

SMEnergy Project Newsletter

The SMEnergy Final Conference, "From Projects to Impact: Supporting SMEs' Energy Transition", held on 9 June 2026 in Budapest, marked the culmination of 30 months of cooperation dedicated to strengthening support for SMEs in their energy transition journeys across the Danube Region. Bringing together project partners, policy makers, development agencies, SME support organisations, energy experts, and other stakeholders, the event provided an opportunity to reflect on project achievements and discuss how to sustain impact beyond the project lifetime.



Hosted by PC-Trend and Energiaklub, the conference showcased the results of SMEnergy's pilot activities and the development of one-stop shop (OSS) models designed to provide SMEs with coordinated access to information, expertise, and support services. Participants explored lessons learned from implementation across partner

regions, examining what worked, what did not, and which approaches could be transferred to other regional contexts.

The programme featured keynote presentations, expert panels, roundtable discussions, and interactive sessions focused on the realities of supporting SMEs through the green transition. Discussions highlighted the importance of stakeholder cooperation, accessible support structures, and long-term policy commitment in helping SMEs improve energy efficiency and adopt renewable energy solutions.



The event concluded with exchanges on sustaining project results through regional action plans, continued stakeholder engagement, and future cooperation. The conference reaffirmed the importance of coordinated support systems in accelerating SME energy transition and highlighted the lasting value of the SMEnergy project. The knowledge, partnerships, and action plans developed throughout the project will continue to support SMEs across the Danube Region in building a more sustainable, resilient, and energy-efficient future. **Check out the event [website](#) for more information, including presentations to download.**



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PROJECT DETAILS

Period: 01 January 2024 - 30 June 2026

Budget: € 2,065,115

Interreg Funds: 80%



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. Find it on our [website & platform](#).

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Slovenia

As the SMEnergy project moves towards its conclusion, the **Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje (LEASP)** is laying the groundwork to ensure its impact continues well beyond the project lifetime.

Through its newly developed Local / Regional Action Plan for Slovenia (Spodnje Podravje), LEASP is committed to maintaining practical support for SMEs on their energy transition journey. The action plan builds on the SMEnergy pilot experience, where LEASP worked directly with selected companies to assess their energy situation, identify realistic saving opportunities and investment measures, and guide companies towards available funding mechanisms.

A key development is the planned integration of a GEKOS-type support function within LEASP as a practical regional access point for SME advisory, mentoring and roadmap support. The model will not create a new legal entity, but will be embedded into existing LEASP activities and connected with regional stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce, municipalities, national support bodies, energy experts and technology providers. Stakeholder commitment is also being strengthened through Letters of Intent, including possible local-level support from the Municipality of Dornava.



In the months following the project closure, LEASP will focus on follow-up advisory support for pilot SMEs and additional interested companies, support for access to subsidies and other financing opportunities, and mainstreaming SMenergy tools and methods into regular regional advisory work. These continuation measures are designed to keep the SMenergy results operational beyond the project lifetime and to help SMEs move from awareness to concrete implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.

Hungary

The past six months have marked an important milestone for SMEnergy in Hungary, with **Energiaklub Climate Policy Institute** and **PC-Trend** jointly hosting the highly successful SMenergy Final Conference while also finalising their own organisational-level action plans to ensure the project's long-term impact.



Building on the experience gained through SMenergy, both organisations have committed to maintaining the visibility and continued use of the GEKOS approach in Hungary. The SMenergy pilot demonstrated that SMEs require flexible, expert-supported guidance tailored to their specific operational needs, with many businesses benefiting first from energy monitoring, optimisation measures and structured planning before pursuing larger renewable energy investments.

The experience also highlighted that while companies are highly motivated to reduce energy costs and improve competitiveness, they often lack the internal capacity, reliable data or confidence needed to take the next step. By promoting the GEKOS model as a cooperation-based support pathway, Energiaklub and PC-Trend aim to combine digital tools with expert mentoring, helping SMEs better navigate available technologies, financing opportunities and practical energy transition solutions.

Austria

On 19 March 2026, Austrian SMenergy partner, **Burgenland Research Ltd. (FB)** participated in the Interreg Danube RISE stakeholder workshop held in Eisenstadt, demonstrating the importance of cross-project collaboration in supporting sustainable regional development. The workshop provided an opportunity for representatives from both projects to exchange experiences on stakeholder

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engagement, capacity building and the long-term sustainability of project results. While SMEnergy focuses on supporting SMEs in their energy transition and RISE addresses innovation and sustainability in the food sector, both initiatives share a commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and creating practical implementation pathways for their target groups.

During the discussions, FB highlighted how SMEnergy's Energy Transition Roadmaps and stakeholder cooperation model could complement activities within the RISE framework, while also drawing valuable lessons from RISE's approaches to regional innovation and stakeholder mobilisation. These exchanges support the ongoing implementation of the SMEnergy Regional Action Plan and reinforce the integration of project outcomes into existing regional structures.



By engaging with complementary initiatives such as RISE, FB is helping to ensure that the knowledge, networks and methodologies developed through SMEnergy continue to create lasting value for SMEs and stakeholders across the region.

Czech Republic

Meanwhile in Czech Republic, **DEX Innovation Centre (DEX IC)** has played a leading role in shaping the long-term legacy of SMEnergy through the finalisation of the validated **SMEnergy Model and GEKOS Operation Guideline**. This key project output brings together the experiences and lessons learned from all partner countries into a single, transferable framework for supporting SME energy transition across the Danube Region.

Drawing on evidence gathered during the pilot activities and partners' Action Plans, the guideline confirms that the GEKOS concept works best as a flexible, cooperation-based support model embedded within existing trusted organisations, rather than as a standalone institution. It also highlights the importance of combining digital tools and verified supplier information with

personalised expert mentoring and guidance on financing to provide SMEs with practical and accessible support.

The framework further demonstrates that long-term sustainability relies on strong institutional partnerships and blended funding models, while the transnational GEKOS network remains one of SMEnergy's greatest strengths.

Slovakia

On 14 May 2026, representatives of ministries, energy agencies, regional authorities and business organisations met in Bratislava for the 5th SMEnergy Stakeholder Meeting focused on supporting SMEs in their renewable energy transition. Led by the **Slovak Business Agency (SBA)**, the event brought together representatives from ministries, energy agencies, regional authorities, business organisations and project partners to discuss practical measures for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in adopting renewable energy solutions and to explore how these actions can be effectively implemented in the coming years. The meeting provided a valuable platform for strengthening cooperation between key stakeholders and aligning efforts to accelerate the energy transition of Slovak businesses.



Alongside the Action Plan, SBA focused on ensuring the long-term impact of SMEnergy through a range of capitalisation activities. These included the preparation of new project proposals that build on SMEnergy's achievements and aim to scale and replicate successful approaches beyond the project lifetime.

To further support sustainability, SBA also launched a dedicated campaign to recruit SMEs for its 2026 pilot activities, giving businesses the opportunity to test sustainable energy solutions in practice while promoting the continued uptake of SMEnergy tools, methodologies and results across Slovakia.



SMENERGY IN NUMBERS

Looking back at the last 30 months of cooperation across the Danube Region, we can see the key achievements of the SMEnergy project. Ten partner organisations from eight countries joined forces to advance the energy transition, supporting 40 SMEs and developing 20 Energy Transition Roadmaps. Additionally, 16 stakeholder events have been organised, engaging 40 experts and building a strong, dynamic network that provides a solid foundation for continued collaboration and future impact.



TRANSNATIONAL GEKOS ACTION PLAN

As the SMEnergy project reaches its conclusion, partners from across the Danube Region have jointly adopted the SMEnergy Transnational GEKOS Coordination & Sustainability Action Plan, ensuring that the project's results will continue to deliver value long after the funding period ends. The Action Plan provides a roadmap for sustaining the GEKOS model through existing organisations and regional support ecosystems, rather than creating new institutions. It outlines how partners will continue collaborating across borders to maintain the SMEnergy platform, harmonise tools and methodologies, share knowledge and good practices, and strengthen links with financing providers.

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Republic of Srpska

The **Development Agency of the Republic of Srpska (RARS)** continues to build on the achievements of SMEnergy by strengthening regional cooperation and laying the foundations for the long-term sustainability of the project's results. A key milestone during the reporting period was the Working Meeting "Transnational Experiences and Opportunities for Local Action", held on 28 May 2026, which brought together representatives from ministries, business support organisations and other key stakeholders to discuss coordinated support for SMEs in the fields of renewable energy, energy efficiency and the wider energy transition.

During the meeting, RARS presented the progress achieved through SMEnergy, including the Guide for Manufacturing Sector Companies, the dedicated project web subpage and the international SMEnergy platform, while highlighting the potential of the GEKOS model as a flexible framework for improving SME access to information, advisory services and financing opportunities.



Discussions emphasised that future support should build on existing institutions and partnerships, with stronger coordination and clearer referral pathways rather than creating new administrative structures.

The event also explored practical next steps, including the development of a joint SME Support Map to help businesses navigate available services, funding opportunities and expert support, contributing to the implementation of the local SMEnergy action plan.

In parallel, RARS strengthened its long-term cooperation with the Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of the Republic of Srpska through a formal cooperation agreement, opening the door for continued joint activi-

ties beyond the lifetime of the project. For more information, catch the [full article](#) on the SMEnergy website.

Bulgaria

As SMEnergy enters its final phase, the **Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises (BSC SME) – Ruse** has been focusing on securing the long-term sustainability of the project's achievements in Bulgaria through the development of its National Action Plan and continued stakeholder engagement. Following consultations with renewable energy experts, the Action Plan sets out a comprehensive vision for supporting SMEs in their green transition by improving access to finance, strengthening collaboration between stakeholders, increasing awareness and promoting the continued use of digital tools and advisory services. Central to this approach is the GEKOS model, which provides businesses with Energy Transition Roadmaps, expert guidance and easier access to relevant knowledge and funding opportunities.

The National Action Plan was presented at a national event of the Enterprise Europe Network – Bulgaria, held in Varna on 4 June 2026, where key business support organisations discussed its future implementation. Participants welcomed the initiative, recommending that it also reflect the priorities of the Clean Industrial Deal to further encourage sustainable development and greater energy independence for SMEs. Stakeholders also expressed strong support for the continued implementation of the SMEnergy model in Bulgaria, recognising that the Action Plan reflects the current needs and realities of the country's business sector.



Further reinforcing this commitment, Ruse University and the Renewable Energy Resources Cluster signed Letters of Intent supporting the long-term implementation of the GEKOS initiative. These partnerships demonstrate the

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growing momentum behind SMEnergy in Bulgaria and help ensure that its tools, services and collaborative approach will continue to benefit SMEs beyond the lifetime of the project.

Germany

In Germany, **Technology Centre for Energy (TZE)** has continued to build on the momentum of SMEnergy by supporting the launch of *EnergieKreis*, a new Bavarian-funded initiative led by the Deggendorf Institute of Technology to accelerate SME transformation towards renewable energy, circularity and climate-friendly business practices.

The first networking event brought together 16 Bavarian SMEs to discuss the challenges and opportunities surrounding energy and circularity, with the SMEnergy team contributing its expertise and exploring synergies between the two initiatives. Insights gathered from the discussions will inform the development of TZE's SMEnergy Action Plan, while



the project's tools and methodologies will be integrated into future *EnergieKreis* activities. Over the next three years, *EnergieKreis* will deliver networking events and targeted training programmes for SMEs, helping to extend the reach and long-term impact of SMEnergy by promoting renewable energy adoption and more sustainable value chains across Bavaria.

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](#).



OUR LEGACY

After 30 months of collaboration, the Interreg Danube SMEnergy project has established a lasting foundation for SMEs in the Danube Region, resulting in the following key achievements:

- GEKOS network established
- SMEnergy Platform remains active
- Regional and national action plans adopted
- Long-term stakeholder cooperation secured
- Continued support available for SMEs beyond the project lifetime

KEEP IN TOUCH—JOIN THE SMENERGY PLATFORM

Although the SMEnergy project is coming to an end, its impact will live on through the SMEnergy online platform a digital hub that supports SMEs, energy experts, technology providers and financial consultants in their transition towards a greener future. The SMEnergy platform is more than just a directory — it helps connect small and medium-sized businesses with trusted energy experts and suppliers. By providing access to best practices, country-specific regulatory information, it hosts real-life, practical knowledge to inform decision-making of SMEs. A standout feature of the platform is the self-assessment tool, which enables energy-intensive SMEs to evaluate their energy performance, pinpoint areas for improvement, and accelerate their green transition. The platform will remain a valuable resource for collaboration and sustainable business development across Europe.

- ◇ Find energy experts and qualified suppliers
- ◇ Discover financing opportunities
- ◇ Access country-specific regulatory information
- ◇ Assess your company's energy performance
- ◇ Connect with other organisations supporting the energy transition



SCAN ME

PROJECT PARTNERS

Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje - LEASP (Slovenia)

Energiaklub (Hungary)

Burgenland Research Ltd. - FB (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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