

ASPIRE Model description & instructions

| The purpose

ASPIRE model is a tool for assisting in the creation of Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC). The process-like model gives strategic and operational guidance from the very first step to the continuous improvement stage.

Sustainable Energy Communities are areas where rational use of energy and sustainable energy sources as well as energy saving are goals.

| The Background and the Basic Principles

The main background of the model comes from the partnership of ASPIRE-project. From the large variety of different areas represented in the project, the model consists of information that has been tested and implemented all over Europe. These areas are mainly peripheral areas that are at great distances from national energy supplies. The growing concern of the security of energy supply has forced these areas to find alternative solutions to substitute the conventional energy supply.

| Development

The development of the ASPIRE Model was carried out during the lifetime of the ASPIRE project, which started in October 2006 and ended in March 2009. The project enabled the participating partners to gather data and to test it to create suitable generic model to match the needs of different areas all over Europe.

Using a basic spreadsheet to gather data about the process of creating SEC's was found very useful. The information of individual pilot areas was generalized and reconstructed to fit in to the framework of Balanced Scorecard. In the first version of the ASPIRE Model the information was divided into Key Success Factors, Strategic Objectives, Operational Activities and Criteria, familiar to the framework of Balanced Scorecard.

After the Model had found its final structure the next logical step was to create a user-friendly interface for using the model. This could only be made possible

by using software that is specifically designed to include all the information needed to create, develop and manage SEC's. In addition data storage and management was found critical and these reasons led to the creation of ASPIRE Model software.

| Structure

Overview

The ASPIRE Model follows a structure of four phases. These phases are;

1. Planning and creation of SEC
2. Capacity Building
3. Sustainable Energy Action Plan
4. Impact Evaluation

The overview of the model is process-based but it also includes the ideology of the continuous improvement cycle. The starting point is the Planning and Creation phase but in case the work in this phase is already done, users can freely jump directly to the part of process work is still needed. This flexibility is a key feature of the model .

1. Planning and Creation of SEC (Sustainable Energy Community)

The first phase of the Model is to create a solid foundation for the creation of new SEC. The identification of important stakeholders and other actors and securing their commitment to the SEC process is a key role within this initial phase. In addition recruiting an organization creates its own key success factor. Knowledge of Regional characteristics of the SEC is of great importance especially for the fact that in this work task initial data is gathered. Finally the last key success factor of the first phase is finding the demands and needs of the SEC. As a rule of thumb, the actions should always be demand-driven to enhance commitment and positive acceptance.

2. Capacity Building

The Capacity Building phase has a strong foundation in the demands and needs part of first phase. Capacity Building can be seen as continuous work that corresponds to the demands and needs that arise from the area. These can be divided into two main categories;

1. Awareness
2. Capabilities

The first category, Awareness, includes both general energy related matters but also the actions that are done in the SEC. These can be for example informing people about energy saving, holding a workshop or seminar about new

technologies in energy efficient houses but also newspaper articles about energy related matters.

The Capabilities category is more about enhancing the energy related knowledge and knowhow for defined groups of people. Usually the groups can include planners, architects, development organisations and other authority actors.

3. Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP)

The Sustainable Energy Action Plan phase starts from the assembly of different project ideas. This is crucial due to the actual implementation of the Action Plan. Later, when suitable project ideas have been found, they are prioritised in the Action Plan to be carried out in the SEC. The next task is to secure funding for the actions included in the Action Plan. Finally the last work task in this phase is to implement individual projects and actions. This can include operational activities for example recruiting applicable experts, technicians and key persons and gathering data about energy consumption.

4. Impact Evaluation

The evaluation of impacts realized through the creation of a SEC is of great importance. Individual financed projects have to be monitored to ensure effectiveness. The initial data is collected already in the first phase under the topic of Knowledge of Regional Characteristics. Comparison between data in different stages of creating a SEC facilitates the monitoring of progress. Impacts of creating a SEC include changes in the energy self-sufficiency, unemployment rate, number of enterprises, economical welfare and decrease in CO₂ emissions.

| Functionality / Software

The ASPIRE Model software has been designed to ease the work load of developing more sustainable energy oriented communities. This combined with the possibility to separate different work phases, assign persons in charge of the work and to set up targets generates a unique system.

Using the model is easy thanks to the ability to create user accounts and to store necessary information to it. With this approach an account user is able to establish a new SEC that is a geographically defined area, store information about the important stakeholders, manage meeting memo's, to evaluate progress and more.