



# LoCaRe

Low Carbon Economy Regions

## Green New Deal Policy Recommendations



The six regions of LoCaRe



Sustainability Ambassadors



BIOMAP



Tidal energy

# Regional Commitments towards a Low Carbon Economy



"The Region of Southern Denmark is committed to following the path to a Low Carbon Economy. We have taken the decision to cut CO2 emissions by 40% by 2020. We are boosting business development initiatives in the fields of clean tech and energy efficiency. And we are focused on achieving these goals by working closely with local authorities, research institutions, energy supply companies and other enterprises through ambitious initiatives centred on energy-efficient renovation of buildings, strategic energy planning and green transport."

**Lasse Krull**, Chair of the Committee for Regional Development, Region of Southern Denmark

Fossil fuels get scarce. Therefore companies and government are searching for alternative green raw materials and renewable energy sources. As a Province we play an active role. Also the low carbon economy demands re-think especially in the regional and local society and by all participants: government, companies and communities. Only by this way we can contribute to our Dutch national goal: 100% renewable energy use in 2050.

**Ben de Reu**, Member of the Executive Council, Province of Zeeland



One of the key strategic priorities till 2020 in Gorenjska is reduction of CO2. Joint efforts of Low carbon partners - local communities, support organisations, companies and civil society - will result in innovative solutions in the field of energy efficiency measures, use of renewables, innovative green products and services.

**Igor Žula**, Vice president, Development council of Gorenjska region



"The green economy is a complex process that is not only the transition from a traditional to a greener economy, but it presupposes a radical change in the structure, culture and practices that characterize the society. And this change will be more radical where it can be generated from the territory and local communities who play faster and more thoroughly the needs of a changing society". Etats-Généraux of the Green Economy for a proposal of a Green New Deal for Italy

**Gian Carlo Muzzarelli**,  
Regional Minister for Product activities,  
Energy plan and Sustainable development,  
Green economy, Regione Emilia-Romagna



"The Principality of Asturias is a mining and industrial region that has come in recent years firmly committed to renewable energy and energy efficiency. We actively work with our companies, research centers and the wider public sector to achieve a low carbon economy. Sustainable mobility is also one of our preferred courses of action in this matter. The exchange of experiences with other European regions is key to this commitment, we approach from the uniqueness of our production profile".

**Belén Fernández González**,  
Regional Minister of Development,  
Spatial planning and Environment,  
Principality of Asturias, Spain

We have a broad partnership agreement to have an energy system without fossil fuels in Västra Götaland in 2030. We call it Smart Energy. We put a lot of effort in building agreements between different actors in society and on using our public organizations as good examples. Green procurement is fundamental. We have a regional decision that future investments in transport infrastructure should be based on sustainable principles. Our success will still depend on the continued focus on these questions in the EU and on continued interregional exchange to spread methods, insights and commitment.

**Birgitta Losman**, President of the Regional Development Board, Region Västra Götaland



# Introduction – The LoCaRe project

The ambition of the Low Carbon Economy Regions (LoCaRe) project has been to develop and implement low carbon solutions at the local and regional level, at the same time contributing to economic development. The programme has been carried out between 2010 and 2013 within the EU Interreg IVC programme. The work has been ambitious, tackling the question of a prosperous low carbon economy from several perspectives and with different approaches.

The project has been executed via three main tools for sharing and disseminating Low Carbon Economy experiences and perspectives.

(1) **Site visits and seminars** have been held in the participating regions, presenting and discussing state of the art solutions for Low Carbon Economy in the regions. The examples range from the change of systems in transportation, buildings, energy supply, over more general actions in energy efficiency, renewables, planning, procurement practices, carbon capture and sequestration (CCS), to actions taken by single companies.

(2) **Research reports** have been produced on the state of Low Carbon Economy in the participating regions, in EU and on the anticipated road to a Low Carbon Economy (New Energy). On the question of the main driving forces for sustainable development and Low Carbon Economy for politicians, consumers and companies, and on what the prerequisites are to have a more fundamental change in this direction in the future (New Leadership). In the third report, a dissemination of best practices from the participating regions contributing to a low carbon and to a growing economy was made and concrete solutions on the question of how Low Carbon Economy initiatives could be transferred between regions was presented (New Climate).

(3) In parallel **six Sub-projects** have been run inside the project involving multi-regional public body partnerships. The aim has been to co-operate around clearly defined questions, exchanging knowledge and experience, but also to do concrete development work together. The projects have worked with issues in very different fields such as (1) shrinking

the **carbon footprint of the retail sector** – changing norms and habits – at stores and for customers, (2) getting a better understanding of the link between **agricultural/forest development** and Low Carbon Economy, on (3) the **empowerment of students** at all levels – developing tools for them to act as catalyzers for change in society, on (4) how to develop and **market biomass** for bioenergy, biogas systems etc., on (5) stimulating **companies to reduce energy consumption** and on (6) **empowering citizens in smaller communities** to use low carbon planning, and thereby better utilize the potential for Low Carbon Economy in these areas.

The Green New Deal is defined as a deal between the different levels of society.

The LoCaRe project has provided the basic ingredients for regions and municipalities to take a more active and leading role for a Low Carbon Economy in the EU.



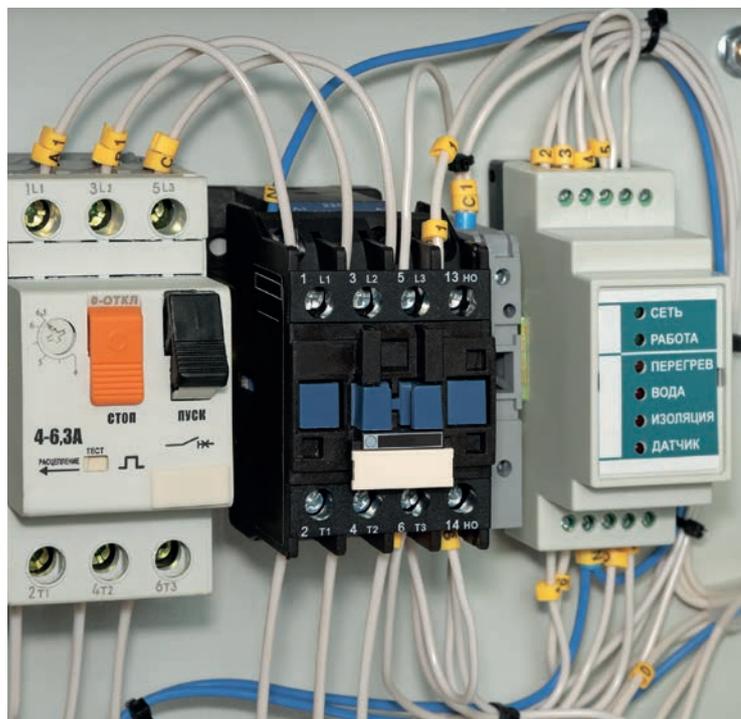
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## Local and regional implementation based on solid methods – a key to speed up EU transition to a Low Carbon Economy

The participating regions in Denmark (Syddanmark, lead partner), Italy (Emilia Romagna), The Netherlands (Zeeland), Slovenia (Gorenjska), Spain (Asturias) and Sweden (Västra Götaland) are all in different phases and have chosen different roads to become low carbon economies. Regions could be seen as innovators, early followers (cost-minimizer/resource efficient) or as latecomers, in general, but it is clear, not at least for the LoCaRe regions, that the same region have different ambitions inside different areas of Low Carbon Economy. To be an “Innovator” it is necessary to have a society and a business sector that is innovative and open for changes. To be an “early follower” requires public support for the necessary investments and that the national policy works in the same direction.

The results from the “Sub-projects” carried out in co-operation between the regions are, on the whole, excellent.<sup>1</sup> The objectives are met and several of the projects will continue working after the official end-

ing of LoCaRe in 2013. The projects have, in many cases, been used as best practice and spread inside the respective regions. A key to the result is that all Sub-projects have been implemented with a clear methodological approach (Voluntary Agreements, Asset Based Community Development method, Life Cycle Analysis etc). This has made it possible to have close co-operation between municipalities and regions, even if the starting point in the projects, or the point of development in the regions, differ Substantially. The methods used have been the same but the implementation has differed according to the local and regional setting. By this way of working, the differences between regions have become an advantage, instead of being a problem. We see this as an important lesson for the future. Our conclusion is that the transition to a low carbon EU could gain, both in pace and quality, with more focus on programmes designed like LoCaRe, working cross-border with transfer of knowledge, technologies and solutions, based on common methods. Differences between regions should be used as a positive force for a faster transition to a low carbon Europe.



## We are in the era of implementation – Regions are key, building local and regional systems

This case is made even stronger realizing that many of the solutions necessary for low carbon economies are present. In an area where technical and technological innovation has been in the forefront for so long, time has come to put more focus on really creating the Low Carbon Economies possible. We believe that we are in the phase of implementation. We can see it in the markets for energy from wind, sun, biomass – growing fast, prices going down – in the long term closing the gap to carbon based energy solutions. We can see it in existing low carbon technologies for transportation, building, industrial production, farming etc. We can see it in the actions taken by our regions where best practice includes systematic changes into low carbon systems.

It is also self-evident that these systems in general are developed at local and regional level (in the Eu-

<sup>1</sup> Vollaard, P.J.: New Reality – Final Report LoCaRe-project 2010-2013

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ropean and national framework). From the LoCaRe regions we have an impressive list of examples on how an active development work has made our regions acting as national leaders in different fields. Southern Denmark has a leading position in energy efficiency technologies, metering, district heating and off-shore wind. Emilia Romagna is implementing green public procurement in the public sector and is very active in urban regeneration and refurbishing old buildings to lower energy claim, and also in diffusing renewables while avoiding landscape impacts. Zeeland is the strongest province in the Netherlands in developing a Biobased economy and in tidal energy. Gorenjska in Slovenia is very active in the field of renewables for heating and on energy efficiency. Västra Götaland is the leader in Sweden in passive houses, energy efficient building, wind power, biogas and biogas powered transportation system.<sup>2</sup>

As focus changes to implementation, the importance of the action taken at local and regional level, increases. To have more profound change there is a need for co-operation between committed partners from all sectors of society. Our conclusion is that it makes a difference if the commitment to a Low Carbon Economy is expressed in a long term, high level, regional, vision, and translated into some kind of a “masterplan”. The “plans” will differ according to local circumstances, but to get all partners on board, the long term goal must be clear. Political leadership is absolutely essential. In LoCaRe, initiatives like Project Zero from Southern Denmark and the climate strategy Smart Energy from Västra Götaland, are used as best practice, and could be used as inspiring examples at local and regional level in other parts of Europe.

## **Low Carbon Economy should be at the top of the development agenda as an opportunity for better lives**

The list of best practices from our regions also gives evidence that the transition to a Low Carbon Economy should be seen as a broad positive force for societal development. There are examples from all regions in which better environment and less dependency on fossil energy, at the same time have created new business opportunities, jobs (mitigating the economic crisis). Also, and this is important, it has lead to improved living conditions for the citizens. The image of the low carbon society as something ascetical and negative is wrong, and needs to be altered, if we want to have real change. The conclusion (also in our research reports) is that Low Carbon Economy must be presented as investment in better living conditions, for the vast majority of people. It needs to be put at the top of the political agenda, as the political opportunity for the future.

## **Technologies and infrastructure are necessary, but change depends on local norms and values**

It is also clear from our work – both in theory and practice – that much of the transition is about norms and values and how they link to our habits. For people to change their life styles and daily routines – into something more sustainable – may be the most challenging question for a Low Carbon Economy. Most people will not change habits easily. Most people will not change habits because of threats to the environment or even to the future of our planet. Many people will not change habits even if the technological solutions and the infrastructure needed are in place. Most people will change habits because it is the way you live

<sup>2</sup> At [www.locareproject.eu](http://www.locareproject.eu) descriptions, films etc. of best practice can be found with contact details.

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and act in your neighborhood, in your municipality or in your line of business. It is about how you are looked upon. It is not what we say, but what we do, that will make the difference. Political leadership is, once more, essential. The roadmap must be clear. All of the projects carried out between the LoCaRe regions had, in varying degrees, focus on changing the way we do things (our habits), dependent on how we see that things should be done (norms and values). Our conclusion is that this aspect should be an important part of Low Carbon Economy projects in the future.

## **There is no alternative to invest in a more modern and inclusive Europe – Low Carbon Economy and regions are key**

The prolonged financial crisis is perceived as one of the most important threats to a low carbon economy, also in the LoCaRe regions. At the same time we have seen that special investment packages with a focus on Low Carbon Economy have been launched in the regions (for example in Emilia Romagna, Southern Denmark and Västra Götaland) to mitigate the crisis.<sup>3</sup> We think that this is the necessary conclusion. The need to invest in a more modern and inclusive Europe is obvious. The alternative does not really exist. The vision of a sustainable low carbon economy should be at the forefront of these opportunity investments. This is where we see our future.

<sup>3</sup> New Climate Analysis p. 37ff

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The LoCaRe project has shown that:

- Regional implementation based on solid methods is key to speed up EU transition to a Low Carbon Economy
- We enter the era of implementation. Regions are key, building local and regional systems
- Low Carbon Economy should be at the top of the development agenda as an opportunity for better lives
- New technologies and infrastructure are necessary, but change depends on local norms and values
- There is no alternative to invest in a more modern and inclusive Europe – Low Carbon Economy and regions are key

It is decisive that these findings influence the implementation of EU and national policies in the years to come. The importance of the regions increases in a situation where a low carbon economy is in reach, an economy creating a more modern and inclusive Europe for its citizens. Political leadership at all levels of society is fundamental to diminish economic risk and uncertainty on which way we are taking.

## **Regions are key to a low carbon future in Europe in three unique ways:**

- Building local and regional low carbon systems in different areas.
- Influencing norms and values in the local and regional society.
- Spreading results at project level between regions in different phases of transition

# Facts from the LoCaRe Sub-projects

**BIOMAP** – Three www based market places for Biogas, 90 companies involved, 40 interregional and 50 local meetings, 20 good practices on the use of biomass taken forward.

**CARBON.CARE** – Three regional operational groups. Life cycle assessment tested and found adequate as a tool for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in agriculture and forestry.

**ESA** – More than 100 Schools involved in empowerment of students of all ages and with different methods.

**LOCAL COMMITMENT** – Five networks and 50 stakeholder meetings. More than 2500 people involved

**VACO2R** – 18 public/private agreements, 150 energy audits in SME's, 60 Voluntary agreements signed by companies and more than 150 energy managers trained.

**ZEROTRADE** – Four interregional workshops, Eight best practices of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in trade/retail sector, 145 trade/retail companies that has signed a Voluntary agreement to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Twelve pilot actions implemented in retail outlets. Four regional action plans for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in retail. 24 local meetings with a total of +40 000 people reached.



## Litterature

Algedheg, Egels- Zandén, Ekberg, Johansson, Solér (2011) *New Leadership – How can consumers, companies and policymakers join forces towards a low carbon economy?* LoCaRe-project

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