

Unlocking SME Energy Potential

Europe's Small Businesses Face the Green Challenge — and New Solutions Emerge

16 June 2025, SMEnergy project

Across Europe, thousands of SMEs are already benefiting from “One-Stop-Shop” models that simplify their green transition — but many regions are only just beginning to unlock their potential. Across Upper Austria, Slovenia and Southern Sweden alone, more than 4,000 SMEs have already received hands-on advisory support, achieving energy savings of up to 15%, while new pilots continue to scale up across the Danube region and beyond.

Last week, over 50 participants from across Europe gathered for the “Unlocking SME Energy Potential” international online conference, held within the framework of the Interreg Danube Region Programme’s SMEnergy project. The aim: to explore how scalable One-Stop-Shop (OSS) models can offer SMEs the clear, coordinated support they often lack when navigating the complex world of energy transition.

Press release

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The One-Stop-Shop: From concept to practical reality

Throughout Europe, multiple OSS models are already showing what works — and what doesn’t. At the conference, speakers shared a range of approaches from their national contexts:

- ❖ **Tea Potočnik** (*Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje*) introduced the SMEnergy project’s transnational work to pilot new OSS service hubs, helping SMEs access expert guidance, suppliers, and financing for renewables.
- ❖ **Lena Eckerberg** (*Energy Agency Southern Sweden*) presented how Swedish regions combine SME coaching, targeted sectoral networks, and local partnerships to deliver measurable energy savings while boosting competitiveness.
- ❖ **John Flynn** (*Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland*) explained how Ireland’s highly structured OSS approach offers SMEs a simplified, predictable pathway through the complex maze of technical standards, grants, and service providers.

- ❖ **Christiane Egger** (*OÖ Energiesparverband, Austria*) shared Upper Austria's long-standing OSS system, where expert consulting, company networks, training and investment incentives work hand-in-hand to support SMEs at every stage of the energy transition.
- ❖ **Rajko Leban & Milan Klemenc** (*Slovenia*) brought insights from Slovenia's emerging OSS structures, built around local energy agencies and a rapidly growing advisory network offering hands-on support to SMEs.

Roundtable: scaling up, breaking barriers

One of the conference highlights was the dynamic expert roundtable, where Borbála Tóth (REKK) guided a truly international panel — Ilona Szécsi (MEHI), Diana Bosfy (FEDARENE), and Dilyana Gerdzhikova (Plovdiv Chamber of Commerce and Industry) — through a candid discussion on how countries and regions still in the early stages of OSS development can take meaningful, practical steps forward.

The roundtable discussion focused on:

- Where are the biggest obstacles that still prevent SMEs from fully engaging in the green transition?
- How can OSS models be adapted to the wide variety of local contexts across Europe?
- What lessons from successful pilots can guide the scaling up of OSS services beyond early adopters?

Real-world numbers...

...already show the growing impact of these models: In Upper Austria, more than 3,000 SME energy consultations have already been delivered, supported by a system where companies pay as little as €450 for expert advice thanks to public funding covering up to 75% of the cost. In Southern Sweden, over 150 SMEs have participated in dedicated coaching programmes, achieving energy savings of 10–15% on average. Meanwhile, Slovenia's newly launched advisory

What SMEs need

The conference also reflected the diverse and highly practical concerns SMEs have raised, including:

- Who can help them navigate regulations and technical requirements?
- How can they access knowledge, opportunities and credible suppliers?
- Where can they find tailored advice that fits their own sector and size?

It has become increasingly evident that OSS models can play a critical role precisely because they integrate multiple forms of expertise, coordination and trust-building in one place.

Building Europe's green SME economy

The Interreg Danube SMEnergy project is part of a growing European movement that recognises SMEs are driving Europe's green industrial future, and that they require simple, trustworthy and accessible

pathways to do so. The lively exchanges, rich expertise and strong participation at the conference suggest that across Europe, this shift is already underway — but much work remains to scale it up.

About SMEnergy

The SMEnergy project, funded by the Interreg Danube Region Programme, brings together 18 partners from 8 countries to develop and test practical One-Stop-Shop models that help SMEs access renewable energy solutions and support their sustainable transformation.

More information:

<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/smenergy>

<https://formacio.hu/unlocking-sme-energy-potential/>

Contact and further information

Edina Kálmán

Business & Organization Development Expert
PC-Trend Ltd.

Email: kalmanedina@formacio.hu

Phone: +36 20 581 2822

www.formacio.hu

Madeline Langlois

Associate Director
Elfi-Tech e.V.

Email: m.langlois@eifi-tech.eu

Phone: +49 176 87958476

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