SMEnergy Project Newsletter

The 4th SMEnergy Partner Meeting & Stakeholder Event, held on 19–20 November 2025 in Bratislava, brought together project partners and regional stakeholders to advance collaboration on SME energy transition across the Danube Region. Hosted by the **Slovak Business Agency (SBA)**, the two-day gathering combined strategic discussions, interactive workshops, and a practical study visit showcasing real-world energy efficiency solutions for SMEs.

Participants reviewed progress on regional pilot activities and contributed to shaping the SMEnergy transnational strategy. The event opened with welcomes from the SBA and an update from the Lead Partner, followed by exchanges on connecting SMEnergy outputs with broader European initiatives supporting decarbonisation. Discussions highlighted ways to strengthen SME support through improved tools, networks, and financial mechanisms.

A key focus of the meeting was the Strategy & Action Plan Workshop, where partners and invited stakeholders collaborated in small groups to refine elements of the SMEnergy Strategy. They explored how to embed key project outputs—such as the SMEnergy Roadmap, Green Database & Marketplace, and GEKOS hubs—into long-term regional frameworks while addressing common challenges faced by SMEs, including limited awareness, funding gaps, and regulatory barriers.

On the second day of the event, project partners visited **Bakery Kvetoslavov**, an artisan bakery demonstrating effective adoption of renewable energy and modern energy-saving solutions. From thermal-oil deck ovens to heat recovery systems and photovoltaic installations, the visit offered practical insight into how SMEs can reduce energy consumption and operational costs while enhancing sustainability.

The insights gathered in Bratislava will feed into the final SMEnergy Strategy Wireframe and support the development of local action plans in the coming months. The event reaffirmed the consortium's commitment to empowering SMEs to adopt renewable energy, reduce emissions, and contribute to a more sustainable and competitive Danube Region. ***Check out our website for more!***

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PROJECT DETAILS

Period: 01 January 2024 - 30 June 2026

Budget: € 2,065,115

Interreg Funds: 80%

Interreg Danube Region

Co-funded by the European Union

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WHAT IS THE SMENERGY STRATEGY?

The SMEnergy Strategy is the main strategic output of the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project, guiding Danube regions towards a sustainable, decentralised, SME-driven energy future. Drawing on pilots, tools, and transnational cooperation, it provides a framework for integrating SMEnergy solutions into regional policies, business support, and long-term energy planning. The Strategy empowers SMEs to actively participate in the green transition through technical support, digital tools, capacity building, and cross-border knowledge exchange, making clean energy investments more accessible and feasible. Ultimately, it supports an energy-independent Danube Region.

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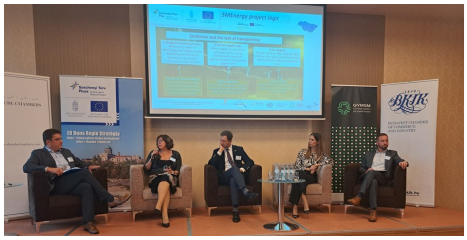
Slovenia

Within the scope of the SMEnergy project, **Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje (LEASP)** has provided personalised mentoring and advisory support to SMEs across the Spodnje Podravje region, helping them better understand their energy use and identify concrete opportunities for savings. The support ranged from simple, no-cost improvements to larger investments, such as photovoltaic systems or electric vehicles. Several SMEs also received guidance on navigating national funding schemes and subsidy opportunities, making it easier for them to move from plans to actual implementation.

A key highlight of the piloting period was the "business breakfast" co-organised with the Chamber of Commerce. The event brought together local companies in an informal setting to learn about energy-saving practices, exchange experiences, and gain practical insights into financing options for renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures. This format proved effective in engaging SMEs that are often difficult to reach, creating space for open discussion and peer learning. Overall, the pilot confirmed that direct, personalised support, combined with opportunities for SMEs to meet and learn from each other, plays an essential role in motivating companies to take meaningful steps toward improving their energy performance and embracing the energy transition.

Hungary

On 9 October 2025, SMEnergy was represented at the "Future of Businesses within the Danube Region" conference in Győr, Hungary, organised under the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The event convened policymakers, business leaders, and experts from across the Danube macro-region to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing SMEs, with a focus on competitiveness, sustainability, and innovation. Krisztina Horváth-Karip (**PC-Trend**) contributed to the panel on "Sustainable future, value and leadership in businesses", presenting SMEnergy's perspective on how SMEs can harness energy efficiency, strategic planning, and sustainable business models to strengthen both environmental responsibility and economic resilience. In addition to panel discussions, the conference offered interactive sessions on funding opportunities, workforce adaptation, and the impact of business networks, as well as extensive networking with representatives from chambers of commerce, development agencies, EU projects, and private organisations. growth across the Danube region.



Further, on 28 November 2025, the SMEnergy consortium hosted *SMEnergy Talks – Why It Is Beneficial for SMEs to Engage in the Energy Transition*. Moderated by the **Energiaklub Climate Policy Institute**, project leader Áron László presented the SMEnergy initiative, its one-stop shop (GEKOS) concept, and the Hungarian advisory pilot, in which consultants from **PC-Trend** and **Energiaklub** supported SMEs with audits, data analysis, and investment planning.

Nelli Tóth, Managing Director of MN6 Energy Agency, stressed that energy management is both a sustainability expectation and a business opportunity, combining data collection, loss identification, operational optimisation, and long-term decarbonisation planning. She noted that "energy efficiency and sustainability go hand in hand", cautioned that renewable energy is not "free", and underlined that efficiency measures should always precede renewable investments. Meanwhile, expert Zoltán Baranyák (Wattmanager) highlighted practical energy-saving methods, from correcting operational errors (ventilation, building

control, compressed air) to waste heat recovery and modernising outdated equipment. Case studies, including a holding furnace whose energy use dropped by 46% after a fault was fixed, showed how simple changes can yield immediate savings. The Q&A confirmed strong interest in obligations, PV sizing, storage, and operational scheduling, reinforcing the message: energy transition is cost-effective when SMEs first understand their data, address inefficiencies, and then integrate renewables strategically.

Austria

Forschung & Innovation Burgenland (FIB) has been actively piloting support for regional SMEs to improve energy efficiency and sustainability. During the pilot, around 20 SMEs were contacted, with 12 reached through events, social media, emails, and phone calls—the latter proving most effective for engaging companies. Selection criteria ensured transparency and impact, focusing on energy-saving potential, commitment to sustainability, operational readiness, and eligibility for funding.

Currently, one SME is fully involved and two others have started, with support tailored individually to each company. Services include assessing the current energy situation, identifying optimisation opportunities, advising on improvements and funding options, and providing guidance throughout the application process. The pilot has also demonstrated the value of the SMEnergy platform, connecting SMEs with experts, suppliers, and proven solutions. Best practices, such as Wolf Nudeln, showcase how innovative energy management can achieve full CO_2-neutrality and operational self-sufficiency.

Czech Republic

During this period, **DEX Innovation Centre (DEX IC)** participated in two events that helped expand awareness of the SMEnergy project in the Czech Republic and beyond. Firstly, DEX took part in a ceremonial event organised by the City of Liberec to mark the awarding of the Mission Label by the European Commission. During the event, DEX presented SMEnergy as one of its key activities supporting regional sustainability efforts and as an initiative that facilitated cooperation within the city's Climate Contract.

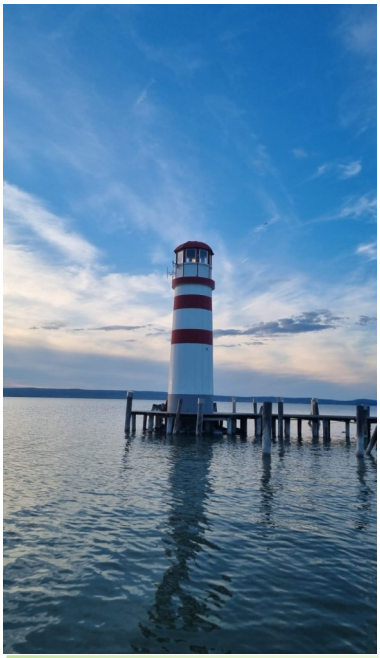
The meeting enabled discussions with local institutions and stakeholders working toward climate neutrality and energy transition. DEX also participated in a regional energy event hosted by the Liberec Region. The event brought together regional actors to discuss developments in community energy, renewable energy sources, energy savings and electromobility. SMEnergy was introduced as part of DEX's activities in sustainable energy transition, providing an opportunity to engage with stakeholders and explore synergies aligned with the project's objectives. By engaging with both local institutions and regional actors, DEX helps showcase SMEnergy's role in sustainable energy initiatives and fostering partnerships that contribute to a climate-neutral future.

Slovakia

The **Slovak Business Agency (SBA)** successfully launched and implemented its national SMEnergy pilot, guiding participating SMEs through an intensive, multi-module programme designed to improve energy efficiency, understanding of renewable energy solutions, and strategic planning for green transformation.

SBA introduced SMEs to the SMEnergy platform, offered expert-led workshops, and provided personalised consultations, enabling companies to assess their current energy use and identify viable opportunities for adopting renewable technologies and reducing operational costs. The pilot followed a structured learning path—from energy audits and renewable technologies to financing options and digital tools—ensuring a comprehensive and hands-on experience for all participants.

Throughout the pilot, SMEs gained access to leading experts and tailored guidance on navigating the often-complex energy landscape. Feedback collected during the sessions highlighted high usefulness, clarity, and strong applicability of the programme's content, confirming the effectiveness of the pilot design. The SBA team also carried out continuous evaluation and benchmarking activities to optimise the programme for broader deployment in Slovakia.



WHAT ARE GEKOS?

The **Green Energy Knowledge, Operation, and Service Hubs (GEKOS)** network are being developed within the SMEnergy project aims to provide a single-channel service to SMEs, especially to energy intensive ones, equipped with a cross-border green energy database and a marketplace supporting and fostering the SMEs green energy transition in the Danube region.

Services include:

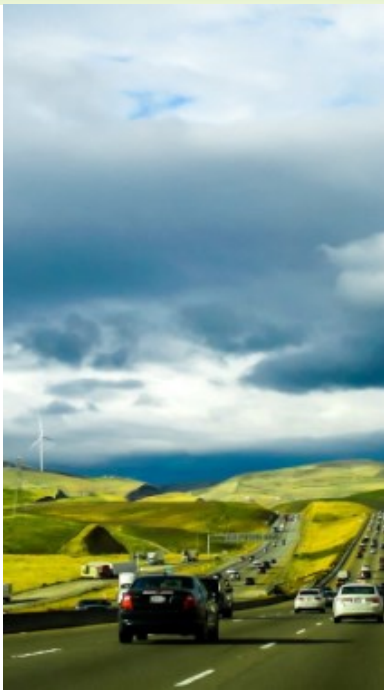
⇒ **Financial support;**

⇒ **Support in overcoming the administrative burden:** understanding the legislation;

⇒ **Capacity building:** trainings, seminars, awareness raising ;

⇒**Access to a qualified supplier & energy expert database.**

⇒**Publications & promotional materials** on RES topics.



WHEN THE ENERGY RUNS OUT

On 12 November 2025 in Budapest, the SMEnergy project and the Hungarian Renewable Energy Association (MMESZ) organised the workshop “When the Energy Runs Out” to bring together energy professionals to explore the challenges and opportunities of Hungary’s green energy transition. The opening presentations stressed shared responsibility, knowledge exchange, and data-driven approaches, while SMEnergy presented its practical pathway to support SMEs. Expert speakers highlighted systems-based development, collaborative models, and the growing value of professional expertise.

Learn more about the event **here**.

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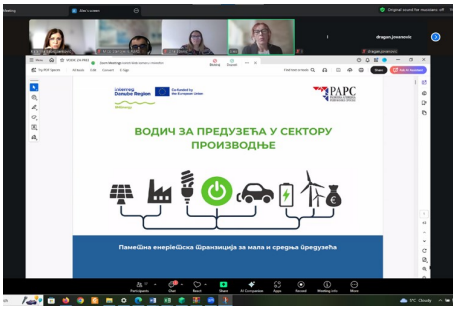
Republic of Srpska

In December 2025, the **Development Agency of the Republic of Srpska (RARS)** organised an online promotion of the Guide on Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency for Small and Medium Manufacturing Enterprises as part of the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project. The event, held via Zoom, brought together around 20 representatives from manufacturing SMEs, local authorities and mentoring organisations across the Republic of Srpska.

The online session aimed to encourage energy transition and investment in renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, highlighting their role in reducing operating costs, improving energy performance and minimising environmental impact. Representatives of RARS moderated the event, provided an overview of the SMEnergy project, and facilitated discussion among participants.

The guide was presented by its author and energy expert, Ms Aleksandra Stanivuković, who outlined its key content and practical value for manufacturing SMEs. Participants actively engaged in the discussion and raised questions related to implementation and available support.



Virtual promotional event for the SMEnergy project results in the Republic of Srpska

During the event, RARS also invited participants to join the SMEnergy platform, which connects organisations across the Danube region—from Germany to Bulgaria—and supports their visibility as suppliers, consultants or potential partners for international cooperation. In addition, a new dedicated subpage within the Business Support section of the RARS website was introduced. The page provides an overview of opportunities related to energy efficiency, renewable energy and green transition, and offers access to relevant institutions, support programmes and the guide itself via the “Energy Transition for SMEs” section.

This online promotion marked an important step in supporting manufacturing SMEs in the Republic of Srpska to actively engage in the energy transition and increase the uptake of renewable energy solutions.

Bulgaria

In June 2025, the **Business Support Centre for SMEs (BSC SME)** in Bulgaria, together with the University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”, co-organised an Information and Demonstration Event on Renewable Energy Solutions for Residential and Industrial Users. The event showcased the services of the GEKOS Centre, established in Ruse under the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project, which aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises in their green transition.

Information and Demonstration Event "Renewable Energy Solutions for Residential & Industrial Users", Ruse, Bulgaria

The programme featured a discussion panel that enabled participants to exchange ideas, explore key challenges facing the sector, and identify potential joint solutions. In addition, demonstrations of innovative green energy products and services highlighted how new technologies can enhance the efficiency and sustainability of energy systems.

Following these dissemination and promotional activities, several companies that participated in SMEnergy events in Bulgaria expressed interest in the GEKOS Centre’s services. With the support of an energy expert, BSC SME carried out pilot actions with four SMEs to test and assess the operation of the GEKOS hub and the SMEnergy platform.

The participating companies received tailored guidance on using the SMEnergy portal and database, improved their internal awareness of energy management, and obtained expert recommen-

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dations to support their green transition. These activities demonstrated how targeted support and practical guidance can help SMEs advance their energy efficiency and sustainability goals.

The analysis of feedback and results from these pilot actions will form a key foundation for the upcoming SMEnergy Strategy, capturing lessons learned, stakeholder engagement, identified challenges, and transferable outcomes.

Germany

In Germany, SMEnergy is helping SMEs overcome barriers to renewable energy adoption. Certified energy consultants assess companies' energy use, and based on these assessments, SMEs can access financial support for renewable energy and efficiency measures. Despite these opportunities, many SMEs still face challenges such as high transformation costs, bureaucratic hurdles, and uncertainty from changing regulations. SMEnergy demonstrates that long-term political support and simplified processes are key to enabling SMEs to successfully engage in the energy transition. At the **Technology Centre for Energy (TZE)**, two new projects will launch in January 2026, aiming to foster cooperation with SMEs and transfer renewable energy knowledge from academia into practice. Synergies with SMEnergy will be explored – so stay tuned!

SMENERGY FINAL CONFERENCE

The Final Conference of the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project will take place on 10th June 2026 in Budapest. The conference will provide a platform to reflect on the project's key achievements, share lessons learned, and discuss how SMEnergy results, tools and strategies can support the green transition of SMEs beyond the project lifetime. It will also offer opportunities for networking, exchange of good practices and dialogue on future cooperation at the regional and transnational levels. ***Stay tuned!***

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Issues addressed

SMEs make up 99% of all businesses in Europe, accounting for around 25 million enterprises. Many of these businesses lack the resources to fully explore opportunities for improving energy efficiency and adopting renewable energy solutions. To promote economic resilience in the EU and achieve the ambitious targets set out in the EU Green Deal, it is crucial to have mechanisms in place that support SMEs. By offering tailored and transparent solutions, we can create the enabling conditions necessary to accelerate the energy transition and promote sustainable growth among SMEs.

The Interreg Danube SMEnergy Project

Over the course of 30 months, the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project aims to create a **pilot network** of regional/countrywide service centers in order to support energy-intensive SMEs in accelerating the transition to adopting renewable energies. Corresponding outputs can be achieved only through transnational collaboration: an **energy transition roadmap** providing answers to diverse company maturity & situations, as well as the model operation of ***Green Energy Knowledge, Operation and Service Hubs (GEKOS),*** assuring single-channel service, equipped with a cross-border green energy database and marketplace. Due to scalability, we must meet the needs of SMEs that are only just considering their energy transition, but also those that are already at the forefront of this. The final aim of the project is to create both national and transnational strategies/toolkits on how the diverse SME segments can be better supported in the increased use of renewables.

The SMEnergy project is aligned with the Interreg Danube Region Programme 2021-2027 priority, **"A greener, low-carbon Danube Region"**, and directly contributes to the Programme Specific Objective 2.1, **"Support greening the energy and transport sectors in the Danube Region by enhancing the integration of renewable energy sources.** For more information on how to get involved, visit our website.

JOIN THE SMENERGY PLATFORM

SMEnergy has built a dynamic **online platform** — the Green Energy Marketplace and Database — to connect energy suppliers, experts, and financial consultants across Europe. The overall goal is to support SMEs in their energy transition by providing access to trusted professionals and services.

The platform, developed by **Energiaklub** with the support and input from all partners, offers more than just listings – it functions as a knowledge-sharing space where users can exchange **good practices**, country-specific **regulatory insights,** and **technical information** relevant to their region. One of its flagship features a self-assessment tool, enabling energy-intensive SMEs to evaluate their current status and explore tailored energy efficiency and green transition opportunities.

Be part of the energy transition – join our SMEnergy platform!

PROJECT PARTNERS

Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje – LEASP (Slovenia)

Energiaklub (Hungary)

Business Agency Burgenland Research and Innovation Ltd. – FIB (Austria)

PC-Trend Ltd. (Hungary)

DEX Innovation Centre – DEX IC (Czech Republic)

Slovak Business Agency – SBA (Slovakia)

Development Agency of the Republic of Srpska – RARS (Republic of Srpska/Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises - Ruse – BSC SME Ruse (Bulgaria)

European Institute for Innovation-Technology (Germany)

Landshut University of Applied Sciences – TZE (Germany)

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