

# ENERGY ADVISORY SERVICES

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF MEEMP SERBIA

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### EVALUATION REPORT

21.07.2025

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## Executive Summary

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The Municipal Energy Efficiency and Management Project (MEEMP), implemented in Serbia from 2018 to 2023 with funding from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), aimed to strengthen municipal energy efficiency through strategic planning (C1 – EEA), infrastructure investments (C2), and capacity development (C3). The project engaged four pilot municipalities – Kruševac, Užice, Paraćin, and Vrbas – and collaborated with the Ministry of Mining and Energy (MoME) and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM).

MEEMP was highly **relevant** at the municipal level. Component 2 (investments) addressed critical infrastructure needs and delivered visible benefits such as improved comfort and estimated energy savings in public buildings. Components 1 and 3 were also appreciated but saw uneven uptake depending on local leadership and capacity. Vrbas and Kruševac showed strong ownership and integration of EEA tools, while Užice and Paraćin struggled with follow-up due to staffing gaps, unclear responsibilities, and limited guidance.

**Effectiveness** varied across components. While most outputs were achieved – such as EEA certification and EMIS deployment – outcome-level results (e.g. energy savings, GHG reductions) were not consistently measured or reported, limiting verification. Capacity development improved municipal planning and awareness, but was not institutionalized nationally, leaving gains vulnerable to staff turnover and lack of continuity.

**Efficiency** was mixed. Implementation was generally smooth at municipal level and appreciated by stakeholders. However, centralized procurement led to significant delays and reduced local ownership. The compartmentalized delivery of the three components also reduced potential synergies and learning across the project.

**Sustainability** remains a key challenge. While Kruševac and Vrbas embedded energy practices institutionally, others relied on individual leadership and lacked systemic support. Nationally, no structures (e.g. advisor networks or funding mechanisms) were established to sustain or scale the approach. This was not unexpected, as MoME had signalled limited capacity and no immediate intention to institutionalize EEA, and SCTM lacked resources to do so. Despite high-level visits, limited follow-up and communication meant the demonstration effect remained largely local.

Several **strategic limitations** – including the absence of a clearly articulated Theory of Change, exit strategy, and handover plans – undermined MEEMP’s long-term impact and left municipalities and institutions without guidance for sustaining tools and processes.

**Key lessons** include the importance of local ownership, the drawbacks of centralized implementation, and the need for integrated project design and national-level institutionalization. Recommendations for a follow-up phase emphasize embedding the EEA framework, decentralizing procurement, establishing national training systems, and strengthening visibility and incentives.

## Abbreviations

C1	Component 1 (EEA component)
C2	Component 2 (investment component)
C3	Component 3 (capacity building component)
EE	Energy efficiency
EEA	European Energy Award
EMS	Energy management system
EMIS	Energy management information system
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
MEEMP	Municipal Energy Efficiency and Management Project
MoME	Ministry of Mining and Energy (Serbia)
PIA	Project Implementation Assistant
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (Serbia)
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SEMP	Smart Energy Municipalities Project (Albania)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToT	Training of Trainers

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Short project description

The **Municipal Energy Efficiency and Management Project (MEEMP)** was implemented in Serbia between 2018 and 2023 with financial support from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). The project aimed to improve energy efficiency in public buildings, strengthen municipal energy management capacities, and pilot the introduction of the European Energy Award (EEA) methodology in Serbia.

MEEMP was designed in close coordination with the **Ministry of Mining and Energy (MoME)**, which served as the main national counterpart, and four pilot **municipalities** – Kruševac, Užice, Paraćin, and Vrbas. These municipalities were selected for their willingness to engage in structured energy efficiency planning and investment.

The project was implemented by a consortium led by **Enco**, in partnership with **GFA**, **Quiddita**, and **EBP**. Implementation was supported by a Project Implementation Assistant (PIA) embedded within MoME and funded by MEEMP and benefited from the involvement of the **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)** in Serbia, which played a key role in stakeholder engagement and promotion of project results.

MEEMP was structured around three interrelated components, each addressing a specific aspect of municipal energy efficiency and together forming the project's intended outcomes:

- Component 1 (C1) – Strategic Energy Management (European Energy Award, EEA): Introduction and piloting of the EEA methodology to improve municipal energy planning, monitoring, and institutional coordination.
- Component 2 (C2) – Infrastructure Investments: Energy-efficient refurbishment of selected public buildings in the four pilot municipalities to reduce energy consumption, increase user comfort, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Component 3 (C3) – Capacity Building and Awareness: Strengthening the knowledge and awareness of municipal staff, public building janitors, and the wider public to promote sustainable energy behaviours and improved energy management practices.

Each component included a set of specific outputs, such as the development of national EEA tools, training of EEA advisors, implementation of the EMIS energy monitoring system, adoption of municipal energy action plans, and a study tour to Switzerland.

A **reconstructed results model** is presented on the next page (*Figure 1*).

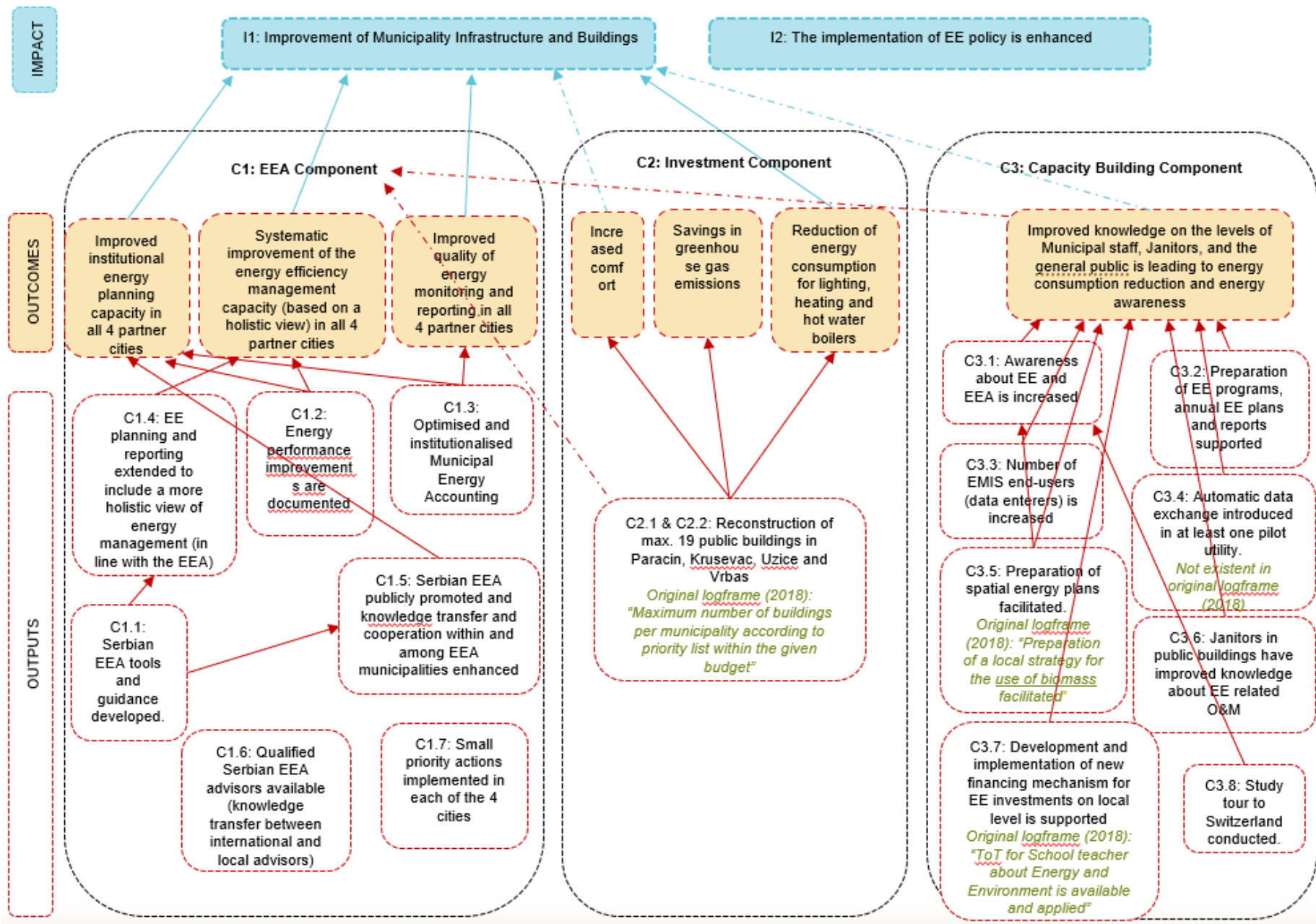


Figure 1: MEEMP results model

The project's credit proposal was approved in 2015, with implementation initially scheduled from 2015 to 2020. However, implementation formally began in 2018. The main phase, originally planned to conclude by June 2021, was extended until December 2022. To consolidate achievements and prepare for a possible scale-up, an 11-month bridging phase was implemented from January to November 2023.

Following the bridging phase, MoME submitted a proposal for a second phase of MEEMP focused on expanding to additional cities and addressing urban air pollution challenges. This proposal served as a key rationale for conducting the current end-of-phase evaluation.

## 1.2 Scope of evaluation

As part of its mandate for expert advisory services, the Consortium under the lead of Skat Consulting Ltd. was requested by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) to carry out end-of-phase evaluations for two projects: the Smart Energy Municipalities Project (SEMP) in Albania and the Municipal Energy Efficiency and Management Project (MEEMP) in Serbia. Both initiatives are funded by SECO and aim to support local energy transition efforts through capacity development, strategic planning, and investment in public infrastructure.

The **primary purpose** of this evaluation is to generate lessons learned and recommendations to inform the design of future EEA-related projects, and to contribute to accountability through an external assessment of the quality and sustainability of the results achieved under MEEMP. The evaluation focuses on project processes, outputs, and outcomes; it does not include a technical verification of infrastructure works. However, it does assess the adequacy of the financing mechanisms used.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, SECO will determine whether and how to proceed with a possible second phase of MEEMP in Serbia.

The scope of the evaluation covers four of the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability**. The criteria of **Coherence** and **Impact** were excluded from this assessment for the following reasons:

- *Coherence* is best assessed by SECO's Swiss Cooperation Office in Serbia, which has a comprehensive view of all SECO-funded and related initiatives in the energy sector.
- *Impact* may be evaluated at a later stage through a dedicated ex-post assessment, once longer-term effects can be reasonably observed.

The evaluation provides consolidated responses to nine core evaluation questions, as presented in *Table 1* below. These were elaborated during the inception phase to ensure a focused and systematic analysis of the project's performance and learning potential.

**Table 1: Final evaluation questions**

DAC Criteria	#	Final evaluation questions
Relevance	Q1	To which extent did the project (component 1, 2, 3) address the policy priorities and needs of the partners (the beneficiary municipalities and the Ministry of Mining and Energy)?
	Q2	Was the project’s theory of change reflective of the evolving context and partner capacities?
Effectiveness	Q3	To which extent were the MEEMP objectives (component 1, 2, 3, outputs and outcomes) achieved at municipal and national level?
	Q4	To what extent was the capacity development strategy effective? Did it address the main gaps in the field of municipal energy management?
	Q5	To what extent did the investment component deploy the expected demonstration effect?
Efficiency	Q6	To which extent was the MEEMP implementation set up efficient (organisation of the implementing consortium, cooperation modalities with the partners. etc)?
Sustainability	Q7	To which extent did the project contribute to sustainable municipal energy management capacities? To what extent is the EEA approach owned by the beneficiaries and partners?
	Q8	To which extent was the MEEMP intervention strategy appropriate to foster sustainable results?
	Q9	To what extent did the project contribute to the upscaling or roll out of the EEA approach and project results?

## 2 Methodology

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### 2.1 Methods and tools

This section outlines the methodological approach used for the MEEMP end-of-phase evaluation. It describes the combination of tools applied, including document reviews, semi-structured interviews, field visits, contribution analysis, and triangulation, and clarifies how these align with evaluation standards and the expectations of the donor.

The evaluation follows the standards of the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL, 2016) and SECO’s Evaluation Guidelines (2025). It is classified as an **ex-post process evaluation**, with a focus on assessing inputs, activities, outputs, and to some extent outcomes. It does not aim to provide a rigorous causal impact assessment, but rather to explore plausible pathways of change using a contribution analysis approach.

The evaluation covers four OECD DAC criteria: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability**, as defined by SECO. The criteria of *coherence* and *impact* were excluded for reasons outlined in Chapter 1.2.

A **theory-informed, mixed-methods** approach was applied. Evaluation findings were derived through iterative interpretation by the evaluation team and were **triangulated** to ensure credibility and robustness. Given the absence of a formally documented Theory of change, the evaluation team reconstructed a results model (see *Figure 1*) to support contribution analysis and assess the coherence of the project’s logic across components.

## Applied Methods

- **Document Review:** A systematic review of key project documents was conducted, including the SECO credit proposal, inception report, quarterly and annual progress reports, final report and bridging phase report, EEA audit records, municipal action plans, and relevant policy documents. These documents helped reconstruct the project's results model (see *Figure 1*) and served as a key reference point for triangulation.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were held both in person and online using a structured interview guide (see *Annex C*) derived from the evaluation matrix. The guide ensured systematic coverage of all DAC criteria and allowed for comparison across stakeholders. Interviewees included representatives from the four pilot municipalities, MoME, SECO, the implementing consortium, SCTM, local energy advisors, and other development actors.
- **Field Visits:** A one-week field mission in Serbia included on-site visits to all four pilot municipalities (Kruševac, Užice, Paraćin, Vrbas). These included interviews with municipal officials, energy managers, pilot building staff, and local advisors, as well as selected visits of refurbished buildings (without technical assessment).
- **Contribution Analysis:** The evaluation applied selected elements of Contribution Analysis to explore the extent to which MEEMP contributed to observed results. Rather than conducting a fully-fledged CA, the team used a simplified approach, which included:
  - Reconstructing the project's implicit theory of change (in the absence of a formally articulated one)
  - Identifying key causal assumptions and testing their plausibility based on stakeholder interviews, document review, and field observations
  - Considering plausible alternative explanations for observed changes, such as parallel donor initiatives, evolving national legal obligations (e.g., mandatory EMIS use), changes in municipal budgets, energy price fluctuations, or independent municipal actions.

While these alternative factors were reflected in the evaluators' triangulated interpretation of results (particularly under Q3, Q4, and Q7), no formal challenge mapping or quantitative assessment of alternative explanations was conducted. The findings draw on qualitative triangulation and contribution storytelling rather than on a structured attribution framework.

- **Triangulation:** To ensure robust findings, the evaluation applied triangulation in three ways:
  - **Data triangulation** – Comparing perspectives across different stakeholder groups (e.g., national vs. municipal actors, implementers vs. beneficiaries).

- **Investigator triangulation** – The two evaluators (external experts) compared and jointly interpreted field notes, observations, and emerging insights.
- **Source triangulation** – Comparing interview findings with project documentation, field observations, and existing tools or reports.

This multi-level triangulation allowed the evaluation team to increase confidence in the findings and mitigate the influence of partial or biased views.

All data collection and analysis were guided by the **evaluation matrix** (see *Annex B*), which translates the evaluation questions into concrete assessment criteria and indicators, data sources, limitations and evidence quality.

### Managing Bias

Potential biases were addressed through a diverse selection of interviewees (internal and external stakeholders), use of structured interview protocols, and systematic cross-checking between the two evaluators. Stakeholder perspectives were always interpreted in light of their possible interests or limitations and were compared against document evidence and insights from other sources to ensure balanced conclusions.

## 2.2 Evaluation process

The evaluation commenced in May 2025, following the approval of the mini-offer submitted by Skat for the assignment “Evaluation of the European Energy Award Projects in Albania and Serbia (SEMP and MEEMP)”.

The inception report was submitted to SECO on 4 June 2025, with a feedback meeting held on 11 June 2025. Based on this discussion, the evaluation team proceeded with the implementation of the agreed methodology, as outlined in the inception report and detailed in chapter 2.1 above.

A field mission to Serbia was conducted from 16 to 20 June 2025. Meetings in Belgrade were held on the first day (Monday), followed by visits to the four pilot municipalities Paraćin, Kruševac, Užice, and Vrbas on the subsequent days. The mission included interviews with national and local stakeholders, as well as site visits to selected refurbished public buildings.

A summary of the mission itinerary is provided in *Table 2* below; the full list of stakeholder meetings can be found in *Annex D* and summaries of municipality visits in *Annex E*.

**Table 2: Final mission itinerary**

Final mission itinerary – MEEMP Serbia external evaluation				
Mon 16.6.	Tue 17.6.	Wed 18.6.	Thu 19.6.	Fri 20.6.
Belgrade	Paracin	Krusevac	Uzice	Vrbas
Interview with Milos Banjac (former PIA at MoME)	Travel to Paracin (1.5h)	Meetings with Krusevac	Meetings with Uzice	Meetings with Vrbas

Interview with Zoran Kapor (GFA), Milena Milenkovic (Quiddita) and Sladjana Jevremovic (local EEA advisor)		municipality and energy team, site visits	municipality and energy team, site visits	municipality and energy team, site visits
Interview with Bojan Bogdanovic (EBRD)	Meetings with Paracin municipality and energy team, site visits			
Interview with Mladen Mrkic (former PIA at MoME)				
Interview with Miodrag Gluscevic (SCTM)	Travel to Krusevac (45min)	Travel to Uzice (2.5h)	Travel to Vrbas (3.5h)	Travel to Belgrade (1.5h)
Interview with Antonela Solujic (former MoME)				

### 3 Findings

This chapter presents the main evaluation findings, structured according to the four selected OECD DAC criteria: **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability**. It provides consolidated responses to the nine evaluation questions, drawing on a comprehensive analysis of data collected through document reviews, stakeholder interviews, and field visits. The findings reflect a triangulated approach and contribution analysis to ensure validity and depth of insight across all components and levels of the MEEMP intervention.

#### 3.1 Relevance

**Q1: To which extent did the project (component 1, 2, 3) address the policy priorities and needs of the partners (the beneficiary municipalities and the Ministry of Mining and Energy)?**

MEEMP was well aligned with national and local energy efficiency priorities, addressing both strategic planning needs and practical infrastructure improvements. Component 2 (C2), which focused on refurbishing public buildings, was most clearly in line with local and national priorities. It addressed urgent infrastructure deficits while delivering immediate, tangible benefits: reported (anecdotal) energy savings of 15–40%, improved comfort and safety, and lower operational costs. All four municipalities appreciated these outcomes. In particular, Kruševac and Vrbas emphasized how C2 supported their strategic goals and mobilized political and community support. In Paraćin and Užice, despite a less strategic integration of energy planning, the visible impact of investments was highly valued.

At the local level, C2 contributed to improved environmental performance and energy transitions, for example, by replacing coal or non-efficient wood heating systems with gas-based solutions. Users across all municipalities provided positive feedback and confirmed improved indoor comfort and (fire) safety.

Components 1 (EEA) and 3 (capacity development) were also relevant but perceived as less immediately impactful. In Vrbas and Kruševac, strong political support and continuity in energy management enabled better uptake of the EEA framework. Vrbas used it to mobilize internal and external stakeholders, while Kruševac integrated it into its long-term planning and is aiming for recertification. In contrast, Paraćin and Užice were initially less familiar with EEA. While they reached certification, weak institutional ownership and limited understanding reduced long-term commitment. For example, Užice's energy team faced disruptions due to staff turnover and illness, and Paraćin lacked clarity on how to proceed after certification.

At the national level, MoME strongly supported Component 2, reflecting its focus on visible, investment-driven results. However, C1 and C3 did not receive sustained institutional backing. While EMIS was legally mandated and its rollout supported under C3, planning and capacity-building efforts were often viewed as secondary. The absence of a clear national mandate or institutional owner for the EEA framework limited the systemic integration and follow-up beyond the pilot municipalities.

Despite the relevance of the project's overall objectives, several systemic barriers hindered deeper uptake. These included limited staffing at the municipal level, high staff turnover, unclear institutional responsibilities, and the absence of financial or policy incentives for ongoing engagement. Although the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) helped disseminate project experiences, the lack of a national framework for institutionalizing EEA tools reduced the project's broader relevance at the national scale.

**Q2: Was the project's theory of change reflective of the evolving context and partner capacities?**

MEEMP did not operate with a formally documented Theory of Change (ToC), which limited its strategic clarity and ability to adapt proactively to shifting local and national contexts. In practice, adaptations occurred – particularly under Component 2 – in response to rising costs, outdated feasibility studies, and procurement delays. For instance, in Vrbas, original expectations had to be scaled back significantly, but political support remained strong. In all municipalities, the number of buildings refurbished was reduced to roughly half of what was initially planned, reflecting the project's operational flexibility in adapting to external constraints.

Some adjustments were also made to selected outputs under C3 (see *Figure 1*), but they did not translate into strategic changes at the outcome level. Both C1 and C3 lacked clear adaptive strategies. In Užice and Paraćin, engagement with the EEA framework diminished after initial certification, partly due to insufficient institutional ownership and a lack of structured follow-up. Confusion over EEA processes, combined with minimal national guidance, further eroded continuity. Užice's long-term loss of its energy manager exemplified the fragility of capacity gains that were not institutionally embedded.

At the national level, MoME's understanding and support for C1 remained limited throughout the project. High turnover and shifting priorities at the ministry undermined

continuity. Furthermore, without a clear ToC, strategic learning was not embedded into the project cycle, and emerging needs or gaps were not systematically addressed. A more robust strategic framework might have facilitated earlier identification of barriers to sustainability, such as the absence of institutional anchoring or post-certification support for EEA municipalities.

While the project demonstrated operational adaptability, it lacked mechanisms for structured strategic learning and course correction. The absence of a national EEA support system or an institutionalized advisor training model further weakened the project's ability to adjust to evolving partner capacities. As a result, MEEMP's responsiveness was ad hoc rather than systematic, and its strategic orientation did not fully keep pace with changing conditions in the partner environment.

### 3.2 Effectiveness

#### **Q3: To which extent were the MEEMP objectives (component 1, 2, 3, outputs and outcomes) achieved at municipal and national level?**

The achievement of MEEMP's objectives varied across components and levels<sup>1</sup> and is difficult to assess conclusively due to inconsistencies in results reporting. While the project successfully implemented many planned activities and delivered tangible results at the municipal level, the lack of a consistent and consolidated outcome monitoring framework limited the ability to systematically measure achievement against higher-level objectives, particularly for C2.

The final report (2022) did not clearly distinguish between output- and outcome-level indicators, especially for C2. Reported figures (e.g. 63% energy and 69% GHG reductions) lacked transparent calculation details. According to the consortium, estimates were based on feasibility studies and design documents in line with Serbian regulations, using standard CO<sub>2</sub> coefficients. However, no post-renovation monitoring was conducted within MEEMP, and relevant EMIS data was only collected after project closure due to the extended implementation period.

While technically sound, the methodology was not consistently documented or consolidated across reporting. Changes to buildings and measures during implementation further complicated comparison with original targets. As a result, although the estimates are plausible, the fragmented and non-transparent presentation reduces their credibility and limits their usefulness for accountability and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note on impact-level achievements and indicators:** Although impact is not formally within the scope of this evaluation (question), it is worth noting that the logframe provides only one impact indicator – neither SMART nor linked to both intended impact statements. The causal relationships between outcomes and impact(s) were not clearly defined, making it difficult to understand how short- and medium-term results were expected to contribute to long-term change. Furthermore, there is no evidence or reporting on impact-level indicators in either the final report or the bridging phase report.

Despite these limitations, qualitative evidence and municipal feedback strongly suggest that MEEMP led to important progress at the local level. Under C2, all four municipalities completed building refurbishments, improving energy performance, indoor comfort, and user satisfaction. In Vrbas and Kruševac, implementation aligned with local planning cycles and benefited from stable political support. Užice and Paraćin faced delays due to procurement and staffing challenges but ultimately delivered high-quality renovations. Across sites, users confirmed significant improvements in thermal comfort and safety, although precise baseline and endline measurements were lacking.

C1 (EEA) was implemented in all municipalities, and all four achieved initial certification. Vrbas and Kruševac continue to integrate EEA principles into their planning and intend to recertify, showing strong municipal ownership. Užice and Paraćin, by contrast, face difficulties maintaining EEA activities due to unclear or inexistent national procedures and support and the absence of local coordinators or advisors. This points to insufficient institutional anchoring and weak follow-up mechanisms.

C3 (capacity building) enhanced awareness, planning tools, and EMIS adoption. By 2023, all municipalities had developed energy and climate plans aligned with EEA and national requirements. However, national uptake of MEEMP’s tools, methodologies, and advisor training systems remained limited. This was not unexpected: at project outset, MoME had indicated limited capacity and no immediate plans to institutionalize the EEA, focusing instead on implementing new legislation. SCTM was considered as a potential host but lacked the staffing and resources to take on this role. As a result, national follow-up mechanisms were not established, and institutionalization beyond the pilot municipalities did not occur. While municipal outcomes were visible and valued, the lack of national monitoring or aggregation – though not foreseen in the project – limited MEEMP’s contribution to broader policy or sector-wide learning.

Table 3 below presents a summary of outcome-level indicators and their achievement status, as reconstructed from the project’s logframe (see Figure 1 for the reconstructed results model) and reporting documents:

**Table 3: Summary of outcome-level achievement of indicators**

Outcome	Indicator	Achievement status (end of project)
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Improved Energy Planning, Management and Monitoring Capacities in all four Cities (C1: EEA)	EEA score of min. 50% in areas 2 and 5	<b>Achieved</b> (all 4 cities score min. 50% in areas 2 and 5, in the final audit in 2022/2023)
	Overall EEA score of min. 50% until 2020 in all 4 cities	<b>Achieved</b> (3 cities in 2022, 1 in 2023), although 2-3 years later than planned
	Regular meetings with the Energy Teams in all four cities (number of meetings and participants)	<b>Achieved</b> (although the required frequency and participants was not defined): 4 initial energy review workshops, 4 energy planning workshops (67 participants)

	Number of inhabitants benefiting from the improved energy management and investment measures (municipal administration and territory)	<b>Unclear</b> (not measured/reported in the final report, and no specific target was defined)
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Increased Energy Efficiency and Comfort and reduced GHG emissions in Public Buildings in all four Cities (C2: Investments)	<b>Comfort:</b> Comparison of indoor temperatures in winter 2018/2019 to measurements in winter 2021/2020 (by thermometers, energy meters etc.); <b>Target:</b> 20°C in classrooms	<b>Unclear</b> (no systematic monitoring data available; feedback suggests improved comfort, but no measured values or consistent baselines exist)
	<b>Emissions:</b> Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in tCO <sub>2</sub> during the operating phase in 14 buildings; <b>Target:</b> decrease from 1.652 tCO <sub>2</sub> /year to 1.145 tCO <sub>2</sub> /year	<b>Unclear</b> (reported reduction of 69% based on design documents and feasibility studies; no post-renovation data available; calculation details not transparently documented)
	<b>Energy consumption:</b> Reduction of energy consumption for lighting, heating and hot water boilers <b>Electricity</b> in MWh/a; <b>Target:</b> Reduction from 315 MWh/a to 148 MWh/a <b>Heat</b> in MWh/a; <b>Target:</b> Reduction from 5.110 MWh/a to 3.289 MWh/a	<b>Unclear</b> (reported 63% reduction, based on design-phase data; unclear whether figures cover both electricity and heat; not validated with endline measurements)
<b>Outcome 3:</b> Improved Knowledge and Awareness of Municipal Staff, Janitors, and the General Public (C3: Capacity Building)	EE plans and reports available in increasing quality	<b>Achieved</b> (all 4 cities developed EE plans enriched with EEA elements)
	Consumption decreases at public buildings with trained janitors	<b>Unclear</b> (not systematically measured, no defined baseline or targets).
	Participants in EE events show growing EE awareness	<b>Achieved</b> (not formally measured, but confirmed through participant feedback)

In conclusion, while MEEMP largely delivered on its output-level targets and was appreciated by municipal stakeholders, its outcome-level achievements are only partially documented and cannot be verified in a fully evidence-based manner. Most of the success was driven by local initiative and political will. Systemic anchoring, outcome measurement, and national-level follow-up remained weak, constraining the project's potential for institutional change and long-term sustainability.

**Q4: To what extent was the capacity development strategy effective? Did it address the main gaps in the field of municipal energy management?**

C3 of MEEMP made significant strides in strengthening municipal capacity for energy efficiency (EE) and climate policy planning. By the end of the project, all four pilot municipalities had markedly improved their internal capabilities compared to their 2018 baselines.

All municipalities had designated energy managers at the outset, but their roles were often limited or underutilized. Through C3, these roles became institutionalized, active, and increasingly embedded in municipal governance. Notably, Kruševac and Užice retained strong managerial continuity, while Vrbas reactivated and trained its energy manager after initial stagnation.

Energy teams evolved from fragmented or inactive entities to operational cross-departmental working groups in Užice, Paraćin, and Kruševac. Vrbas, which had no functional team in 2018, successfully re-established and expanded its team by 2023.

Strategic EE planning also improved considerably. All four municipalities adopted updated energy and climate action plans aligned with national requirements. Kruševac and Paraćin integrated these plans into broader governance frameworks, while Vrbas revised its Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) and linked it to other thematic strategies.

EMIS, which was largely absent in 2018, was fully implemented across all four municipalities by 2023. Vrbas transitioned from its legacy ISEM system to EMIS following initial delays, with trained staff now actively monitoring energy consumption.

Despite these municipal-level achievements, the capacity development strategy had limitations at the systemic level. The absence of a national training-of-trainers (ToT) model or accreditation mechanism means that capacity gains remain vulnerable to staff turnover and lack of reinforcement. Furthermore, C3 ended earlier (June 2021) than the other components, and its strategic continuation was not clearly planned.

In conclusion, C3 effectively addressed core gaps in municipal EE capacity and helped institutionalize energy management practices. However, without national anchoring or follow-up, these local successes may prove fragile in the mid-term and even more in the long term.

**Q5: To what extent did the investment component deploy the expected demonstration effect?**

While the MEEMP project did not explicitly define a demonstration or replication objective within its results framework for C2, the investments in public building refurbishments nonetheless generated a clear demonstration effect at the municipal level. Refurbished schools and kindergartens in Paraćin, Užice, Kruševac, and Vrbas visibly improved energy performance and user comfort. Anecdotal evidence from site visits and interviews suggests energy savings in the range of 15–40%<sup>2</sup>, with users consistently reporting increased comfort, safety, and satisfaction. In Vrbas, municipal officials noted

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<sup>2</sup>Note that this is significantly lower than the calculated 63% reduction as per the final report (31.12.2022)

increased public interest and engagement, including inquiries from neighbouring municipalities.

However, this demonstration effect remained largely localized. Although some communication took place, the project lacked a structured dissemination strategy to amplify visibility and learning beyond the pilot municipalities. Refurbished buildings lacked standardized signage, there was limited media engagement, and no formal platform was established to share technical designs, results, or lessons learned. This limited the project's ability to influence replication at scale. While high-level visits to the refurbished buildings by the Minister and the Swiss Ambassador helped generate visibility during implementation, the project lacked a structured national communication or dissemination strategy to sustain visibility and institutional learning beyond the local level.

In addition, building selection was often guided primarily by feasibility/cost or previous studies rather than by criteria designed to maximize energy savings or demonstration value (which – as stated above – was never clearly defined as a project objective). This, combined with the absence of national promotion or incentive schemes for replication, further constrained the broader impact of C2.

Stakeholders across all municipalities emphasized the importance of stronger communication, visibility, and strategic outreach in future initiatives. A more deliberate integration of investment planning with awareness and knowledge-sharing measures – alongside alignment with national financing programs – would be necessary to fully leverage the demonstration potential of municipal energy efficiency investments.

### 3.3 Efficiency

#### **Q6: To which extent was the MEEMP implementation set up efficient (organisation of the implementing consortium, cooperation modalities with the partners, etc)?**

The MEEMP implementation structure demonstrated reasonable efficiency at the municipal level, but systemic inefficiencies at the national and consortium levels limited the overall value for money and timely delivery of results. Municipal stakeholders generally appreciated the quality and professionalism of technical support received, particularly under C2, where construction supervision and guidance were considered effective. Cooperation with the implementing consortium was described as constructive at the operational level, especially during the preparation and execution of infrastructure works.

However, the organizational setup of the consortium contributed to fragmentation. The three components – EEA (C1), infrastructure investments (C2), and capacity development (C3) – were implemented largely in parallel, with limited coordination. This siloed structure reduced opportunities for synergies, such as aligning EMIS training (C3) and EEA processes (C1) with the building refurbishment cycle (C2). The division of components

across different consortium partners further reinforced this separation – though some specialization was necessary due to differing technical expertise.

National-level inefficiencies further constrained implementation. The MoME, while engaged in infrastructure decision-making, did not have a strategic mandate or adequate staffing to coordinate C1 and C3 effectively. The centrally managed procurement process (for C2), which was implemented at the request of MoME to ensure oversight and alignment with national priorities, led to repeated delays and limited municipal ownership. For instance, Užice faced significant setbacks due to failed tenders, eventually requiring direct negotiation. Paraćin and Vrbas similarly reported administrative burdens and protracted timelines, which delayed the delivery of works and follow-up activities.

The PIA embedded within MoME and funded by MEEMP was a useful interface but lacked sufficient authority to expedite decisions or ensure coherence across components. Combined with high staff turnover in both MoME and some municipalities, this resulted in loss of institutional memory and inconsistent follow-through.

From a financial perspective, the project remained broadly within its original budget envelope. However, significant cost escalations (notably in C2) due to inflation and procurement delays meant that fewer buildings were rehabilitated than initially planned. As a result, while the per-building investment was justifiable given the quality and complexity of the works, the cost-efficiency (i.e., outputs per CHF spent) was somewhat diminished. The absence of a formal cost-benefit analysis or standardized monitoring of financial efficiency indicators further limits a conclusive judgment on value for money.

In retrospect, and while MoME initially preferred centralized procurement to ensure national-level control, a more decentralized implementation model – with municipalities entrusted to manage procurement under national rules (subject to safeguards), combined with improved coordination across components – would likely have enhanced both efficiency and ownership. Clearer delineation of responsibilities within the consortium and more agile decision-making mechanisms could have further improved delivery performance and overall cost-effectiveness.

### 3.4 Sustainability

**Q7: To which extent did the project contribute to sustainable municipal energy management capacities? To what extent is the EEA approach owned by the beneficiaries and partners?**

MEEMP contributed to strengthening municipal energy management capacities, particularly through the introduction of EMIS and the EEA framework. In Kruševac and Vrbas, these tools have been institutionalized: EMIS is used routinely, energy teams remain active, and energy planning has been integrated into broader municipal strategies. Both municipalities show continued ownership, with plans to maintain or renew EEA certification and pursue further energy efficiency measures.

In contrast, Paraćin and Užice faced setbacks. Užice's capacity was weakened by the long-term absence of the Energy Manager, while Paraćin expressed confusion over EEA requirements and re-certification processes, despite having paid the annual fee. In both cases, the EEA process lost momentum without clear guidance or institutional support.

At the national level, sustainability was more limited. While EMIS remains a legal requirement (for municipalities with over 20,000 inhabitants), the broader systemic structures to support municipal energy management – such as EEA certification procedures, advisor training systems, or dedicated funding mechanisms – were not institutionalized by the MoME. As a result, the sustainability of MEEMP's outcomes remains highly dependent on local political will and leadership, particularly in the absence of coordinated national oversight.

SCTM contributed to promoting the EEA and disseminating lessons but lacked the mandate and resources to ensure continuity post-project. Without dedicated national incentives or structures, gains made at the local level remain fragile and at risk of backsliding.

The lack of a formal handover or continuation plan at project closure further limited the institutionalization of MEEMP tools and left municipalities without clear guidance or support mechanisms. Opportunities to embed EEA related responsibilities within national institutions or link them to ongoing energy sector reforms were not pursued, reducing the likelihood of long-term systemic uptake.

**Q8: To which extent was the MEEMP intervention strategy appropriate to foster sustainable results?**

The MEEMP intervention strategy – combining technical assistance, capital investments, and institutional support – proved effective in municipalities with strong leadership and administrative capacity. In places like Kruševac and Vrbas, this integrated approach enabled long-term planning, community engagement, and continued investment in energy efficiency.

However, the project lacked systemic anchoring. No exit strategy was developed, and there were no national mechanisms to continue support once the project ended. MoME did not assume ownership of key processes such as the EEA rollout or municipal capacity development, nor did it integrate these elements into policy frameworks or budgets.

The project design assumed that national institutions would absorb and sustain MEEMP's tools and practices, but this transition did not occur. The strategy lacked built-in mechanisms for institutional learning or feedback, which could have helped national counterparts gradually take ownership of tools and processes introduced by the project. Municipalities consistently emphasized that while MEEMP support was highly appreciated, it was project-dependent. Without a formal advisor network (e.g. certified national and regional EE/EEA advisors), a national coordination body, and sustainable financing mechanisms, the approach could not be institutionalized.

The pilot clearly demonstrated that sustainable results are achievable—but only in environments with sufficient local capacity and commitment. To achieve systemic sustainability, the strategy would have required stronger national ownership, better alignment with ongoing reforms, and mechanisms for long-term support.

**Q9: To what extent did the project contribute to the upscaling or roll out of the EEA approach and project results?**

MEEMP successfully piloted the EEA methodology in four municipalities, all of which achieved certification. In Kruševac and Vrbas, the process was well integrated into local planning and continues beyond the project’s conclusion. This demonstrates that EEA is feasible and valuable in the Serbian context.

However, there was no structured effort to scale up the approach beyond the pilot sites. While SCTM and local advisors supported some promotion, there was no national strategy, budget, or institutional framework to enable replication. MoME did not champion the EEA at national level or provide guidance to other interested municipalities. Even where interest existed, such as in neighbouring towns or through donor interactions, the absence of support mechanisms made uptake unlikely<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, communication and knowledge-sharing were limited. Refurbished buildings lacked consistent signage, success stories were not widely disseminated, and no national workshops or training events were organized to encourage broader adoption. This limited the visibility of results and undermined MEEMP’s potential as a demonstration project.

It is important to note that a full-scale national roll-out was not a formal objective of MEEMP. The only related output – C1.5 (*Serbian EEA publicly promoted and knowledge transfer and cooperation within and among EEA municipalities enhanced*) – had a modest scope. However, even this limited objective was only partially addressed, as few activities were implemented due to operational or budget constraints, thereby reducing the project’s potential to support broader upscaling.

In summary, while MEEMP proved the value of EEA in practice, it did not generate the momentum needed for wider replication. Without national leadership, structured coordination, or donor engagement, the pilot’s success has yet to translate into broader systemic change. Future efforts would require stronger institutional anchoring, a clear national strategy, and sustained technical and financial support.

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<sup>3</sup> While MoME is actively working to align with the EU agenda and implement key energy efficiency measures, including the Energy Efficiency Law, rulebooks on energy certificates and buildings standards, and development of long-term renovation and climate strategies (e.g. NECP), these efforts have not included a structured mechanism or policy framework to scale up the EEA model nationally.

## 4 Conclusions and lessons learned

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### **Overall Conclusions**

The MEEMP project made a valuable contribution to improving municipal energy management and energy efficiency (EE) in Serbia. It successfully piloted public building refurbishments (C2), introduced the European Energy Award framework (C1), and supported institutional capacity development (C3). The project demonstrated that municipalities can plan and implement effective EE interventions when provided with the right tools, resources, and support structures. In particular, municipalities such as Kruševac and Vrbas showed strong ownership, integrating project tools into their local governance and planning processes. The project helped empower municipal energy managers, turning previously underutilized roles into key drivers of local energy planning and implementation such as in Kruševac.

However, MEEMP's long-term transformative potential was constrained by weak institutional anchoring at the national level, unclear responsibilities for follow-up, and the absence of a strategy for sustainability or scale-up. While municipal-level results were generally positive – especially where political support and staffing continuity were present – the project lacked mechanisms to consolidate and replicate achievements systemically.

### **Conclusions by DAC Criteria**

#### **Relevance:**

MEEMP was well aligned with municipal needs and national priorities in energy efficiency. C2 in particular delivered tangible benefits that addressed urgent infrastructure needs. However, C1 and C3 were not fully internalized at the national level. While municipalities valued the tools provided, especially EMIS and the EEA framework, their longer-term relevance was undermined by weak institutional ownership, limited follow-up and lack of guidance. The selection of pilot sites and buildings was broadly appropriate but not always guided by transparent or strategic criteria.

#### **Effectiveness:**

The project delivered on most of its output-level objectives. All four municipalities received EEA certification and implemented building renovations that improved comfort and performance. Capacity development efforts were effective in building municipal planning capabilities and institutionalizing roles such as energy managers. However, outcome-level achievements – particularly for C2 – were only partially documented and not measured in a consistent or transparent manner. National-level uptake and institutionalization of tools such as EEA and EMIS were limited, reducing the project's effectiveness at a systemic level.

#### **Efficiency:**

At the municipal level, implementation was generally efficient and well-regarded. However, centralized procurement processes under SECO rules led to significant delays

and reduced local ownership. The siloed delivery of Components 1–3 limited cross-component synergies. Staff shortages, high turnover and unclear roles – especially within MoME – led to procedural bottlenecks. While the project remained broadly within budget, inflation and procurement challenges reduced the scope of investments, affecting overall cost-efficiency.

### **Sustainability:**

Sustainability varied considerably across municipalities. In Vrbas and Kruševac, municipal leadership, functional energy teams, and embedded planning practices helped sustain MEEMP results. In Užice and Paraćin, staffing gaps and a lack of guidance weakened follow-up. Nationally, no mechanisms were established to maintain or scale the EEA approach. EMIS remains a legal requirement but there is limited national-level follow-up, funding and support post-project. Without institutional ownership, funding, or incentives, long-term sustainability remains uncertain and dependent on local initiative.

### **Key Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

- Municipal Ownership Is Crucial for Sustainability

Municipalities with internal capacity, stable staffing, and strong political support (e.g., Kruševac, Vrbas) were more successful in sustaining MEEMP outcomes. Future projects should assess municipal readiness at the outset and invest in strengthening ownership through early involvement, tailored support, and clear follow-up mechanisms.

- Empowering Energy Managers Strengthens Institutional Sustainability

MEEMP showed that when energy managers are empowered with clear mandates, training, and political backing, they become central drivers of sustainable energy management at the local level. Future initiatives should ensure that the enabling conditions are in place for energy managers to contribute effectively and consistently to local energy planning and implementation efforts.

#### **1. Centralized Procurement Can Undermine Local Engagement**

Procurement managed centrally under SECO procedures caused significant delays and weakened local ownership. Enabling procurement through municipalities, aligned with national legislation and supported by safeguards, would likely improve efficiency and responsiveness, as suggested by Užice and other stakeholders.

#### **2. Pilot Projects Require Institutional Anchoring for Scale-Up**

Piloting without embedding tools (like EEA) in national structures reduces the potential for replication. A national coordination body, housed in MoME or SCTM, is needed to oversee standard-setting, knowledge sharing, and quality assurance. This should include a permanent mechanism for monitoring and supporting EEA municipalities beyond the pilot phase.

#### **3. Capacity Development Must Be Institutionalized and Recognized**

Ad-hoc trainings are not sufficient to ensure lasting capacity. A national training of trainers (ToT) model and advisor certification scheme should be established to formalize expertise, support staff turnover, and provide consistent guidance. A pool of certified national EEA advisors, officially recognized by MoME, should be part of an institutionalized support system. In parallel, EE should be more systematically integrated and expanded within university, vocational and training curricula to strengthen long-term, multi-level capacity.

#### **4. Visibility and Communication Matter for Demonstration Effects**

MEEMP's visibility was limited, reducing its demonstration potential. Refurbished buildings lacked standardized signage, and EEA certification was not visibly marked at municipal entrances. While some communication activities took place, there was no coordinated campaign to promote project successes to the wider public or peer municipalities. Future initiatives should include dedicated communication resources for visible branding and structured outreach to enhance replication and recognition.

#### **5. Integration Across Components Increases Impact**

The disconnection between Components 1, 2, and 3 reduced potential synergies. Aligning energy planning (EEA), infrastructure investment, and capacity development from the start can reinforce learning loops, simplify implementation, and increase overall impact. A more integrated and iterative approach is essential for future programming.

#### **6. National Institutions Need Clearer Roles and Incentives**

MoME's engagement focused heavily on infrastructure (C2), while it lacked the mandate or mechanisms to support capacity building and planning (C1 and C3). National ownership should be clarified and supported through formal mandates, inter-ministerial coordination, and performance-based incentives. Donors should also align project support with existing institutional responsibilities and reform processes.

#### **7. Exit and Handover Planning Are Essential for Sustainability**

MEEMP lacked a defined exit strategy, leaving municipalities and national institutions without a clear plan for sustaining tools and processes after project closure. Future interventions should embed transition planning from the outset, including documentation, capacity transfer, and institutional responsibilities.

## 5 Recommendations

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The following recommendations are prioritized by strategic importance and feasibility. Each recommendation is directed to specific actors: *SECO*, *MoME*, *Municipalities* and future *implementing partners*.

### Strategic Recommendations

*As MEEMP was designed as a pilot, these recommendations outline next steps to enable national institutionalization and scale-up of the EEA approach.*

#### 1. Institutionalize the EEA Framework Nationally (*MoME, with support from SECO*)

- Establish a dedicated EEA coordination unit within the Department for Energy Efficiency at MoME to oversee implementation, quality assurance, and national rollout.
- Integrate EEA principles into national energy and climate planning and reporting frameworks.
- Define clear procedures, responsibilities, and support structures for municipal re-certification and engagement.
- Formally recognize and certify national EEA advisors and establish a national training program, as highlighted in the final report (2022).

#### 2. Develop a Scalable Capacity Development Model (*MoME and Implementing Partner, with initial support from SECO*)

- Partner with universities and vocational training centres to establish a national Training of Trainers (ToT) model, where international/national experts train local trainers who deliver ongoing certified programs for EE advisors and energy managers.
- Integrate EE into relevant curricula to build long-term capacity across technical and administrative levels.
- Develop practical, legislation-aligned toolkits to support EMIS and EEA processes in municipalities.
- Reinforce recommendations from the final report regarding institutionalizing municipal energy teams and embedding continuous learning.

#### 3. Align Investment Planning with Clear Incentives (*SECO and MoME*)

- Link co-financing or access to new grants with performance metrics, such as EEA certification or EMIS compliance.
- Establish transparent eligibility criteria and reward municipalities that demonstrate sustained EE progress.

- Consider financial mechanisms similar to those in Switzerland and Luxembourg, where EEA performance is directly linked to funding support, as recommended in the final report (2022).

#### **4. Empower and Institutionalize the Role of Municipal Energy Managers (MoME and Municipalities)**

- Define the role of municipal energy managers through standardized job descriptions and align it with national energy and climate policy mandates.
- Include energy managers in municipal staffing frameworks and budget planning processes to ensure continuity and institutional accountability.
- Establish a national certification and training program for energy managers, possibly linked to EEA or EMIS competencies, in collaboration with accredited training institutions.
- Create opportunities for peer learning and professional development to reinforce motivation, retention, and cross-municipal knowledge exchange.

#### **5. Plan for Integration Across Components from the Start (SECO and Implementing Partner)**

- Future projects should include a coherent Theory of Change that defines expected synergies between investment, capacity building, and institutional change.
- Develop component-specific SMART indicators and establish cross-cutting feedback mechanisms to support learning and adaptive management
- Ensure that project design explicitly links C1 (EEA) with C2 (investment), addressing gaps identified during MEEMP implementation.

### **Operational Recommendations**

#### **6. Ensure Better Communication and Visibility (Implementing Partner and MoME)**

- Allocate specific budgets for communication activities including signage, media outreach, and success story documentation.
- Promote tangible results through national peer exchanges and knowledge events.
- Address the lack of visibility for EEA achievements, such as missing signage at town entrances, which limited recognition of certified municipalities.
- Reinforce final report (2022) recommendations on broad public marketing of the EEA award.

#### **7. Decentralize Procurement Where Feasible (MoME and Implementing Partner)**

- Delegate procurement responsibilities to municipalities under a grant agreement model, using national legislation.
- Implement light-touch oversight such as technical quality reviews, milestone audits, and independent spot-checks.

- Ensure clearer assignment of roles and responsibilities, as recommended in the final report (2022).

#### **8. Target Municipalities Strategically for Scale-Up** (*MoME and SECO*)

- Apply transparent selection criteria that consider EE needs, implementation capacity, and regional equity.
- Prioritize underserved or high-potential municipalities for inclusion in follow-up initiatives.
- Explore cost-effective models for EEA roll-out, including EEA-inspired systems adapted to Serbian legal and fiscal context.

#### **9. Define Exit Strategies and Institutional Handover from the beginning** (*Implementing Partner and MoME*)

- Embed exit strategies and institutional transition plans from the outset, including responsibilities for sustaining tools, platforms, and advisory systems.
- Ensure handover of digital tools (e.g., EMIS), training systems, and methodologies to national institutions.
- Document and transfer all key project deliverables to national partners, ensuring long-term public accessibility.
- Align efforts with SCTM and other national institutions to reinforce institutional continuity.

**These recommendations build on the findings of this evaluation and the MEEMP Final Report (2022), aiming to enhance institutional ownership, operational effectiveness, and the long-term sustainability of energy management in Serbian municipalities.**

## 6 Annexes

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**Annex A:** ToR

**Annex B:** Evaluation Matrix MEEMP

**Annex C:** Interview guide MEEMP

**Annex D:** List of stakeholder meetings (date, persons interviewed)

**Annex E:** Pilot Municipalities Visit Summaries



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## Terms of Reference

# Evaluation of the European Energy Award Projects in Albania and Serbia (SEMP and MEEMP)

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The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) is soliciting expert consultancy services to conduct an end-of-phase evaluation of the Smart Energy Municipalities Project (SEMP) in Albania and the Municipal Energy Efficiency Management Project (MEEMP) in Serbia. These terms of reference outline the context, objectives, process and deliverables for the evaluation. The services described in here are to be financed by SECO.



## 1. Background

### 1.1. Smart Energy Municipalities Project (SEMP) Albania

The Smart Energy Municipalities Project (SEMP), funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) as part of international cooperation activities in Albania, aims to promote an energy management framework inspired by the European Energy Award (EEA). It involves applying an inter-sectorial approach at municipal and national level, which contributes to improving energy efficiency and to mitigating climate change, in line with Albania's commitment under the Paris Agreement and with the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. It is implemented by the SEMP consortium, a team of consultants led by GFA Consulting Group GmbH.

The SEMP project is structured around two outcomes, subdivided into five components:

<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Improved energy management framework</b>
Component 1A	Implementation of energy management systems in 4 pilot municipalities (Berat, Korça, Përmet, Shkodra)
Component 1B	Design of a national energy management framework (draft secondary legislation)
Component 1C	Support to the roll-out of the national energy management framework (inclusion of 10 new municipalities, training of energy & climate consultants)
<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Better energy services through effective institutions</b>
Component 2A	Quick-win investments (street lighting) in 4 pilot municipalities to strengthen project preparation and implementation capacities
Component 2B	Capacity strengthening of key institutions at national and municipal level

The SEMP project implementation started in November 2021 and will end in November 2025. Details of completed and ongoing activities can be found in the last progress report and in the SEMP team's proposal for Component 1C, to be implemented in 2025 (Annexes A, B).

### 1.2 Municipal Energy Efficiency Management Program (MEEMP) Serbia

The Municipal Energy Efficiency and Management Program (MEEMP), funded by SECO in the frame of the Swiss - Serbian Cooperation Program 2018<sup>1</sup> – 25, aims at improving the municipal energy management, energy efficiency in public buildings in four municipalities and to introduce to the extent possible renewable energy sources by adopting the European Energy Award. The project is implemented by consortium of international and local consultancy companies under the lead of Enco with EBP, GFA, and Quiddita.

MEEMP consists of three components respectively outcomes with a set of outputs:

<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Improved Energy Planning, Management and Monitoring Capacities in all four Cities</b>
Output 1.1	Serbian EEA tools developed and updated
Output 1.2	Energy performance improvements documented
Output 1.3	Optimized and institutionalized municipal energy accounting
Output 1.4	EE planning and reporting extended to include a more holistic view of energy management
Output 1.5	Serbian EEA publicly promoted and exchange between EEA municipalities enhanced

<sup>1</sup> MEEMP was approved in 2018 but only became operational in 2020.

- Output 1.6 Qualified Serbian EEA advisors are available
- Output 1.7 Small priority actions implemented in each of the 4 cities

**Outcome 2 Increased Energy Efficiency and Comfort in Public Buildings in all four Cities**

- Output 2.1 Reconstruction of a maximum of 19 public buildings in four cities

**Outcome 3 Improved Knowledge and Awareness of Municipal Staff**

- Output 3.1 Awareness about EE and EEA is increased
- Output 3.2 Preparation of EE programs, annual EE plans and reports supported
- Output 3.3 Number of EMIS end-users is increased
- Output 3.4 Automatic data exchange is introduced in one pilot utility
- Output 3.5 Preparation of spatial energy plans is facilitated
- Output 3.6 Janitors in public buildings have improved knowledge about EE related to O&M
- Output 3.7 Development and implementation of new financing mechanism for EE investments on local levels is supported
- Output 3.8 Study tour to Switzerland is conducted

MEEMP implementation started in January 2018 and ended in June 2023. A final report and extension report give a comprehensive stocktaking of the project achievements, including lessons learnt and recommendations. (As background information: The Ministry of Mining and Energy, the key counterpart of MEEMP, submitted a second phase proposal for a roll out of MEEMP to other cities with the primary objective to fight air pollution).

## 2. Purpose of the evaluation

### 2.1 SEMP

These Terms of Reference define the scope of an external, end-of-phase evaluation of the SEMP, to be commissioned by SECO. The purpose of the evaluation is the identification of lessons learned, recommendations for future EEA-projects<sup>2</sup> and accountability through the provision of an external assessment of the quality and sustainability of achieved results. A verification of the realised infrastructure investments (i.e. street lighting) is not part of the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation is organised in the context of challenges faced in the collaboration with SEMP partners, especially at national level (Agency of Energy Efficiency (AEE), Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MoIE)). A lack of responsiveness and engagement from the AEE/MoIE led to a temporary suspension of SEMP activities in January 2025. A solution regarding the use of Swiss Counterpart Funds, as foreseen in the Project Agreement, is still pending.<sup>3</sup> Progress on policy dialogue activities has also been slow, with limited or no feedback provided on key documents such as the draft secondary legislation prepared by the SEMP team. At local level, municipalities have actively engaged and shown commitment in SEMP activities.

### 2.2 MEEMP

These Terms of Reference define the scope of an external end-of-phase evaluation of MEEMP, to be commissioned by SECO. The purpose of the evaluation is the identification of lessons learned and

<sup>2</sup> Learnings to improve the quality and results of the SEMP or future, similar programmes by gathering knowledge about what works and why it works (or, conversely, what does not work and why it does not work).

<sup>3</sup> Swiss Counterpart Funds correspond to approx. CHF 26 million that were granted by the Government of Switzerland to the Government of Albania as part of support for hydropower projects in the 1990s. The amount paid into a dedicated account at the Bank of Albania to date is approx. CHF 6 million. The SEMP Project Agreement foresees that these funds will be made available by the MoIE for implementation of energy efficiency measures, however this has not materialised to date.

recommendations for future EEA-projects and accountability through the provision of an external assessment of the quality and sustainability of achieved results. A verification of the realized infrastructure investments is not part of the evaluation, the adequacy of the financing mechanism, however, is to be considered.

### 3. Evaluation questions

The evaluation shall cover DAC criteria<sup>4</sup> of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability (Table 1). In relation to each of these criteria, the evaluators shall provide an assessment of the quality of what has been completed to date during implementation of the SEMP and MEEMP.

The DAC criteria “coherence” and “impact” are not part of the scope of the evaluation because: (i) coherence can best be assessed by the Swiss Cooperation Office team in Albania respectively Serbia, which has a good overview of SECO and other initiatives in the energy sector; (ii) “impact” will be assessed by the SEMP implementation team based on pre-specified indicators (e.g. estimated reduction in greenhouse gases emissions) respectively for MEEMP possibly at a later stage in the frame of an ex-post evaluation.

Based on the results of the evaluation, SECO will take a decision on the way forward and potential follow up projects in Serbia and Albania.

**Table 1** Evaluation questions for SEMP Albania

DAC Criteria	Completed activities
Relevance	To which extent did the scope and implementation modalities of SEMP components 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B address needs and priorities of partner municipalities, of the AEE, and of the MoIE?
	To which extent was the implementation team able to adapt to changing priorities of the SEMP partners?
	What are remaining regulatory, institutional, and/or capacity gaps or barriers related to energy efficiency in Albania (considering both public and private sector stakeholders)?
Effectiveness	To which extent were the SEMP objectives (outputs and outcomes) achieved at municipal and national level or which objectives are expected to be reached until the project end?
	To which extent were the SEMP implementation team’s structure (incl. secondment of one team member to the National Agency for Energy Efficiency) and profile suitable to achieve the SEMP outputs and outcomes?
Efficiency	To which extent were the SEMP implementation team and modalities (incl. secondment of one team member to the National Agency for Energy Efficiency) efficient in the use of resources? Do achieved results represent good “value for money”?
	To which extent were the SEMP results delivered in a timely manner, according to plans?
Sustainability	To which extent and how were project preparation activities within SEMP used to leverage investments in energy efficiency measures? (What were barriers and enablers to leveraging investments, including in the case of Swiss Counterpart Funds?)
	To which extent were the SEMP implementation modalities appropriate to foster sustainable improvements in energy management and efficiency?
	What were the main obstacles to the foreseen national roll-out of the energy management system piloted through the SEMP?

**Table 2** Evaluation questions for MEEMP Serbia

DAC Criteria	Completed activities
Relevance	To which extent did the project (component 1, 2, 3) address the policy priorities and needs of the partners (the beneficiary municipalities and the Ministry of Mining and Energy)?
	Was the project’s theory of change reflective of the evolving context and partner capacities?
Effectiveness	To which extent were the MEEMP objectives (component 1, 2, 3, outputs and outcomes) achieved at municipal and national level? What are the main lessons learnt and recommendations for a second phase?
	To what extent was the capacity development strategy effective? Did it address the main gaps in the field of municipal energy management?

<sup>4</sup> For further details on the definition of DAC criteria and how they are to be understood in the context of these ToR, please see the OECD publication “Better Criteria for Better Evaluation”: [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/better-criteria-for-better-evaluation\\_15a9c26b-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/better-criteria-for-better-evaluation_15a9c26b-en.html)

	To what extent did the investment component deploy the expected demonstration effect? Is there potential for improvement?
Efficiency	To which extent was the MEEMP implementation set up efficient (organisation of the implementing consortium, cooperation modalities with the partners. etc)? What are the lessons learnt?
Sustainability	To which extent did the project contribute to sustainable municipal energy management capacities? To what extent is the EEA approach owned by the beneficiaries and partners?
	To which extent was the MEEMP intervention strategy appropriate to foster sustainable results?
	To what extent did the project contribute to the upscaling or roll out of the EEA approach and project results?

#### 4. Evaluation methods and process

It shall be the responsibility of the evaluators to:

- Critically review evaluation questions and suggest improvements, if relevant
- Define and propose a rigorous evaluation approach and methodology to address evaluation questions, in compliance with SECO Evaluation Guidelines (especially the principles in chapter 1.3) and the relevant [Swiss Evaluation Society \(SEVAL\) Standards 2016](#)
- Fill out the Evaluation Matrix (SECO Evaluation Guidelines p. 28)
- Develop a detailed workplan in line with the proposed methodology.

These steps will inform the development of an inception report (deliverable #1) including (i) evaluation protocol / methods, (ii) data collection tools (e.g. interview guides), and (iii) workplan, to be approved by SECO (milestone #1).

The evaluation approach is to be selected by the evaluators and is expected to make use of the following:

- A desk review of available program documents (e.g. progress reports incl. logframe, project preparation documents, notes from workshops and steering committees);
- Semi-structured, qualitative interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. MoIE/MoME, AEE, municipal energy management units, etc);
- Purposive sampling strategy for qualitative data collection: sampling must strategically select interview partners which are expected to provide valuable information. The sample should include external stakeholders who can give a neutral opinion about the project. The sampling should consider the (expected) biases by respective interview partners, declare those, and take them into account in data analysis. – *draft list of all possible interviewees to be shared by SECO at the beginning of the evaluation;*
- Triangulation and Evidence Quality: findings must be based on several data sources, possibly using different data collection methods. The different evidence gathered must be valued transparently taking into account their quality, strength and inherent biases.
- Mapping and capacity assessment of key stakeholders;
- Identification of lessons learned;

For organisational purposes, all site visits and meetings with project partners shall be closely coordinated with SECO and/or the Swiss Cooperation Offices in Tirana and Belgrade. This is intended to facilitate contacts with project partners, without undermining the independence of evaluators. Representatives of SECO and/or the Swiss Cooperation Offices in Tirana and Belgrade will not attend meetings of the evaluators with project partners.

Preliminary evaluation findings shall be presented and discussed with SECO during an online or in-person meeting (milestone #2).

Final evaluation findings and recommendations shall be synthesised in a narrative report reflecting the protocol structure, with an executive summary suitable for a general audience (deliverable #2).

## 5. Implementation

### 5.1. Evaluation team

The evaluation team (one or several individuals) shall bring the following competencies and experience:

- In-depth knowledge and understanding of the energy sector in Albania and Serbia, including technical, institutional, regulatory, and financial aspects (10+ years of relevant experience);
- ~~In depth knowledge and understanding of financing of local self governments respectively subnational public financial management, including public investment.~~
- Understanding of the international cooperation landscape and implementation modalities in Albania and Serbia (5+ years of relevant experience);
- Strong methodological expertise and theory-based experience with evaluation approaches relevant to international cooperation programmes (i.e. theory of change development, purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and data analysis).

The designated Lead Evaluator shall supervise the evaluation team, retaining full responsibility for the execution of the mandate, including all communications with SECO, and the quality of deliverables.

### 5.2. Place of work

The evaluation consists of 1) desk-based and field work in Albania, including data and information collection covering partners at national level as well as the four SEMP pilot municipalities, and 2) desk-based and field work in Serbia, including data and information collection covering partners at national level as well as the four MEEMP pilot municipalities.

The evaluators shall share their mission plans and a list of envisaged meetings with the SECO National Programme Officer based at the Swiss Embassy in Tirana (Mr Eduart Rumani) and at the Swiss Embassy in Belgrade (Ms Ana Pajkovic) at least 2 weeks before travelling.

### 5.3. Deliverables

The evaluators shall prepare and deliver:

SEMP:

- An inception report including (i) evaluation protocol / methods, (ii) data and information collection tools (e.g. interview guides), and (iii) workplan, to be approved by SECO
- An evaluation report including findings related to each of the evaluation questions (Table 1)

MEEMP:

- An inception report including (i) evaluation protocol / methods, (ii) data and information collection tools (e.g. interview guides), and (iii) workplan, to be approved by SECO
- A concise evaluation report including findings related to each of the evaluation questions (Table 2)

The above requested documents shall be submitted to SECO for review and discussed during a debriefing meeting to be held 2-4 weeks after its submission. Feedback from SECO shall be integrated into a final version of the report, to be approved by SECO.

## 6. Tentative schedule

The evaluation is expected to be conducted from May to August 2025, with the level of effort (in days) as outlined in the following table.

Timeline	Milestone	Location
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May 2025	Kick-off meeting: briefing on expected outputs, scope and timeline	Online
	Review of background documents	Office
	Development of an evaluation protocol including tools such as interview guides	Office
	Preparation of a detailed workplan	Office
xx	<b>Deliverable #1: inception report</b>	
	Site visits and key informant interviews	On site, online
	Data analysis	Office
	Presentation of preliminary findings	Online
	→ →	
xx	<b>Deliverable #2: evaluation report</b>	
	Debriefing meeting and finalisation of the report	Online, office
<b>Total (days)</b>		

## Annex B - MEEMP Serbia – Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question	Assessment criteria, indicators Operationalisation of evaluation questions	Data sources, data collection, data analysis	Limitations	Evidence Quality
Relevance	<i>To which extent did the project (component 1, 2, 3) address the <b>policy priorities and needs of the partners</b> (the beneficiary municipalities and the Ministry of Mining and Energy)?</i>	Alignment with national strategies/laws/policies Alignment with municipal needs Stakeholder satisfaction with project design Demand for project continuation or expansion	Document review  Semi-structured interviews	There may be a positive bias from stakeholders due to their institutional roles  Not all priorities and needs might be fully documented	High
	<i>Was the project's <b>theory of change</b> reflective of the evolving context and partner capacities?</i>	Responsiveness to changing legal and policy context Adaptation to institutional and capacity constraints Stakeholder perception of project design (suitable to capacities?) Coherence of theory of change	Document review  Semi-structured interviews	No clearly defined Theory of Change (only logframe)  Limited documentation of assumptions	Moderate
Effectiveness	<i>To which extent were the <b>MEEMP objectives (component 1, 2, 3, outputs and outcomes) achieved at municipal and national level?</b></i>	Achievement of planned outputs and outcomes (as per logframe) Contribution analysis: Test the Theory of Change (with evidence), explore alternative explanations, assess the strength of MEEMP's contribution, use triangulation, provide a reasoned narrative.	Document review, including final logframe matrix  Semi-structured interviews	Attribution is complex due to multiple influencing factors  Delays and reporting gaps may obscure consistency	Moderate
	<i>To what extent was the <b>capacity development strategy</b> effective? Did it address the main gaps in the field of municipal energy management?</i>	Relevance of training topics to local needs Coverage and delivery of capacity-building activities Application of acquired skills and knowledge Institutional anchoring of knowledge and skills Engagement of local champions	Semi-structured interviews	Limited baseline information on capacities (consider EEA initial energy reviews 2018)  Staff turnover may reduce institutional memory	High
	<i>To what extent did the investment component deploy the expected <b>demonstration effect</b>?</i>	Visibility and accessibility of renovated building buildings as demonstration cases Replication or scaling interest expressed by other municipalities and by MoME Evidence of learning or inspiration by peers	Semi-structured interviews	Effects may be delayed or hard to quantify  Visibility may come from other awareness efforts	High

		<p>(e.g. learning events, testimonials, case studies)</p> <p>Demonstrated impact on users (improvements in comfort, energy savings, consumption changes based on EMIS, etc.)</p> <p>Level of community engagement</p>			
Efficiency	<p><i>To which extent was the MEEMP implementation set up efficient (organisation of the implementing consortium, cooperation modalities with the partners. etc)?</i></p>	<p>Clarity and complementarity of roles within the implementing consortium, including evidence of coordination and synergies between partners/consultants</p> <p>Efficiency of internal project management and administration</p> <p>Efficiency of coordination with internal (PIA at MoME) and external stakeholders (others at MoME, SCTM, municipalities, SECO,...)</p> <p>Use of financial and human resources relative to achieved results (value-for-money assessment)</p> <p>Adaptive efficiency and response to challenges</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Document review, including final project expenditures</p>	<p>Limited access to internal coordination data</p> <p>Perceptions of efficiency may vary by role</p>	High
Sustainability	<p><i>To which extent did the project contribute to sustainable municipal energy management capacities? To what extent is the EEA approach owned by the beneficiaries and partners?</i></p>	<p>Sustainability of institutional capacities at municipal level</p> <p>Retention and continued use of tools and processes</p> <p>Perceived ownership and integration of the EEA approach</p> <p>Capacity at national level (MoME, SCTM)</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Short period after project completion limits long-term view</p> <p>Ownership varies across municipalities</p>	High
	<p><i>To which extent was the MEEMP intervention strategy appropriate to foster sustainable results?</i></p>	<p>Design of interventions for long-term uptake (e.g. can tools and documentation be used independently, have trainings focused on institutional rather than individual capacities)</p> <p>Degree of embeddedness in local procedures</p> <p>Balance of project-driven and municipality-driven activities</p> <p>Consistency with enabling environment (national frameworks, linking to future support mechanisms, continued support)</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p>	<p>Limited visibility on use of tools post-project</p> <p>Sustainability objective not always explicit</p> <p>Project not always aligned with local budget cycles</p>	High

		from MoME/SCTM after project period) Mechanisms for support (post-project)			
	<i>To what extent did the project contribute to the <b>upscaling or roll out of the EEA approach</b> and project results?</i>	<p>Interest and replication by non-partner municipalities (requests to adopt EEA tools, use of tools/guides, examples of municipal replication)</p> <p>National-level dissemination and institutional uptake (EEA promotion, reference to MEEMP in national policy/programs)</p> <p>Evidence of MEEMP's influence on government institutional actions including changes in budgetary priorities, adoption of new procedures, or shifts in policy direction</p> <p>Cross-project or cross-country influence (e.g. SEMP-MEEMP interaction, or influence on other countries in the region)</p> <p>Strategic steps taken for scale-up (e.g. 2nd phase proposal/interest or incorporation of EEA into a national program)</p> <p>Role of champions in dissemination</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Comparative timeline mapping</p>	<p>The MEEMP logframe did not define a roll-out or upscaling of the EEA approach, but more as a long-term ambition</p> <p>Attribution of replication to MEEMP is difficult</p> <p>Limited evidence of uptake beyond pilot sites</p> <p>Difficulty to isolate MEEMP's contribution from other concurrent initiatives or external factors</p>	Moderate

## Annex C – Interview guide MEEMP

### General Introduction:

- Brief introduction of evaluators and the purpose of the evaluation.
- Emphasis that this is not an audit but a learning and accountability exercise.
- Clarification that responses will be anonymized unless otherwise agreed.
- Overview of expected interview duration.
- Confirmation of consent to take notes.

*Note: the below questions will be adapted based on the role of the stakeholder.*

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions for semi-structured interviews
<b>Relevance</b>	<p><b>Alignment with Needs and Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did MEEMP align with your municipality's or institution's energy-related priorities?</li> <li>• Were the project activities (C1, C2, C3) useful and relevant for your work?</li> <li>• Did MEEMP address real needs at the time, and did those needs change?</li> <li>• Did the project generate interest or demand for continuation, scale-up, or similar initiatives?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Responsiveness and Adaptation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the project adapt to legal, institutional, or contextual changes (e.g. new EE law, Covid-19, staffing)?</li> <li>• Were changes made to accommodate your institution's capacities or feedback?</li> <li>• In your opinion, was the overall project design realistic and appropriate for your context?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<p><b>Achievements and Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the MEEMP objectives or results (outputs/outcomes) do you believe were fully achieved? Partially? Why?</li> <li>• What were the most important changes observed in your municipality/institution due to MEEMP?</li> <li>• Did MEEMP help strengthen local ownership / decision making in energy planning</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Contribution of MEEMP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent do you believe MEEMP contributed to these changes?</li> <li>• What other factors also influenced these outcomes?</li> <li>• Would these changes have occurred without MEEMP?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Capacity Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which trainings, tools, or guides did you or your team participate in or use?</li> <li>• How relevant and useful were they in practice?</li> <li>• Were you or colleagues able to apply what you learned? Give examples.</li> <li>• Have any local champions emerged or remained active post-project?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Demonstration Effect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What impact have the renovated public buildings had in your city/community?</li> <li>• Have other municipalities shown interest in your experience?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were there learning exchanges or peer events as a result of MEEMP?</li> <li>• Did MEEMP inspire additional actions not originally foreseen?</li> <li>• Have any MEEMP practices been replicated independently, by your team or by other municipalities?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<p><b>Implementation and Coordination:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your collaboration with the project implementers (ENCO, EBP, Quiddita, GFA)?</li> <li>• Was coordination with other actors (MoME, SECO, SCTM, local teams) effective?</li> <li>• Were resources (time, funds, staff) used efficiently, in your opinion?</li> <li>• Were the roles of the consortium members clear and complementary?</li> <li>• Did you feel your feedback or suggestions were taken into account during project implementation?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Challenges and Adaptation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the key implementation challenges (e.g. design revisions, procurement, delays, administrative procedures)?</li> <li>• How did your team or the implementers address those?</li> <li>• Could decision-making or approvals have been more efficient?</li> <li>• Was there room for better resource or time planning?</li> <li>• Would you suggest any improvements for coordination in future projects?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p><b>Sustained Capacity and Use of Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you still using MEEMP tools like EMIS, EEA, EE planning templates, or toolboxes?</li> <li>• Does your municipality still have an active energy team or EE positions?</li> <li>• Is EEA now institutionalised? When was the last EEA audit? Are future ones planned?</li> <li>• Have MEEMP tools or practices been passed on to new staff or teams?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Long-term Relevance and Embedding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are MEEMP-developed resources still in use or shared?</li> <li>• Have any tools or approaches been adopted into local procedures or documents?</li> <li>• Is there a system in place to preserve institutional knowledge gained through MEEMP (e.g. onboarding of new staff, documentation)</li> <li>• What would help ensure continuity of the work MEEMP started?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Upscaling and Roll-Out:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have other municipalities approached you about MEEMP or EEA?</li> <li>• Are there signs of national-level interest or institutionalisation, or formal integration into national programs or budgets?</li> <li>• Do you believe EEA or energy management systems can/should be rolled out nationally?</li> <li>• What would be required for that to happen?</li> </ul>
<b>Final wrap-up questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the most important benefits of MEEMP for your institution or city?</li> <li>• What were the main limitations or missed opportunities?</li> <li>• Would your institution be interested in participating in follow-up activities?</li> <li>• What would you prioritize in such a program?</li> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to share?</li> </ul>

## Annex D – List of meetings / interviews by the MEEMP evaluation team

Date	Name	Organisation	Meeting	Online / in-person
12.05.25	Barbara Jaegglin Ana Pajkovic	SECO	Kick-off meeting	Online
15.05.25	Maren Kornmann Zoran Kapor Milena Milenkovic	Enco GFA SEE Quiddita	Inception meeting	Online
16.05.25	Ivo Foelmlj	EBP	Inception meeting	Online
11.06.25	Barbara Jaegglin Ana Pajkovic Eduart Rumani	SECO	Discussion of inception report	Online
11.06.25	Anne Rialhe	AERE	Semi-structured interview	Online
16.6.25	Milos Banjac	MoME (former Assistant Minister)	Semi-structured interview	In-person
16.6.25	Zoran Kapor Milena Milenkovic Sladjana Jevremovic	GFA SEE Quiddita GFA (ex subcontractor)	Semi-structured interview	In-person
16.6.25	Bojan Bogdanovic	EBRD	Semi-structured interview	In-person
16.6.25	Mladen Mrkic	MoME (former PIA)	Semi-structured interview	In-person
16.6.25	Miodrag Gluscevic	SCTM	Semi-structured interview	In-person
16.6.25	Antonela Solujic	MoME (former head of EE Dept.)	Semi-structured interview	In-person
17.6.25	Mr. Jugoslav Nikolić – Local Energy Manager Mr. Vladimir Janković – Former SECO Cooperation Coordinator Mr. Dejan Đorđević – Public Utility Company "Crnica" Mr. Miloš Đokić – Deputy President of the Municipal Assembly Mr. Žarko Savić – Member of the Municipal Council Mr. Dejan Miladinović – Member of the Municipal Council Mr. Dejan Stojković – Director, Public Utility Company Mr. Predrag Jovanović – Director,	Paracin	Semi-structured interview	In-person

	Primary School "Branko Krsmanović" (Sikirica)			
18.6.25	Mr. Ivan Manojlović – Mayor of Kruševac Ms. Ana Prvanov – Deputy Mayor Ms. Ivana Pajić – Deputy Head of City Administration Mr. Bratislav Đorđević – Energy Manager	Krusevac	Semi-structured interview	In-person
19.6.25	Mr. Aleksandar Tasić – Lead for MEEMP Component 2 (C2) implementation Ms. Svjetlana Drakul – Head of the Department for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development	Uzice	Semi-structured interview	In-person
20.6.25	Mr. Milan Glušac – Mayor of Vrbas Ms. Tijana Aleksić – Chairwoman of the Municipal Assembly Mr. Željko Zečević – Former Member of the Energy Team	Vrbas	Semi-structured interview	In-person
23.6.25	Maren Kornmann	ENCO	Semi-structured interview	online
03.07.25	Barbara Jaegglin Ana Pajkovic	SECO	Mission debriefing call	online

## Annex E – Pilot Municipalities Visit Summaries

June 17–20, 2025

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### Site Visit Summary: Paraćin

On 17 June 2025, the evaluation team visited the Municipality of Paraćin and met with key stakeholders, including the Energy Manager, Mr. Jugoslav Nikolić, former SECO Coordinator Mr. Vladimir Janković, and senior municipal officials. The municipality highlighted the refurbishment of two primary schools as the main achievement under MEEMP. While four schools were initially planned, cost increases required reducing the scope. Completed works were technically and visually successful, with energy savings of approximately 30%. The temporary relocation of pupils was managed effectively during construction.

Capacity-building activities, a study visit, and early engagement in the EEA process were mentioned, but considered secondary. Since MEEMP ended, Paraćin's involvement in the EEA has declined due to limited staff and lack of guidance. Although the municipality paid the EUR 2,000 fee (not yet for 2025), future participation remains uncertain. Officials expressed confusion about EEA requirements, re-certification steps, and benefits. Only mandatory EMIS reporting to MoME is currently maintained. One concrete outcome linked to EEA was Paraćin's shortlisting for an EBRD/SECO geothermal project in 2021.

Municipal staffing remains a serious constraint, with difficulty hiring and retaining qualified energy professionals due to limited budgets and competition from the private sector. Officials called for legal and financial reforms to support local EE efforts, including dedicated positions and clearer national mandates. They suggested future donor projects combine infrastructure with institutional support and focus on high-impact buildings, such as the town's overused sports center.

The team visited one rehabilitated school, observing significantly improved conditions. A brief stop at another site illustrated the municipality's readiness for further EE investment. However, the lack of MEEMP/SECO signage suggested missed opportunities for visibility.



*Meeting with Municipality of Paraćin*



*Refurbished primary school in Sikirica*

## Site Visit Summary: Kruševac

On 18 June 2025, the evaluation team visited Kruševac and met with Deputy Mayor Ana Prvanov, Deputy Head of Administration Ivana Pajić, and Energy Manager Bratislav Đorđević. The Mayor, Mr. Ivan Manojlović, also briefly joined. Kruševac is widely recognized as a leader in local energy transition and is involved in multiple energy-related initiatives.

Energy efficiency is a municipal priority, especially in the context of district heating. The city's energy plans align with national and EU frameworks and are locally funded. Through MEEMP, a school and a kindergarten were renovated, with reported energy savings of 15–18% and 40%, respectively. Construction quality was high, and disruption to pupils was minimal. MEEMP also contributed to energy team capacity building.

Kruševac has fully integrated EEA requirements across six thematic areas and uses the process as a strategic planning and awareness tool. Re-certification is planned for 2026 or 2027, though officials noted the need for clearer national guidance. The Energy Manager's placement under the City Council has elevated the role's authority.

The city has trained over 130 facility users in EMIS use and continues to operate the platform. Officials emphasized the need for broader EEA promotion, stronger peer exchange, and inclusion of certified advisors in local structures. While collaboration with MEEMP, MoME, and the consortium was positive, visibility remains a weakness – no SECO or MEEMP signage was observed at visited sites.



*Meeting with Municipality in Kruševac City Hall    Refurbished primary school 'Jovan Popović'*

## Site Visit Summary: Užice

On 19 June 2025, the team visited Užice and met with Aleksandar Tasić (C2 lead) and Svjetlana Drakul (Head of Environment Department). The Energy Manager was absent due to illness, highlighting capacity gaps. Užice views energy efficiency as a key strategy to combat air pollution.

MEEMP originally planned six building refurbishments, but only three were completed due to procurement delays, budget constraints, and inflation. The team visited a kindergarten where gas heating replaced coal and wood. Energy savings of 20–30% were reported, and staff noted improved comfort and safety. The janitor received training for boiler and fire safety.

The municipality found MEEMP relevant but challenging. The central procurement process caused major delays, with three failed tenders before a direct negotiation succeeded. Local authorities preferred national procedures used with UNOPS, which they found more efficient and better aligned with their capacity.

While Užice remains a nominal EEA member, understanding of the framework is limited. The previous EE action plan expired in 2024; a new one is planned pending national guidance. EMIS reporting continues, showing ongoing transparency. Other notable MEEMP outputs include a Swiss study visit, trainings, and Serbia's first local flood early warning system with 10–11 monitoring stations.



*Meeting with Užice municipal representative Aleksandar Tasić*



*Visit to rehabilitated kindergarten*

### Site Visit Summary: Vrbas

On 20 June 2025, the evaluation team met with the Mayor, Ms. Aleksic (Assembly Chair), and former energy team member Željko Zecevic. The Energy Manager was on leave. Vrbas has long led on local EE, creating Serbia's first municipal energy office in 2012. It operates its own monitoring system, viewed locally as superior to EMIS.

The municipality proposed renovating 20 buildings, but only three were included due to budget limits. Refurbished sites – a school and a kindergarten – were in good condition, and users expressed satisfaction. While early plans to make Vrbas a regional EE hub were not realized, the municipality continues to pursue this vision.

Political and administrative continuity have supported strong implementation. Despite reduced staff, former team members still offer informal support. Documentation and procurement under C2 were burdensome, and officials advocated for streamlining future procedures.

Vrbas remains active in the EEA process and values it as a planning and engagement tool. Certification has helped attract funding and raise the municipality's profile. However, recognition from peers remains limited. The municipality sees itself as well placed to serve as a regional EE hub, provided greater visibility and donor support.



*Exterior of refurbished primary school  
Svetozar Miletic in Vrbas*



*Visit to rehabilitated kindergarten*