PV (e.g., Austria: floating PV; Germany: Agri-PV), other regions are facing the challenge on how to make legal secure assessment-based decisions.

Project objective

Given the urgent need for energy transition, a more ambitious advancement of renewable energy sources is imperative. This involves not only traditional methods but also exploring innovative approaches, especially in solar sector, where multiple land uses can be harmonized. However, accelerating renewable energy deployment interacts with nature conservation concerns. Therefore, BiodlvErSe's overarching goal is to balance the competing priorities of solar energy expansion and its ecological repercussions by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that merges research & administrative perspectives: We evaluate the potential of each region for underexplored innovative PV forms, highlighting challenges & exchanging good practices related to affected biodiversity concerns & ensuring public acceptance through a transparent & participatory approach. Practical feasibility is guaranteed by involving authorities, developing administrative guidelines & disseminating the results to policymakers.

Project partners

Within BiodlvErSe 9 partners (among them 1 advisory, 2 discovery) from Germany, Latvia, Poland, Greece, Ukraine, Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina plus 2 associated policy authorities from Germany & Austria work jointly to close knowledge gaps and to develop criteria for regional potential analysis & approval as well as strategic planning & implementation methods. As a result 6 regional policy instruments on regional strategic acceleration of Innovation PV will be developed exemplary.

Lead partner IZES gGmbH, Saarland, Germany

Vidzeme Planning region, Latvia

Marshal's Office of the Mazovian Voivodeship in Warsaw, Poland

Region of Western Macedonia, Greece

International Solar Energy Society, Germany

Energy and Environment Agency of Lower Austria, Austria

City of Laktaši, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Executive Committee of the City Council of Drohobych of Lviv region, Ukraine

Lviv Municipal Enterprise "Lvivsvetlo", Ukraine

Project duration

Project start date: 01.05.2025

Project end date: 31.07.2029

Project promotional video: <https://vimeo.com/1130163969?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

More information about the project: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/biodiverse>

BiodivErSe

**Accelerating Multifunctional
Innovative Photovoltaic Energy
Systems through Biodiversity
Sensitive Assessment**

