

Evaluation of a renewable energy support programme: The Énergivie programme in Alsace

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The Énergivie programme

Énergivie is a two-year programme led by Alsace regional authority in partnership with ADEME, the French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management, which aims to develop and strengthen the use of renewable energies, with a focus on solar heating and wood energy. The programme mainly combines a promotion campaign with training and support for local authorities getting involved in renewable energies.

The Midterm evaluation

As a European Union funded programme, the evaluation is mandatory. Emphasis was put on measurement of the effects of the programme on the building of a demand large enough to sustain the growth of renewable energies in Alsace and on the contribution of Énergivie to economic development and job creation through renewable energy market deployment.

Methodology

Several tools were used for Information collection, including interviews, analysis of statistical data provided by the regional authority and ADEME, case studies on several aspects of the programme and a survey aimed at final beneficiaries.

The analysis and judgement phases have used comparative tools (before and after; national comparison, ...), which allowed to have a full perspective about the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

Finally, the evaluation team proposed several scenarios to build on.

Results of the evaluation

After presenting this methodology, the main results of the programme will be detailed:

- Although the programme met its quantitative objectives, the growth of the renewable energy market in Alsace falls below French growth.
- The programme met difficulties to enhance local supply through formation and networking.
- Effects on local development appear somewhat limited to a mechanical contribution of the market to the creation of jobs and value.

Contribution to practice of evaluation

The programme featured a distinctive feature, as it was very short: the regional authority had two years to make use of the funds it was granted. The evaluation process showed that it was quite difficult to pronounce a judgement on the effects of such a short program. Level of demand appeared as a valuable indicator for the effectiveness of the part of the programme which was focusing on market growth. On the supply side, the evaluation team was aware that the limited duration of the programme could not allow for seeing first effects of the policy: accordingly, the evaluation pointed out insufficiencies of the programme rather than the lack of effects.

Moreover, the evaluation pointed out the drawbacks of before-after comparison when used on such a fast growing market. The achievement of its objectives can not be a sufficient indicator for the performance of a programme: indeed these objectives appeared to be significantly lower than the national trend over the period. Results were also compared to best practices achieved by a European leader, Upper Austria, thus offering a different perspective.

The evaluation team proposed several scenarios for the programme's future, according to two axes: a choice on intended effects (focusing on environment vs. focusing on economics) and a choice on means to attain them (keeping the same pace; catching up with European leaders; innovating).