

Unlocking Local Climate Action: The Transformative Journey of OwnYourSECAP



Own Your SECAP

Empowering Municipalities to Own Their
Sustainable Energy and Climate Futures

Unlocking Local Climate Action: The Transformative Journey of OwnYourSECAP

Final public project report (D6.3)

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More information: www.ownyoursecap.eu



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01

Why OwnYourSECAP: Background

Across Europe, **municipalities have become key players** in achieving climate and energy goals. Through the Covenant of Mayors and other initiatives, thousands of local authorities have developed Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and adapt to climate change. Yet, for many, the challenge begins after the plan is written. Despite strong ambitions, implementation often lags behind — not because of a lack of commitment, but because of limited capacity, resources, motivation and institutional support.

Municipalities operate within complex realities. Staff and budgets are often stretched thin, responsibilities for energy and climate matters are scattered across departments, and short-term political cycles can disrupt long-term goals. Many local governments also lack robust data, clear monitoring systems, or the technical expertise needed to turn strategies into tangible actions. As a result, SECAPs risk remaining static documents instead of dynamic tools for change.

At the same time, the urgency to act has never been greater. The transition to climate neutrality demands not only technology and investment but first effective local governance and community engagement. **Municipalities need practical methods** to move from planning to doing — to organise their internal work, involve citizens and stakeholders, and embed climate objectives into daily decisions.

The OwnYourSECAP initiative was born from this need: the recognition that Europe's energy transition will only succeed when local authorities have the capacity, confidence, and ownership to implement their plans systematically and sustainably.

02

Understanding OwnYourSECAP approach

The OwnYourSECAP approach is straightforward yet transformative: it focuses on providing consistent, tailored support to municipal staff across different departments — not only on technical aspects of energy and climate planning, but also on communication, coordination, and creating synergies across sectors. The project recognises that successful implementation of Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) depends on **empowering people** within municipalities to collaborate effectively, make informed decisions, and integrate climate objectives into everyday governance.

To drive this process, OwnYourSECAP built a strong network connecting experienced “expert municipalities” with those just beginning their SECAP journey or struggling to move forward. This peer-to-peer learning approach was supported by national partners in 11 countries, who served as technical facilitators and knowledge brokers. Together, they organised targeted capacity-building activities focusing on five key themes: energy management, systematic implementation of SECAP measures, communication, climate mainstreaming, and climate adaptation. These exchanges created a dynamic environment for learning and collective progress.

Through training workshops, mentoring sessions, and collaborative meetings, the consortium strengthened municipal capacities and provided practical tools for day-to-day use by energy and climate managers (see

Main Outcomes section). The guidelines and templates developed under the project support a structured, step-by-step process — from taking stock of existing SECAPs and identifying priority measures to preparing short-term action plans, implementing them, and monitoring results. This systematic, annual cycle helps municipalities transform strategic plans into continuous, measurable action.

Energy management has remained a cornerstone of OwnYourSECAP, building on the legacy of the earlier Compete4SECAP project. By introducing and institutionalising energy management practices, municipalities gain practical skills, data awareness, and a stronger sense of ownership over their own energy use. This internal commitment often becomes the catalyst for broader actions across sectors such as public buildings, households, transport, renewable energy, and climate adaptation.

Another key innovation of the project is climate mainstreaming, which has shown how energy and climate planning can unite different municipal departments — including technical experts, environmental officers, and financial managers — around shared objectives. Finally, OwnYourSECAP made extensive use of design thinking, a creative and participatory methodology that encourages municipalities to co-develop solutions with stakeholders, fostering collaboration, innovation, and lasting change.

“**Excellence is a matter of steps**
— writer Ryan Holiday”

03

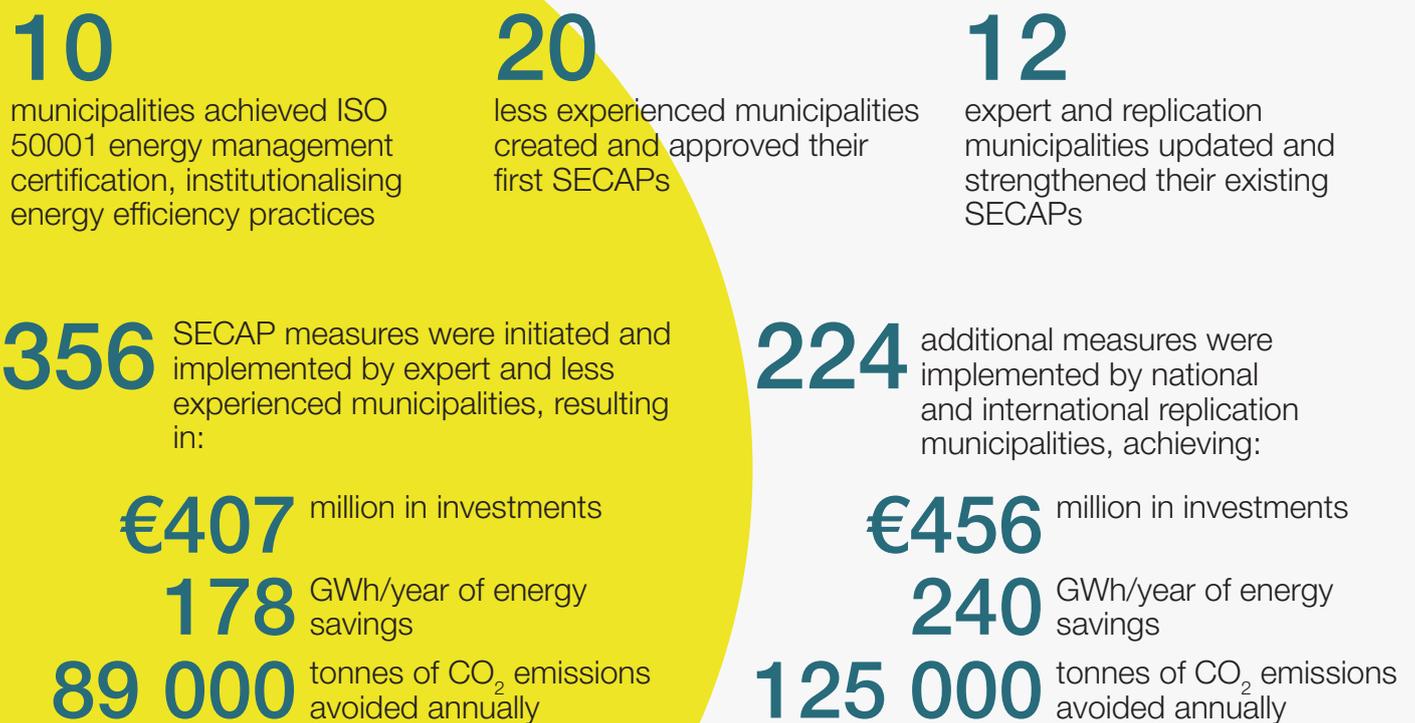


Key results and achievements

Municipalities involved:



Key results overall:



Capacity building and knowledge sharing:



205
capacity building
workshops organised
across 11 countries

Three international peer-
to-peer events held,
enabling cross-country
learning and exchange



4371 participants trained,
including local decision-makers,
energy managers, and technical staff



11 national platforms established
and continuously updated with training
materials, tools, and success stories



“ Okay, you’ve got to do something very difficult. Don’t focus on that. Instead break it down to pieces. Simply do what you need to do right now. And do it well. And then move on to the next thing. Follow the process and not the prize.

– writer Ryan Holiday ”

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Case study

Municipality of Kuldīga, Latvia – Pathway towards owning your SECAP

- *Population: almost 25 thousand inhabitants*
- *Climatic region: Maritime climate, wet, moderate winters*
- *One important energy / climate related fact about the municipality: Kuldīga is a historic municipality in western Latvia that has turned its SECAP from a document on the shelf into a living management tool. By hiring a dedicated energy manager, building an energy management system, and creating a culture of data-driven decision-making, the municipality has taken tangible steps towards systematic and continuous climate action.*

Core energy team:

The Energy Management System is managed under the leadership of the Chair of the Council and the Executive Director, supported by a cross-departmental Energy Management Working Group. The group includes the Municipal Energy Manager (Agate Zirne), representatives from the Technical, Property, Finance and Economic, Construction, Administrative, and Maintenance Departments, and heads of municipal institutions and parish administrations. The working group ensures continuous improvement, coordination, and monitoring of energy performance across all municipal buildings and services.

Targets set under OwnYourSECAP project:

- Participate in the projects' capacity activities and apply lessons learned in practice.
- Identify and implement three SECAP measures:
 - Identification of the most sensitive municipal buildings and development of an action plan for adaptation and energy efficiency.
 - Improvement and full integration of the EnMS.
 - Monitoring of renovated buildings.



Photo: Energy managers attending OwnYourSECAP workshop in Latvia

What has been achieved:

- The Energy Management System was formally established and approved in 2024.
- A working group was created with defined roles and annual objectives.
- Regular energy monitoring and data analysis introduced using an Energy Monitoring Platform .
- Continuous cooperation between the energy manager, building supervisors, and technical staff improved energy awareness and performance tracking.
- Energy savings of 10-40% achieved through behavioural and technical measures.
- The SECAP was reviewed, its measures reassessed, and a monitoring journal was prepared for systematic tracking of progress on energy and climate actions.

Actions taken for achieving the targets:

- Appointed a part-time energy manager who received mentoring support from national partner Ekodoma and participated in the national network of energy managers.
- Establishment of a cross-departmental working group responsible for the EnMS and SECAP integration.
- Regular meetings and workshops for building managers and institutional heads

on energy monitoring, behavioural change, and efficient energy use.

- Continuous communication and engagement within the municipality, ensuring that staff understood the goals and benefits of energy management.
- Implementation of behavioural change campaigns, energy audits, and real-time monitoring using temperature and consumption sensors (installed in schools).
- Development of guidelines for short- and long-term energy-saving actions to improve staff competence and awareness.
- Identification of 10 criteria for evaluating municipal buildings to guide investment decisions and prioritise adaptation measures.

Lessons learnt and recommendations:

Kuldīga's journey shows that meaningful progress starts with internal commitment and human capacity rather than large investments. The creation of a dedicated energy manager position and cross-departmental cooperation were decisive steps toward breaking silos and embedding energy management into daily work.

Behavioural changes and improved monitoring delivered quick, measurable results – often without major costs. The municipality learned that communication, transparency, and regular feedback are key to sustaining motivation and performance.

Targets for the future to ensure continuity:

- Continue to maintain the EnMS, including regular updates and annual energy reviews.
- Further develop staff training and community awareness, ensuring energy efficiency becomes a shared responsibility.
- Maintain and update the SECAP journal as a living document for continuous improvement and transparency.

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Case study

Municipality of Roveredo in Piano, Italy – Ensuring continuity and integration between ISO 50001 and SECAP



- *Population: 5 801 inhabitants*
- *Climatic region: Mediterranean climate*
- *One important energy / climate related fact about the municipality: Roveredo in Piano is a non-expert municipality that has successfully used the ISO 50001 Energy Management System as the central methodological tool to systematise and certify its commitment to sustainability.*

Core energy team:

The municipality's Energy Management System (EnMS) is overseen by senior management — the Mayor and the Councillor for Public Works. An Energy Management Group (EMG) has been established, coordinated by the Head of the Technical Department (Mr. S. Pivetta), a Technical Office representative (Mr. S. Contin), and two external energy managers: one responsible for the Building Energy Management Contract (Apleona) and another for the Public Lighting Energy Management Contract (CityGreenLight). This structure ensures strong internal coordination and integration with external service providers.

Targets set under OwnYourSECAP project:

- Development, implementation, and ISO 50001 certification of the municipal Energy Management System, fully integrated with the SECAP framework.
- Definition of 29 energy performance targets for the 2024–2026 period, to be achieved through the ISO 50001 Action Plan.
- Identification of a portfolio of energy improvement opportunities to be integrated into future three-year energy management plans for municipal assets.



What has been achieved:

Governance goal achieved: adoption of the Energy Policy and formal establishment of the EnMS.

Strategic goal achieved: approval of the SECAP for the Pordenone Conurbation (Municipal Resolution No. 16, 28 April 2025).

Energy performance improvement:

- 20% overall reduction in energy consumption across buildings and public lighting — from 343.4 TOE (2021) to 274.9 TOE (2024).
- 43.1% reduction in energy use for Public Lighting — from 136.5 TOE (2021) to 78.2 TOE (2024).

Actions taken for achieving the targets:

Political commitment: adoption of resolutions to join the Covenant of Mayors and to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for a joint SECAP (July 2023).

Comprehensive Energy Review (ER): identification of Significant Energy Uses (SEUs) in municipal facilities — Socio-Cultural and Sports Centres (38.8% of total TOE), Public Lighting (28.4%), and Schools (20.6%).

Systematic monitoring: establishment of specific Energy Performance Indicators (EnPIs) — such as kWh/m², kWh/h, kWhth·HDD/h, and kWh/light point — enabling dynamic tracking of energy performance across municipal assets.

Contract integration: alignment of the EnMS with the Energy Service Contracts (Consip SIE4 – Apleona and Consip Service Light 4 – CityGreenLight) to ensure coordinated monitoring and accountability.

Lessons learnt and recommendations:

For a non-expert municipality, ISO 50001 proved to be more than a certification — it became a framework for internal reorganisation and a catalyst for a culture of continuous improvement in energy performance. The key lesson is to treat the Energy Review (ER) as a living document: regularly updated, actively used in managing energy service contracts, and continuously linked to EnPIs for real-time decision-making.

Targets for the future to ensure continuity:

- Annual updates: maintain yearly updates of the Energy Review. Following initial certification in 2023, Roveredo in Piano has successfully completed Surveillance Audit 1 (2024) and Surveillance Audit 2 (2025).
- Ongoing monitoring: continue evaluating EnPIs across all key categories, particularly high-consumption sectors such as Socio-Cultural and Sports Centres, while aligning EnMS operations with the Consip SIE4 energy efficiency objectives.
- SECAP integration: ensure that the EnMS remains the operational backbone for monitoring both direct and indirect energy uses within the municipality, thus reinforcing the link between technical management and strategic climate action.



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Case study

Municipalities of DSO Tolštejn, Czech Republic – Working together

- *Population: ~4 700 inhabitants*
- *Climatic region: Temperate climate*
- *One important energy / climate related fact about the municipality: Rural area in hilly terrain with dispersed settlements*

Core energy team:

SEVEN engaged six municipalities from the Voluntary Association of Municipalities Tolštejn (also known as DSO) in a joint effort to co-develop a common SECAP. From the outset, a working group comprising the six mayors, an energy manager, and SEVEN team members began preparing the SECAP.

The core team included part time energy manager, who works for other nearby communities as well, mayor of Rybniště settlement, one of the constituent municipalities of DSO Tolštejn (DSO meaning voluntary associated municipalities) and two SEVEN consultants.

Targets set under OwnYourSECAP project:

Develop SECAP for DSO Tolštejn and start implementing its measures. Prove feasibility of joint SECAP for multiple local authorities in a rural setting. Czech Republic is among the countries with the most dispersed municipalities in Europe. Local authorities in rural areas tend to be small with low capacities and limited ability to plan and invest. Sharing the climate planning is a way to overcome capacity deficiencies.

What has been achieved:

Seven SECAP measures have been implemented since 2023. Most of them in the field of energy efficiency, i.e. retrofitting the windows in public buildings, improving heating regulation through change and installation of



thermostatic valves, numerous PV installations, street lighting modernisation and also organizing local awareness raising events.

Actions taken for achieving the targets:

The six municipalities associated under the DSO contract agreed to commission a SECAP. They managed to gather all the required data, which is not a straightforward procedure in the Czech Republic. In cooperation with SEVEN, SECAP measures have been collected and prioritized. Involved mayors acquired intimate knowledge of SECAP structure and goals and the document is now used by the shared energy manager to pick and implement selected measures across the municipalities.

Lessons learnt and recommendations:

Joint SECAP brings economies of scale, though less than expected. Shared SECAP allows to distribute the targeted emission reduction among the municipalities. This, along

with sharing of the risks and formalities, motivates municipalities to join the effort. Otherwise, such small municipalities would not possibly develop their own SECAPs. Sharing the organisational capacity was a key to success. However, a burden of data submission and implementation of SECAP measures rest mostly with each municipality and therefore do not bring economies of scale compared to eventual separate SECAP case.

Associations of Municipalities suitable for joint SECAP development - Should be located within the same region; Should be of similar size; Should face similar challenges or issues.

Additional Considerations - The presence of an atypical municipality may reduce the potential for economies of scale; Baseline emissions inventories should be disaggregated for each municipality to allow for comparison; Strong communication and good relationships within the association are essential for successful collaboration.

Targets for the future to ensure continuity:

DSO Tolštejn municipalities have to communicate their objectives and implemented SECAP measures and successes to their citizens. Only engaging the public could enable local authorities to fulfil SECAP goals in the long term and ensure continuity across the election cycle.

“ How often do we compromise or settle because we feel that the real solution is too ambitious or outside our grasp? ”
 – writer Ryan Holiday

07

Main OwnYourSECAP outcomes for replicability

Guidelines on Systematic Implementation of SECAP Measures

[The Guideline on Systematic Implementation of SECAP Measures](#) is a practical handbook designed to help municipalities turn their SECAPs from strategy into action. **Based on real experiences** from across Europe, it provides a clear step-by-step process – from preparation and implementation to monitoring, adaptation, and scaling up. The guide helps local authorities build political support, mobilise resources, involve citizens, and make climate action part of everyday municipal work.

Packed with **ready-to-use templates**, checklists, and examples, the handbook demystifies implementation by showing how to start small, achieve visible results, and build momentum for broader change. It emphasises the importance of institutionalising SECAP processes – anchoring them in budgets, job descriptions, and decision-making – so that progress continues even as political or staff changes occur.

This report is a must-read for any municipality ready to move from planning to doing. It shows that systematic, well-managed implementation not only accelerates the path to climate neutrality but also improves local quality of life and resilience. By following the methods outlined in this guide, municipalities can confidently take ownership of their SECAPs and inspire others to replicate their success.

Strengthening Municipal Capacity for Climate Adaptation: Tools for Systematic Integration

[The Tools for Institutionalising Climate Adaptation report](#) offers a hands-on guide for municipalities that want to move from planning to systematically embedding **climate adaptation in everyday governance**. Developed through the OwnYourSECAP project and tested in collaboration with 11 European countries, the report introduces practical tools and step-by-step methods to help local authorities integrate adaptation into their structures, operations, and decision-making. It demonstrates how municipalities can make climate resilience a routine part of public management – not an isolated project.

Readers will find **clear, replicable procedures** for building internal working groups, assessing climate risks and vulnerabilities, identifying and prioritising adaptation measures, and monitoring progress using digital tools. The report provides templates, methodologies, and examples – from design thinking workshops to ISO 14092-aligned frameworks – that make institutionalising climate adaptation achievable even for small or resource-limited municipalities.

This report is an essential resource for municipalities seeking to turn ambition into action. By applying its tools, local governments can

strengthen collaboration, improve data-driven decision-making, and build resilience to climate impacts across all sectors. It is an invitation to act – to make climate adaptation not just a plan, but a lasting part of municipal governance and community life.



Sharing and expanding knowledge: towards Owning your SECAP

[The OwnYourSECAP Challenges and Solutions Report](#) provides a clear and practical overview of the most common barriers that municipalities across Europe face when implementing their SECAPs – and, more importantly, how to overcome them. Drawing on the experience of OwnYourSECAP partner countries, the report identifies organisational, financial, regulatory, and stakeholder-related challenges, and matches each with **actionable solutions and proven benefits**.

Readers will find real examples of how local authorities have **strengthened** their internal capacity, **improved** cooperation across departments, **engaged** citizens and businesses, and **aligned** their actions with national and EU climate goals. The report highlights practical tools such as climate-mainstreaming municipal budgets, peer-to-peer learning networks, participatory planning, and institutionalised energy management systems – all of which can be adapted to different governance contexts.

This report is a valuable resource for municipalities, policymakers, and practitioners who want to accelerate climate action locally. It offers not just lessons learned but replicable models of good governance and collaboration that can inspire and guide other regions in owning their SECAPs and achieving a faster, fairer transition to climate neutrality.

Climate-mainstreaming in municipal budgets: lessons learned

[The Climate-Mainstreaming in Municipal Budgets: Lessons Learned](#) report offers practical insights for municipalities ready to align their **financial planning with climate goals**. Drawing from experiences in 11 European countries, the report explains how local authorities can systematically integrate climate and energy considerations into their budgets – making every euro count toward a **more sustainable future**. It presents a step-by-step approach to “climate tagging,” helping municipalities identify, track, and increase climate-related investments while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Readers will find real examples of how cities and towns, from Ireland to France and Latvia, tested and adapted the OwnYourSECAP methodology to suit their national and local contexts. The report outlines not only the benefits but also the practical challenges – such as limited data, complex budget structures, and political sensitivities – and provides **realistic, replicable solutions** to overcome them. These include establishing national frameworks, simplifying budget systems, improving data management, and communicating climate budgeting as a positive governance tool rather than a technical burden.

This publication is a must-read for local governments, policymakers, and financial officers who want to make climate action an integral part of municipal budgeting. It shows that climate-mainstreaming is not about rewriting budgets – it’s about **reshaping decisions, building awareness**, and ensuring that every financial choice supports a resilient, low-carbon future.

Own Your Climate Future: how municipalities are making it happen



“
**Moving forward. One step at a time.
 Subordinate strength to the process.
 Replace fear with the process. Depend on it. Lean on it. Trust in it.
 Take your time, don't rush.
 The process is about doing the right things, right now. Not worrying about what might happen later, or the results, or the whole picture.**
 – writer Ryan Holiday
 ”

[The OwnYourSECAP Best Practice Report](#) brings together 11 case studies from across OwnYourSECAP countries that demonstrate how municipalities are successfully transforming climate and energy plans into action. Each example shows how local authorities – regardless of their size, capacity, or starting point – can make **tangible progress toward energy efficiency, emission reduction, and resilience** individually and together. The report highlights approaches ranging from capacity building and citizen engagement to technical innovation and policy integration, offering practical insights for other municipalities aiming to implement their SECAPs.

The featured cases provide a broad spectrum of replicable models. They include Latvia's **national network of energy managers**, Spain's citizen-led climate planning using design thinking, Portugal's cross-departmental cooperation through SECAP development, and Austria's support for **renewable energy communities**. Other examples showcase Ireland's national training model for local authorities, Italy's **ISO 50001 certification** for energy management, and Latvia's innovative method for integrating climate goals into municipal budgets. Joint SECAP development in the Czech Republic, energy data baselines in France, updated climate strategies in Poland, and Sweden's intermunicipal cooperation platform further demonstrate how municipalities can turn shared challenges into collective learning opportunities.

By capturing these diverse experiences, the report serves as a practical guide for replication and adaptation in other European regions. It underscores that **effective climate action** depends not only on funding and technology but also on **governance, peer learning, and local ownership**. The tools, methodologies, and lessons presented here provide a solid foundation for municipalities and national actors seeking to scale up their efforts and accelerate Europe's transition toward climate-neutral, resilient communities.

08

Five lessons learnt from OwnYourSECAP

1. Peer learning builds unity and confidence.

The interaction between expert, less experienced, and replication municipalities during training and exchange activities created a strong sense of unity among local officers. Participants realised they were not alone in facing similar challenges and that collaboration and knowledge-sharing can accelerate progress.



2. The mentoring approach adds real value.

The mentor-based approach, combined with practical tools and step-by-step guidance developed in the project, proved highly effective — even in municipalities where the energy manager works only part-time. It ensured that all municipalities, regardless of their size or resources, could make tangible progress.

3. Climate tagging fosters cross-departmental dialogue.

Even when applied in its simplest form, climate tagging became a powerful tool to initiate discussions between departments. It helped municipal staff better understand how their work connects to climate action and encouraged more integrated decision-making.



4. Each municipality has its own path.

Every municipality starts from a different point and moves at its own pace. What matters most is the process — recognising the progress made since the beginning of the project and identifying the next steps for continuous improvement.

5. Progress is possible despite limited resources.

Even in times of financial and human resource constraints, OwnYourSECAP demonstrated that meaningful results can be achieved through commitment, collaboration, and systematic work. The project proved that change starts with motivation and structure, not necessarily with large budgets.

09

Want to follow our lead?

The OwnYourSECAP team have developed a range of resources to inspire and support others interested in overcoming similar challenges! The resources can be found on projects website and in national languages in websites of project partners.

International:

www.ownyoursecap.eu

National platforms:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
|  | Latvia | https://plano.lv |
|  | France | https://www.mt-partenaires.fr/oys |
|  | Czechia | https://www.svn.cz/oys |
|  | Spain | https://www.eurovertice.eu/proyectos |
|  | Austria | https://www.e-sieben.at/de/projekte/22007_Own_your_SECAP.php |
|  | Portugal | https://sites.google.com/view/isr-ies/projects/own-your-secap |
|  | Ireland | https://tippenergy.ie/our-work/ownyoursecap |
|  | Italy | https://www.sogesca.it/il-progetto-europeo-ownyoursecap/ |
|  | Poland | http://ownyoursecap.pnec.org.pl/ |
|  | Sweden | https://energikontorsyd.se/l/projekt/80516 |
|  | Slovakia | https://ecb.sk/own-your-secap/own-your-secap-aktu%C3%A1ne-inform%C3%A1cie |



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