



European Construction Sector Observatory

Policy measure fact sheet

Slovenia

Energy Advisory Network (ENSVET)

Thematic Objectives 3 &4

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In a nutshell

Implementing body:	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning via Eco Fund (Slovenian Environmental Public Fund)
Key features & objectives:	Independent energy advisory network offering expert advice on energy efficiency and renewable energy free of charge to Slovenian households through local offices and home visits.
Implementation date:	1991 (first implemented) 2014 (updated)
Targeted beneficiaries:	Households (owners and tenants)
Targeted sub-sectors:	Energy efficiency, Education.
Budget (EUR):	584,000 (2016); 379,855 (2015); 500,401 (2014); 522,404 (2013)

Overall energy consumption in Slovenia is decreasing as a result of the renovation of the existing housing stock and the transformation towards energy efficient households.

The Slovenian Government has implemented a number of measures to encourage sustainable construction and resource efficiency. The **National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014-2020** provides an overview of the measures that are designed to achieve the energy efficiency targets set out in Directive 2012/27/EU.

According to the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014-2020, Slovenia is aiming to achieve household energy savings of 30% between 2012 and 2020. In the same period, energy

for heating is forecast to fall by 20% because of the increase in residential floor area¹. The residential housing stock represents 71% of the total building stock in Slovenia and estimates show that 85% of the targeted energy savings will be achieved by renovating residential homes and buildings².

The action plan defines three key goals³:

- 6 million m² of residential building stock to be renovated by 2020;
- 1.8 million m² of the broad public-sector building stock to be renovated between 2014 and 2023 (including 180,000 m² of buildings owned or occupied by central government);
- 1.3 m² of private service sector building stock to be renovated by 2020.

In 2015, the Long-Term Strategy to promote investment in energy efficient building renovations was implemented with targets for 2020, 2030 and 2050. The **ECO Fund** (the Slovenian environmental public fund) plays a key role in providing soft loans for environmental investments, as well as subsidies for residential and multi-residential / apartment buildings. Overall, the ECO Fund has substantially increased the financial resources earmarked for these purposes since 2008 (EUR 342.5 million has been paid out to support about 44,000 incentives)⁴.

The **Energy Advisory Network for households (ENSJET)** is part of a series of measures that were introduced as part of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014-2020⁵, even though as a measure was initially established over 25 years ago. The main goal of ENSJET remains the same – to increase interest and private investment in renewable energy sources (RES) and the rational use of energy (RUE) through a network of regional advisory offices.

The **Energy Advisory Network for households (ENSVET)** is part of a series of measures that were introduced as part of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014-2020⁶, even though as a measure was initially established over 25 years ago. The main goal of ENSVET remains the same – to increase interest and private investment in renewable energy sources (RES) and the rational use of energy (RUE) through a network of regional advisory offices. The main barriers that the network is working to overcome are⁷:

- Low interest in the implementation of energy efficient (EE) measures;
- Low public awareness of EE and environmental issues;
- Lack of investment funds to implement EE measures.

ENSVET provides the public with free counselling and is engaged in a wide range of awareness raising activities across the country. Recently, ENSVET has also added a new scheme for low-income households called AERO, which is a service that is provided in cooperation with social work centres⁸.

1

General description

The initiative was first set up in 1991 as a part of a pilot project that brought together Slovenian-Styrian energy initiatives as part of a bilateral cooperation with Austria. The project was financed by the Ministry of Energy of Slovenia and the Styrian Energy Agency. In 1992, the first energy consultants were trained and one year later six energy counselling offices were established.

The success of the pilot project led the Slovenian Government to establish ENSVET as a permanent network, operating under the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. Up to 2014, the coordinator of the initiative was the Institute for Civil Engineering (ZRMK d.o.o.) and it was funded through the Eco Fund. In 2014, the Energy Law assigned all coordination, financial and organisational responsibilities directly to Eco Fund⁹, giving Slovenia's largest financial institution full responsibility for managing the initiative.

ENSVET provides information, advice and assistance to help households to invest in EE measures and make use of RES, and develop applications to access financial support. Advice is tailored to each case based on the information provided by the owner or tenant and is offered free of charge to all citizens¹⁰.

ENSVET offices are deployed throughout Slovenia. The placement of these offices is designed to ensure that the average distance between the customer (households) and their closest ENSVET office does not exceed 20 kilometres¹¹. There are currently 52 offices in the Slovenian ENSVET network which employ 66 qualified energy advisers. The general objective is to raise public awareness and interest in energy efficiency in households and to help to meet national energy efficiency targets.

The Resolution on the Strategy of Use and Supply of Energy for the Republic of Slovenia has set a goal for ENSVET activities to achieve 2% energy savings per year. Savings are calculated using a methodology and formula that is based on the information obtained through a survey of households that have received advice.

To counter the rise of energy poverty, especially among low-income households, AERO (the Assistance for Energy Poverty

ENSVET is also engaged in educational activities in the field of rational use of energy (RUE) and renewable energy sources (RES), such as offering public lectures (local communities, schools, etc.), publishing articles and organising awareness raising activities in national and local broadcasting media.

in Households) was launched in 2014 as a cooperative pilot project between ENSVET and Slovenia's Social Work Centres, which serve as a contact point. AERO is a result of the EU project 'Achieve2' at national level which focussed on low-income households. The aim is to help socially-deprived groups to improve energy efficiency at home. Households that receive regular welfare (social/financial) support, through Social Work Centres are encouraged to apply for assistance from ENSVET. ENSVET provides free of charge home visits by its energy advisors (to take necessary measurements and make calculations) and a free package of equipment for soft measures (switch diverter, protective wrapping, sealants, etc.), reducing the use of energy and water¹².

The AERO pilot project was run by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning for 1 year with a budget of about EUR 20,000. The pilot project targeted over 200 households and helped them to achieve approximately EUR 24,000 in energy savings, which equates to an average saving of EUR 108 per household involved in the pilot project¹³. AERO was subsequently reactivated in autumn 2016 for the period 2016/2017.

For 2017/2018, there is also an additional budget of EUR 150,000 to fund:

- A communication campaign to disseminate the brochure on energy poverty measures and LED lamps within Red Cross food packages;
- Regional meetings and training sessions with Social Work Centres; and
- To enhance the implementation of more soft measures packages, such as energy-saving / LED lamps, seals for windows and doors, extensions for switch operated electrical power, nozzles for pipes and showers, and reflector panels for radiators.

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Achieved or expected results

ENSVET runs an average of 6,000 advisory sessions per year and aims to increase this figure to 10,000 per year by 2020¹⁴, to meet the objective laid out in the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan¹⁵. It is expected that even more advisory sessions will be held in the future with the launch of mobile ENSVET units.

Measurable results that the ENSVET network has achieved include among others reduced CO₂ emissions, end-use energy efficiency savings, increase in the number of clients that have received advice, the number of investments financed by Eco Fund subsidies and loans, and the number of older houses that have been comprehensively renovated based on ENSVET advice. Table 1 summarises the results of the ENSVET network in recent years. The expected results for 2017 are the same as for 2016.

Table 1: Impact of ENSVET for the period 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of advisory sessions	5,797	5,867	5,483	4,344	4,321	5,746
End use energy savings [MWh/year]	16,303	20,164	18,319	18,540	17,326	13,727
Reduction in CO₂ emissions [kt/year]	4,250	5,257	4,776	4,834	4,517	3,579

Source: Eco Fund

The number of advisory sessions that were held is slightly under the targeted 6,000 sessions per year. The drop in 2015/2016 was due to administrative and organisational changes when the Eco Fund took over from the former contractor disrupting ENSVET activities for a period of time. Since then, the Eco Fund has focussed on promoting the network, developing new services and offering different forms of advice to meet the planned objectives.

In 2014, the AERO project (Assistance for Energy Poverty in Households) was implemented by Eco Fund in cooperation with social work centres. The 1-year project aimed to conclude 300

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visits to provide free advice and materials, out of which 139 were carried out. This same goal has also been applied to the reactivated project in 2016/2017.

The first year of implementation showed that the demand by low-income households is highly dependent on the work carried out by Social Work Centres. As a result, ENSVET is currently working on strengthening this collaboration and its involvement in AERO. Social Work Centres present the project to target groups and collect applications. In 2016-2017, 15 visits have been arranged through AERO so far while 80 additional applications are currently being processed. By redefining the roles and by strengthening collaboration the aim is to attract a significantly higher number of applications. The communication activities planned for 2017/2018 will also be partly focussed on enhancing the visibility of AERO and increase the number of applications.

Table 2 illustrates the energy savings achieved by AERO, based on average values from ACHIEVE2 and REACH EU projects¹⁷. Visits by energy advisers and the distribution of free packages (equipment for soft measures) resulted in significant savings in water, electricity and heating consumption.

Table 2: AERO project results (based on average values from the ACHIEVE2 and REACH projects)

Average on households (average values from the ACHIEVE2 and REACH projects)				
		2014	2016/ 2017	Total
No. of visits		139	15 + (80 in progress)	154 (234)
Electricity	kWh	37,252	4,020	41,272
	€	5,566	601	6,167
	Kg CO ₂	20,614	2,225	22,838
Water	kWh	2,050	221	2,272
	€	3,682	397	4,079
	Kg CO ₂			
Heating	kWh	69,007	7,447	76,453
	€	3,656	395	4,051
	Kg CO ₂	13,142	1,418	14,561
Total	kWh	106,259	11,469	117,725
	€	12,905	1,393	14,297
	Kg CO ₂	33,756	3,643	37,399

Source: Eco Fund¹⁸

Table 3 shows the additional dissemination and communication activities carried out by ENSVET and provides a comparison between planned and achieved results over the past three years. In 2016, ENSVET significantly strengthened its awareness raising activities through seminars, especially in schools. Although, the targets were not met, higher numbers are expected in upcoming years as a result of an extensive communication plan for 2017/2018.

Table 3: Additional ENSVET activities: Actual vs planned results (2014-2016)

Additional activities	Actual / Planned 2014	Actual / Planned 2015	Actual / Planned 2016
Articles	253/400	106/400	177/500
Media (TV, radio)	284/300	236/300	222/400
Seminars	205/100	124/100	180/200
Seminars in schools	36/100	46/100	102/100

Source: Eco Fund¹⁹

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Perspectives and lessons learned

From a **government perspective**, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning believes that the ENSVET has benefited from the change of contractor that has improved the management and coordination of the network.

Having been solely responsible for financial management in the past, Eco Fund assumed broad control of operations and finance in 2014, enabling it to bring planning, implementation, administration and management processes under one roof, simplify processes and reduce costs. This move also enabled the network to build synergic relationships with other Eco Fund measures and initiatives.

From an **implementation perspective**, Eco Fund argues that one of the key benefits of the network is that it is independent from suppliers.

Independence (actual and perceived) is important because it means that the network is able to provide the public with impartial added value advice and assistance, which in turn increases public confidence, without relying on other organisations or commercial interests.

From the **beneficiaries perspective**, based on the results of Eco Fund's latest survey conducted in 2013, 75% of respondents said they were 'very satisfied' with ENSVET services, and 25% said they were 'satisfied'.

In terms of implementing advice provided by ENSVET, only 2% of respondents were 'not satisfied' with the achieved remediation results, stating that they expected better results. On the other hand, the most common reason for not implementing the solution suggested by advisors, was the lack of financial resources²⁰.

More recent information provided by Eco Fund, based on customer feedback, shows that the biggest advantage for beneficiaries (households) is that the advice provided is free of

charge. Furthermore, in the case of AERO, the energy adviser makes a visit directly at the beneficiary's home and provides them with a free package of equipment for soft measures along with the advice.

The numerous ENSVET offices spread across the country definitely bring the service closer to the public in their local environment. The beneficiaries appreciate having access to professional advice that is tailored to individual situations at the offices in all municipalities, without any commercial interests. As an independent service, ENSVET does not confront the public with sales talk or promotional materials on products, services or companies.

Although ENSVET services and free advice can be accessed by email or telephone, the complexities of individual situations tend to make face-to-face interaction the preferred option. The service requires clients to gather and present all of the necessary evidence on the current state of the building (photos, plans or pro-forma invoices). This is sometimes perceived as an obstacle. Via email or telephone, this information can be misinterpreted and the quality of advice questioned, due to the lack of clarifications. Therefore, an appointment at an office is highly recommended. Ultimately, the preferred choice is to get prompt advice through the use of technology. The Eco Fund is planning to introduce a higher online presence and greater visibility (mostly through social media) without affecting the quality of the service.

At the same time, ENSVET is still offering professional knowledge in civil and mechanical engineering, energy efficiency and architecture, all in one place. Eco Fund manages the whole operation and is directly financed by funds earmarked from the national budget.

The initiative has been incorporated into Slovenia's national energy efficiency strategies and actions plans, and together with other measures, it aims to encourage greater use of RES and RUE²¹.

The Fund is also trying to move forward to take advantage of modern technology. Reports are now produced in digital formats, and Eco Fund is planning a stronger communication campaign, including social media and an online presence.

Endnotes

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