



# The new Regio1st project kicks off to embed energy efficiency in regional planning

## PRESS RELEASE

*Brussels, 26/01/2023 – Energy efficiency is more than ever in the spotlight in the EU and has thus gained momentum in the EU policy agenda. For instance, the recast of the Energy Efficiency Directive is a very important piece of legislation under negotiation currently and the final agreement reached may have far-reaching impacts on the EU's clean transition. The Energy Efficiency First principle is among the aspects that are most discussed. But the challenge does not reside only in its legal encoding, implementation is also an aspect to be anticipated and paid attention too, particularly through the multi-level governance approach which the Energy Union requires. Regio1st is thus preemptively addressing a topic of interest for all levels of governance and for citizens alike and will raise awareness and spread knowledge on EE1st principle which will be useful for the large-scale embedding of EE1st in context- and region-specific decision-making and planning processes.*

Up to now, the EE1st principle has been discussed to some extent in the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs); however, when it comes to the regional and local governance levels, this principle is not yet explicit in the policy and public debate. The regions, being the core of Regio1st, elaborate own regional development plans that include decisions on energy investments in both supply and demand sectors. The recent European Commission's guidelines on EE1st thus pointed the regional authorities among the key players for the implementation of the EE1st principle.

A consortium of partners; coordinated by the Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (IEECP) kicked off the activities of Regio1st, a new project funded under the LIFE-CET programme of the EU and running until November 2025. The consortium involves Fraunhofer, the Institute of Communication and Computer Systems (ICCS), FEDARENE and six European regions (represented by IRE Liguria, LEA Spodnje Podravje, Fundación Asturiana de la Energía, Medimurska Energetska Agencija, South East Energy Agency and Bioeconomy and Environment Cluster Western Macedonia).



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The overarching aim of Regio1st is to raise awareness about the Energy Efficiency First (EE1st) principle among the regional governments and their agencies and support them to make related decisions in their planning. It aims to provide appropriate guidance to regional authorities to embed the EE1st principle in their decisions and implementation of their development and energy planning departing from six participant regions (Italy, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece, Ireland) and expanding to over 100 regions in the EU.

Based on activities and consultations carried out in the six pilot regions, the consortium will deliver a customized decision support tool for regions, which will include a citizen deliberation set of practices for engaging and eliciting preferences of stakeholders and citizens. Regio1st will provide decision support to regional authorities to apply the EE1st principle in their planning practices related to energy and, at the same time, establish a community of practice for the EE1st principle with key fora at European level, such as the Covenant of Mayors, to secure political commitment and social acceptance. It will also ensure the enforcement of Multilevel Climate and Energy Dialogue.

This co-design of policy trajectories will bring EE1st at the core of the dialogue and increase its social acceptance. The EE1st principle can play a relevant role in the Commission's Regional Development and Cohesion policy due to its demonstration of the multiple benefits of energy efficiency.

**"The EE1st approach could save families and businesses billions of euros in energy costs annually, improve energy security, and accelerate progress toward Europe's goals for carbon reduction and a clean energy economy."** Vlasis Oikonomou, IEECP Director and Regio1st coordinator states **"Starting from six countries, we will bring all these benefits to the regions, empower them with appropriate guidance and tools, provide access to key networks at EU level and make them become the leading actors in the energy transition through embedding the EE1st principle in their decision making processes."**

Moreover, the project will reach a large community of practice through events organised at EU level and beyond the scope of its consortium. The event will be launched through a two-hour online event which will present the project and its interactions with other LIFE projects. On this occasion, a roundtable will be taking place in cooperation with the Covenant of Mayors-Europe (CoM-Europe), where pilot regions of the project will intervene either as territorial coordinators or as supporters for the CoM-Europe. It will initiate reflections on how energy efficiency has been so far introduced in regional and local planning and on which role it could play in recovery phases.

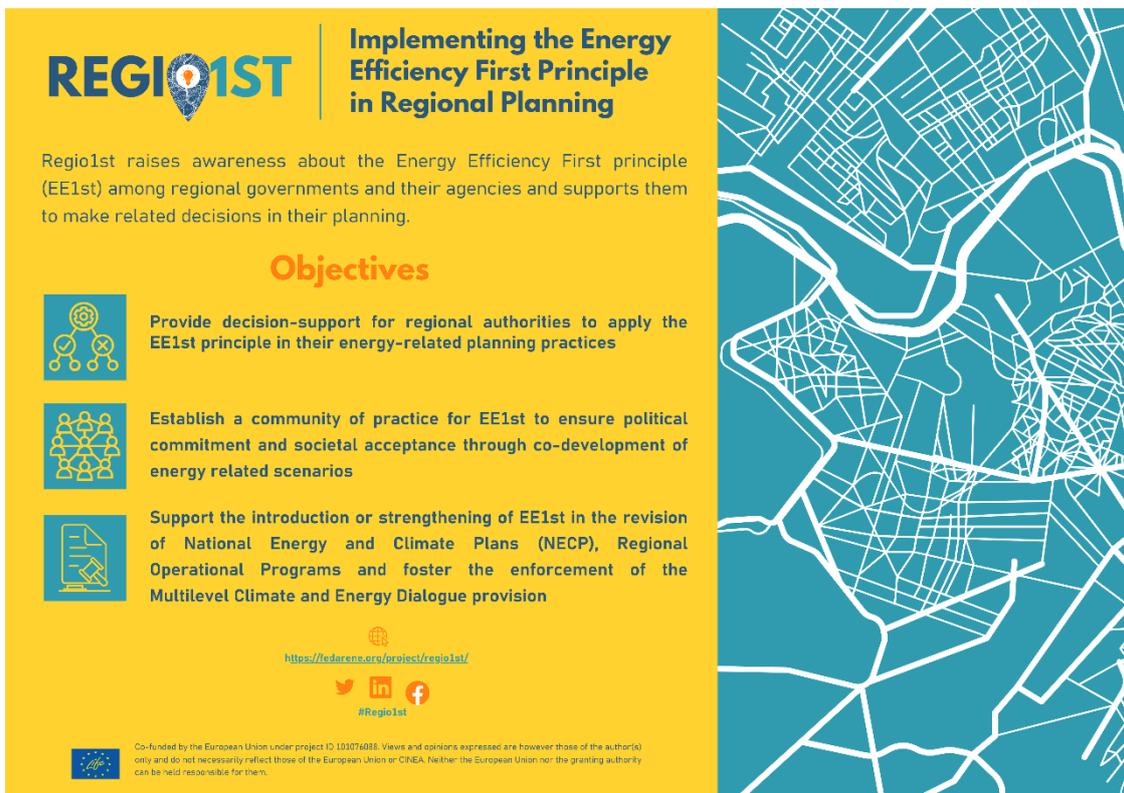
The event will be held on **Thursday 23 February** from **10:30 to 12:00** CET. Registration is open through this link: <https://fedarene.org/event/regio1st-eu-launch-event/>

More information about the project can be found at this link: <https://fedarene.org/project/regio1st/>

## Notes to the editor

### About Energy Efficiency First

Energy Efficiency First (EE1st) is a core principle of the Energy Union. It has entered first the policy debate on legislation with the Clean Energy for All Europeans policy package (2016) and was defined in 2018 in the Governance Regulation (Article 2(18)): *“energy efficiency first” means taking utmost account in energy planning, and in policy and investment decisions, of alternative cost-efficient energy efficiency measures to make energy demand and energy supply more efficient, in particular by means of cost-effective end-use energy savings, demand response initiatives and more efficient conversion, transmission and distribution of energy, whilst still achieving the objectives of those decisions*”. In practice, the EE1st principle balances demand and supply options in order to prioritise the least-expensive investments for the energy system from a whole society's point of view. It can be considered as an organising principle in which assessing the potential for energy savings and demand response becomes the first step in any energy-related decision.



**REGIO1ST** | **Implementing the Energy Efficiency First Principle in Regional Planning**

Regio1st raises awareness about the Energy Efficiency First principle (EE1st) among regional governments and their agencies and supports them to make related decisions in their planning.

**Objectives**

-  Provide decision-support for regional authorities to apply the EE1st principle in their energy-related planning practices
-  Establish a community of practice for EE1st to ensure political commitment and societal acceptance through co-development of energy related scenarios
-  Support the introduction or strengthening of EE1st in the revision of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP), Regional Operational Programs and foster the enforcement of the Multilevel Climate and Energy Dialogue provision

<https://tedarene.eu/projects/regio1st/>

   #Regio1st

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Website: <https://fedarene.org/project/regio1st/>

Social Media: #Regio1st



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