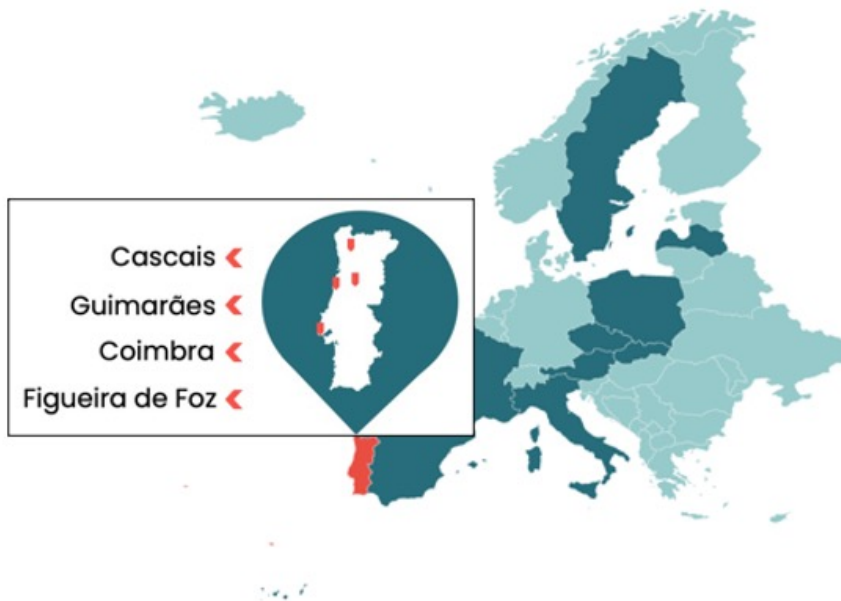


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Own Your SECAP



Welcome to the Own Your SECAP newsletter where, every month, we present a participating country and a partner. We will also cover a topic we are working on with the local authorities. This month will be focused on Portugal and the involvement of stakeholders.



Country of the Month: Portugal

Portugal is situated in the southwest of Europe, between the Atlantic Ocean and Spain. It is 92090 km² wide, with a population of more than 11 million inhabitants.

**Meet our Partner: Instituto des Sistemas e Robótica –
Universidade de Coimbra (ISR-UC)**



The Institute of Systems and Robotics - University of Coimbra (ISR-UC) is a private non-profit research institution founded in 1992 with the overall purpose of building a multidisciplinary research team of excellence, capable of carrying out cutting-edge research in several important areas of science and technology. ISR-UC promotes advanced multidisciplinary R&D in the areas of Advanced Industrial Automation Technologies, Intelligent Transport Systems and Intelligent Energy Systems.

ISR-UC pays special attention to international scientific research cooperation with centers of excellence, as well as to training and advanced education initiatives.

ISR-UC has also developed strong research links with industry, whether national or international companies, or by promoting the creation of spinoffs. Dissemination activities include the organization of prestigious International Conferences and a strong track record of international publications in leading scientific journals and conferences. ISR-UC has been rated "excellent" by the international evaluation panel and is part of the ARISE associated laboratory.

ISR-UC's "Intelligent Energy Systems" research group carries out research into energy efficiency technologies, sustainable transport systems, electric vehicles, energy drive systems, as well as renewable energies and energy storage systems.

They entered the project with the cities of Cascais and Guimarães as expert cities, Figueira da Foz and Coimbra as following cities and Cabeceiras de Basto, Póvoa de Lanhoso, Fafe and Vila Nova de Famalicão as cities in development.

Meet the cities:



Cascais is in the Lisbon metropolitan region, with a territorial area of 97 km², of which one third is protected landscape and includes a 30 km stretch of coastline. The 206,000 inhabitants share the natural resources with more than half a million tourists who visit the municipality every year. Tourism services are therefore one of the most important activities in a municipality whose workforce is mainly in the service sector. Despite its natural landscape, Cascais is mainly urban, with different urban centers along the coast in a continuous urban sprawl. Mainly houses and flats with different densities.



Guimarães is unique. Known as the cradle of Portuguese nationality, the city strives to honor its legacy and heritage. Its vision is to be "more than green", implementing a system of city governance whose aim is to become a model of urban development characterized by difference, boldness and innovation. It has a total area of 240.95 km², spread over its 48 parishes. It is a densely populated municipality with 158,124 inhabitants and a population density of 656 inhabitants/km², making it one of the youngest in Europe.



Coimbra is situated in the center of Portugal and has around 140,000 inhabitants. It is a cosmopolitan city, was once the capital of the kingdom and has an important heritage, having been recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Coimbra excels in providing high quality, differentiated healthcare and is a national and international benchmark. It is home to a world-famous university founded in 1290 and continues to be an important center of learning and research. It is also a living laboratory of technological innovation, made up of an intelligent community that harbors solutions and answers in digital transformation and sustainability. An example of this is the Instituto Pedro Nunes incubator (IPN-Incubadora), which was recently ranked among the 10

best incubators in the world in the "University Business Incubators" category. At the same time, Coimbra is making a strong commitment to sustainability and the environment, with various public space interventions underway that reflect this objective.



Figueira da Foz is located on the western strip of the Iberian Peninsula, more specifically on the coast of the Centre of Portugal, with its entire western sector bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. The municipality's territory, covering around 379 km², has very specific physical characteristics that include areas of high ecological sensitivity (both in coastal and estuarine environments, and in more rural environments), with a set of physical constraints that occupy an area of more than 70 per cent of the territory. On the other hand, it is crossed by the Mondego River, which divides the territory into two large sectors, a northern sector and a southern sector, with very different demographic and socio-economic dynamics. Their characteristics form a context with enormous potential in terms of economic activities. In demographic terms, the municipality has an average population density of 155.7 inhabitants per square kilometre, with a higher population density in the predominantly urban areas. The resident population is estimated at 58,962 inhabitants, varying especially in the summer months due to the tourist activity associated with beaches and water sports, among other tourist attractions.



Cabeceiras de Basto is located between the Cabreira and Marão mountains, in an extensive valley on the banks of the River Tâmega, and is one of the oldest and most historic municipalities in Minho, bordering Trás-os-Montes. It has 12 parishes with a population of around 15,600 inhabitants. Currently, the municipality of Cabeceirensis covers an area of around 241 km² and is surrounded by the municipalities of Celorico and Mondim de Basto to the south, Montalegre and Boticas to the north, Vieira do Minho to the north-west, Fafe to

the west and Ribeira de Pena to the east. Its natural boundaries are the Cabreira and Barroso mountains to the north, the River Bessa to the east, the River Tâmega to the south and south-east and the Serra da Lameira to the west. In addition to its valuable built heritage of great beauty and historical value, Cabeceiras de Basto has great landscape potential, especially in the Serra da Cabreira, resulting from the territory's geomorphological diversity.



Fafe, a part of the Regional Tourism Authority of Porto and Northern Portugal, is situated in the north of the country, in the district of Braga. Fafe has around 50,000 inhabitants, a geographical area of 219.08 km² and borders Guimarães (15 km away), Felgueiras (12 km), Póvoa de Lanhoso (23 km), Vieira do Minho (31 km), Cabeceiras de Basto (22 km) and Celorico de Basto (25 km). In terms of accessibility, the municipality is served by the IC5 which links Guimarães to Fafe and the A7 which connects to Braga (42 km) and Porto (68 km). The potential of its architectural, landscape and natural heritage is put to good use to attract visitors to the municipality. The beautiful handicrafts, the "Architecture of the Brazilians", the hiking trails, the marvelous waterfalls and the various museums that tell the story of the city are the hallmarks of a municipality rich in traditions and cultural diversity. The spectacular rally races, the excellent gastronomy, whose icon is veal roasted in a wood-fired oven, and the breathtaking landscapes are also some of the many anchors of tourism in Fafe.



Póvoa de Lanhoso is located in the sub-region of Ave, in the district of Braga. The municipality has a total area of 134.65 km², 21,787 inhabitants and a population density of 162 inhabitants per km². It is subdivided into 22 parishes, bordered to the north by the municipality of Amares, to the east by Vieira do Minho, to the south by Fafe and Guimarães and to the west by Braga. The municipality is located in the Ave and Cávado river basins, and its great

biodiversity stands out. With its charter dating back to 1292 by King Dinis, these lands have been inhabited since immemorial times, at least three thousand years before Christ, as can be seen from the access to the largest granite monolith on the Iberian Peninsula, at the top of which is the "Castelo de Lanhoso" and the "Castro de Lanhoso" dating back to the Copper Age, as well as other historical monuments scattered around the municipality dating back to Roman times. It was here, in the spring of 1846, that the Maria da Fonte revolution began, spreading to the rest of the country, showing the discontent of the people, and thus managing to bring about a change in the government at the time. It is these peculiar geographical, historical and landscape characteristics that create a unique potential of enormous wealth in this municipality.



Vila Nova de Famalicão belongs to the Northern region and is located in the Ave sub-region. The municipality's role in the regional urban conurbation stands out, as evidenced by its centrality and road and rail links in the regional context, with several neighbouring cities such as Guimarães, Braga, Santo Tirso, Barcelos or Trofa, and less close, but with which it maintains relevant interrelationships, such as Porto, Viana do Castelo and Vigo. With an area of approximately 202 km², Famalicão has the main territorial structuring characteristics of the North Coast, namely homogeneous population densities, diffuse urbanization and a polycentric urban network. The municipality has a high population density (662.9 inhabitants per square kilometer), with around 133,637 people living in it (2021 Census). Its privileged regional location and some of its social and morphological characteristics have, since ancient times, encouraged people and companies to move here and settle. The municipality is on the national and international agenda due to its business and industrial dynamics, driven by the textile industry based on the Ave River basin, making it the third most exporting municipality in the country and the first in the northern region.

Topic of the month: Involving stakeholders

Stakeholder Involvement in SECAPs: The Experience of Coimbra and Figueira da Foz Municipalities

Municipalities are key in implementing national public policies, especially concerning climate and energy actions. They are the ones who know their territories best, understanding their regional specificities and local needs. Additionally, municipalities have direct contact with residents and end consumers, making them the most capable agents to adapt and effectively implement policies tailored to local realities. This close relationship with the community and the ability to shape actions to fit each territory's characteristics make stakeholder involvement at the municipal level crucial for the success of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs).

In Portugal, the municipalities of Coimbra and Figueira da Foz have demonstrated exemplary practices in engaging stakeholders, ensuring that their SECAPs reflect the specific realities of their territories and promote a fair and inclusive energy transition.

Coimbra: Promoting Inclusive Dialogue and Community Engagement

The city of Coimbra has prioritized an engagement strategy that promotes creating a shared vision for climate action and energy efficiency. Recognizing that public policies can only be effective when aligned with local realities, the municipality has organized workshops, public consultations, and informational sessions to ensure that all voices are heard.



Workshop held by the Municipality of Coimbra with various stakeholders on World Energy Day.

This co-creation effort encourages the active participation of a diverse range of stakeholders, such as community groups, academic institutions and local businesses. Through roundtable discussions and open dialogues, Coimbra adapts national policies to local specificities, ensuring that the future SECAP addresses both municipal goals and local needs.

In addition to these direct engagement activities, Coimbra has created an online platform, the [**Balcão Único de Energia de Coimbra**](#) (Coimbra's One-Stop Energy Hub), where residents and organisations can access information, guidance, and energy rehabilitation services for vulnerable households. This platform supports enrolment in funding programs for energy efficiency

improvements, healthier living conditions, and greater comfort in homes. The One-Stop Energy Hub aims to increase interest in energy rehabilitation by providing relevant information and support from the early stages of the decision-making process.



Entrance of the "Energy One-Stop Shop of Coimbra," where citizens can engage directly with the Municipality of Coimbra

Figueira da Foz: Building Strong Partnerships and Collaborative Networks

The Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) of Figueira da Foz is intended to be a practical, dynamic and operational instrument, with the aim of deepening the set of measures, lines of intervention and adaptation options, structured according to the main current and future climate vulnerabilities previously identified in the Municipal Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (EMAAC), thus giving continuity to the adaptive planning process.

In this regard, during the development of its climate action strategy/Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), the municipality of Figueira da Foz adopted a participatory approach, actively involving local stakeholders. This engagement was crucial to ensuring that the plan's measures were tailored to the community's and territory's specific needs.

To attract stakeholders and ensure active participation, the municipality used a diversified communication strategy, including personalized invitations to key community actors—local businesses, associations, and environmental groups. Additionally, a public awareness campaign was launched through digital and traditional channels, highlighting the importance of citizen and organizational involvement in the climate planning process. The municipality also made it clear how stakeholders' contributions would have a direct impact on shaping local policies, reinforcing the importance of collaboration.

Public consultations and participatory workshops were organized inclusively, with accessible times and locations to encourage broad public participation. These sessions brought together citizens, businesses, associations, and other key actors, creating a space where all voices could be heard, and various perspectives integrated into the climate action strategy/SECAP's goals and actions.



Workshop hosted by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz to identify measures for the SECAP, with Cape Verde participating as an observer.

During the SECAP's public consultation phase, which took place over 30 days (between November 17 and December 16, 2023), all of the SECAP's actions were put up for discussion by all citizens and stakeholders, and the feedback received was taken into account when drafting the final version of the SECAP. Some of the actions proposed in SECAP, in order to be successful, must have the direct involvement of companies/ organisations/ population, such as the creation of a **citizen support office** and the launch of public awareness campaigns on energy efficiency and sustainable mobility. National and Local businesses and organisations are actively participat in planning projects related to **renewable energy**, such as the establishment of a community for collective self-consumption, ensuring that the business sector was incorporated into energy solutions.

The active involvement of stakeholders ensured that the climate action plan/ SECAP of Figueira da Foz was widely accepted by the community, making it more effective in implementing climate and energy measures that benefit citizens and businesses.



Signing of a collaboration protocol by the Municipality of Figueira da Foz to establish the first energy community in the municipality.

Conclusion: Municipalities at the Forefront of Local Implementation

The experiences of Coimbra and Figueira da Foz Municipalities highlight the importance of involving stakeholders in the implementation of SECAPs. These municipalities demonstrate how proximity to the territory and its population allows for adapting national policies to local characteristics, significantly increasing the likelihood of success. Effective implementation of any climate action plan requires the direct involvement of the stakeholders who live and work in the area, as they are the ones who best understand the local realities and challenges.

In this way, municipalities play a fundamental role in the energy transition, not only as agents of national public policy execution but also as active promoters of solutions that respond to their territories' specific needs. Stakeholder involvement ensures that each policy is more effective and that citizens feel part of the change process, ensuring a fair and inclusive transition for all.

How Irish LAs are involving their stakeholders into its SECAP

Ireland achieved a substantial milestone in March 2024 when all the local authorities completed their respective Local Authority Climate Action Plans (LACAPs), also known as Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan or SECAP in other European countries. Behind the scenes of achieving this milestone, one can often overlook the kind of efforts and coordination put in by each of the Irish local authorities, which have finally resulted in closing in on a list of climate actions.

With the common goal of addressing climate adaptation, mitigation and energy

efficiency, these climate actions span across several themes of local authorities – governance and leadership, built environment and transport, natural environment and green infrastructure, communities: resilience and just transition, sustainability and resource management. In terms of efforts from local authorities, it meant consultation with senior staff across all local authority services and consultation with external stakeholders, sectors and the public, to share, discuss, debate and learn from each other’s knowledge and expertise, and make them a part of the decision-making process. This has been critical in the Irish context, as part of a consistent response to climate change and deliver on national and international climate targets at local and regional levels, across all the different sectors. At the regional level, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) were established to target cross-boundary climate risks and vulnerabilities and to advise local authorities in their region to strategize a coordinated response to climate change.

Let us take an example of Tipperary County Council, who works in close collaboration with one of the OwnYourSECAP partners, Tipperary Energy Agency. Tipperary County Council, a member of the EU Covenant of Mayors, falls into the Eastern and Midlands CARO. The Council facilitates (a dedicated budget) and supports (senior staff from different services participate) an external stakeholder group called SustainableTipp which is led by the Tipperary Energy Agency. This is a collaborative platform of networks and organisations, each with their own public facing role and responsibilities in County Tipperary working together towards achieving a sustainable and low carbon economy.

Vision statement of SustainableTipp:

“Collaboration and shared learning through existing networks and organisations, each with their own public facing role and responsibilities, driving with a sense of urgency through a just transition towards a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and carbon neutral society and economy, where no-one is left behind.”



This group of stakeholders includes and is not limited to the public participation network, local development companies, local enterprise offices, Tipperary training and education board, etc and many other organizations. In 2021, the SustainableTipp stakeholders approved the interim SECAP (2022 – 2023) for Tipperary and were consulted during the preparation of the Tipperary LACAP.



SustainableTipp meeting on 5th Sep 2024

This is a prominent example of how Irish local authorities involve stakeholders to promote capacity building and raising awareness and encourage involvement in actions to address climate adaptation, mitigation and energy poverty. This platform now serves as a meeting point of different ideas and approaches to deliver the actions of the SECAP or LACAP. Other EU nations can take this example as an important lesson in integrating local actors such as communities and organisations to achieve climate targets.

Latest News

To reach more local authorities, the Own Your SECAP partners have released a video about the importance of having a SECAP.



Our local authorities explain why they have a SECAP

A subtitled version is available in each language of the project, please contact the local partner if you wish to see it in your language.



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