

PRESS RELEASE

PIONEERING HEATING AND COOLING PLANNING IN EU MUNICIPALITIES

Accelerating Europe's Clean Energy Future by Empowering Cities for Efficient Heating and Cooling

Brussels, 6 February 2025 – Small and medium-sized municipalities in the EU often face challenges in developing effective Heating and Cooling (H&C) plans due to limited resources and technical expertise. Addressing this, the EU-funded project ESCALATE offers a standardised methodology to empower municipalities, regional energy agencies, and stakeholders in creating actionable H&C plans.

The building sector is the largest energy consumer in the EU, with residential buildings accounting for **28%** and commercial buildings for **14%** of total energy consumption. Heating and cooling demands make up **80% of this energy use**, underscoring the urgent need for decarbonisation to achieve a clean energy transition.

The ESCALATE project is set to play a pivotal role in advancing the clean energy transition in the European Union by addressing critical challenges in developing local H&C plans. The initiative supports the requirements outlined in Article 25 of the [Energy Efficiency Directive](#) (EED) recast, assisting towns with populations exceeding 45,000 in fulfilling their obligation to develop comprehensive H&C plans.

"Local and regional authorities often lack the expertise and resources in H&C planning. By creating a standardised methodology and comprehensive training program, we aim to empower municipalities across Europe to develop their own heat plans and facilitate H&C planning on a broader scale."

– Catrice Christ, ESCALATE Project Coordinator and Head of the Business Unit Socio-Scientific Evaluation at IREES

Bridging Gaps in Expertise and Collaboration

ESCALATE provides training, templates, and guidelines to address the resource and knowledge gaps hindering effective H&C planning.

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Project partner e-think conducted a comprehensive Capacity Gap Assessment to identify gaps in expertise and determine their training needs, revealing critical needs for training on regulatory frameworks, including the EED, the “Energy Efficiency First” principle, and enhanced stakeholder engagement.

Key findings of the Capacity Gap Assessment include:

- **Skills Development Needs:** Core areas like data collection, inventory management, and energy projections.
- **Decarbonisation Strategies:** High demand for training on heating cost calculations, financial planning, and regional decarbonisation strategies.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The need for improved collaboration among stakeholders and community involvement for effective H&C planning.

“Effective heating and cooling plans are the backbone of Europe's clean energy transition of cities and buildings. Through ESCALATE, we’re equipping regional energy agencies and municipalities with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to drive meaningful change, aligning local actions with EU climate goals and the new requirements of the Energy Efficiency Directive Recast.”

– Giulia Conforto, ESCALATE Capacity Building leader, Senior Researcher, e-think energy research

ESCALATE’s efforts extend beyond meeting legislative requirements. By increasing the technical capacity of regional energy agencies, the project fosters the establishment of energy agencies as key drivers of the clean energy transition. The enhanced collaboration between agencies, municipalities, and other stakeholders ensures a cohesive approach to decarbonising Europe’s H&C systems.

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About ESCALATE

The ESCALATE Project aims to speed up Europe's shift to clean renewable energy by helping cities across the EU plan for more energy efficient heating and cooling. The project focuses on towns with over 45,000 people, ensuring they have the tools and knowledge to create local heating and cooling plans that reduce energy use and support the environment. ESCALATE empowers local communities to make their buildings sustainable, reduce pollution, and help Europe become climate-neutral by 2050 by providing expert training and a clear, easy-to-follow guide.

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