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## “Energy Efficiency First” Made Easy: New tool empowers regions in their local action

Regions and cities play a key role in the energy transition across Europe, as they are the main channel for the implementation of the Green Deal<sup>1</sup>, and of its climate and energy objectives. They are the main players involved in energy transition on-site being in direct contact with the reality and challenges on the ground.<sup>2</sup>

To achieve a reduction of energy consumption of at least 1.7% in 2030 in the EU, as expected in the revised Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), the implementation of the Energy Efficiency First (EE1st) principle, introduced by its article 3<sup>3</sup>, is crucial. This will require local and regional authorities to assess energy efficiency solutions in the planning, policy and major investment decisions related to energy systems.

The concerned stakeholders will have to ensure a careful monitoring of the application of the EE1st principle and promote the application of methodologies that allow a proper assessment of the wider benefits of efficiency solutions.

This is where the brand-new online tool launched by the [Regio1st LIFE-CET project](#) comes into play: the [Regio1st Planning Framework](#) provides a comprehensive, structured approach for regional energy planners in Europe to develop and implement sustainable, cost-effective energy strategies while prioritising energy savings in buildings and energy efficiency solutions in line with the EE1st principle. The interactive tool is delivering a thorough methodology assessing the various benefits of a wide-range of energy-efficiency solutions.

*“The Regio1st online decision-support framework will not only raise awareness about the Energy Efficiency First principle (EE1st) among regional governments and their agencies but will also provide them with a strong benefit assessment methodology. Starting from six regions, we plan to expand the provision of appropriate guidance to regional authorities to embed the EE1st principle in their decisions and implement their energy plans to over 100 regions in the EU.”* **Vlasis Oikonomou, managing director of the Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (IEECP), coordinator of the Regio1st LIFE-CET project.**

Energy efficiency shouldn't be overlooked at any level of governance, since it is a key lever to achieve further emissions reduction and be Fit for 55<sup>4</sup>, to phase out fossil fuels and to boost EU competitiveness by the development of energy-efficient technologies industry. By using the Regio1st Planning Framework, planners can address the challenges of energy planning, develop strategies that maximize the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy, and create a sustainable, resilient, and economically viable energy future for their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> [The European Green Deal - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Cities and regions are impacted by 70% of the new EU legislation: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> [Directive - 2023/1791 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [European Climate Law - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)



Consult the online planning framework here: [Home | Regio1st-planning-framework \(fedarene.org\)](#)

More information on the Regio1st project here: [Regio1st - Fedarene](#)

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### Notes to the Editor

#### About the Energy Efficiency First Principle

The Energy Efficiency First principle is defined by the European Commission as a far-reaching guiding principle that complements other EU objectives, in the areas of sustainability, climate neutrality and green growth.

While considering security of supply and market integration, the Energy Efficiency First principle aims to ensure that:

- only the energy really needed is produced;
- investments in stranded assets are avoided;
- demand for energy is reduced and managed in a cost-effective way.

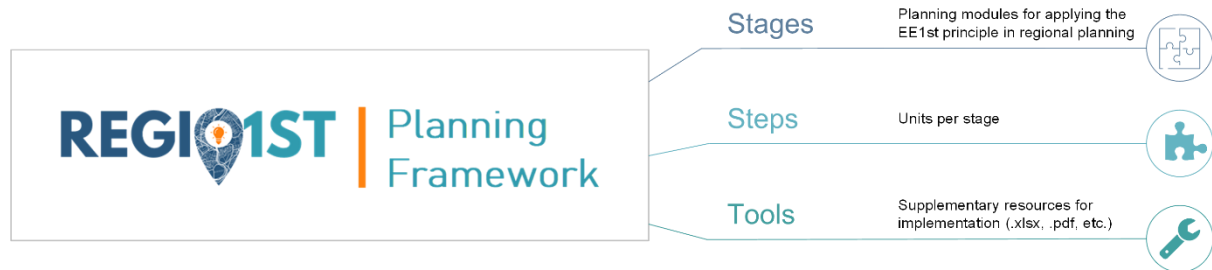
Therefore, as described in the Article 3 of the revised Energy Efficiency Directive, the EE1st implementation involves the *“Member States to ensure that energy efficiency solutions, including demand-side resources and system flexibilities, are assessed in planning, policy and major investment decisions.”*

According to the Directive, in applying the energy efficiency first principle, *“Member States shall: [...] promote and, [...], make publicly available, cost-benefit methodologies that allow proper assessment of the wider benefits of energy efficiency solutions [...], taking into account the entire life cycle and long-term perspective, system and cost efficiency, security of supply and quantification from the societal, health, economic and climate neutrality perspectives, sustainability and circular economy principles in transition to climate neutrality”;*

The Regio1st project thus developed an online Planning Framework for energy planners in Europe, regional authorities' technical staff and interested stakeholders involved in formulating sustainable and affordable energy strategies aligned with the EE1st principle.

#### About the Regio1st Planning Framework

The REGIO1st Planning Framework is organized into eight stages, each containing specific steps that are key to the process. Planners are encouraged to follow the framework in a sequential manner, moving through each stage from preparation to implementation, monitoring, and review. Throughout the process, planners should engage with stakeholders and prioritize energy efficiency measures in accordance with the EE1st principle.



The framework also includes a suite of readily available tools (Excel, PDF, etc.) designed to assist planners through different stages of the process. These tools aid in data collection, analysis, scenario modelling, multi-criteria analysis, and other essential tasks while emphasizing the importance of energy efficiency. By leveraging these tools, planners can streamline the planning process, ensure a thorough and accurate analysis, and make informed decisions that align with the EE1st principle.

The framework is organized into eight stages, each containing specific steps that are key to the process. The stages are:

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**Stage 1 | Preparation**  
Define the geographical scope, establish roles and responsibilities, identify existing regional energy plans, and commission the creation of a new regional energy plan.
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**Stage 2 | Engaging stakeholders and building partnerships**  
Identify key stakeholders and their priorities and develop a stakeholder engagement plan to foster collaboration.
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**Stage 3 | Reviewing energy objectives and targets**  
Examine national and regional visions and targets, discussing them with stakeholders to ensure alignment.
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**Stage 4 | Exploring the current regional energy system**  
Collect and analyse data on energy consumption patterns, infrastructure, and emissions to create a baseline assessment.
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**Stage 5 | Cost-benefit analysis**  
Assess the potential of renewable energy resources and energy efficiency solutions, model future scenarios, and identify least-cost combinations of solutions.
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**Stage 6 | Assessing the practical feasibility of least-cost energy solutions**  
Evaluate distributional impacts, supply chain readiness, workforce capacity, and gather feedback through public consultations.
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**Stage 7 | Defining actions and developing the regional energy plan**  
Rank proposed initiatives based on their potential impact, cost-effectiveness, and stakeholder alignment, and secure funding and resources.
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**Stage 8 | Implementation, monitoring and review**  
Execute detailed implementation plans, establish monitoring and evaluation systems, communicate progress, and periodically update the regional energy plan.

[Download the brochure here](#)

## About Regio1st

REGIO1st, a project co-funded by the EU LIFE programme, aims to raise awareness about the Energy Efficiency First Principle (EE1ST) among regional authorities and their agencies, as well as support them to incorporate this in decisions related to energy planning. It does so through the provision of appropriate guidance to regional authorities to embed the EE1st principle in their decisions and in the implementation of their energy plans. It starts from six participant regions and expands its reach to over 100 regions in the EU. Within the framework of the project a community of practice for EE1st is also being established, in cooperation with the Covenant of Mayors.



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**Coordinator:** Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (IEECP)

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