lifeSMART

Support small Municipalities towARds energy Transition

Co-funded by the European Union

life SMART

Layman's report

PROJECT DETAILS

Project number: 101120908

Project name: Support small Municipalities towArds Energy Transition

Project acronym: LIFE22-CET-SMART

Call: LIFE-2022-CET

Topic: LIFE-2022-CET-LOCAL

Duration: 01/10/2023 - 31/03/2026

Budget:

- Total budget: 1,535,675.77 €
- LIFE co-financing: 1,458,891.98 €

Cordinator: ANATOLIKI SA, Organization for Local Development

Partners:

- AREANATEJO – Agencia Regional de Energia e Ambiente do Norte Alentejano e Tejo
- CCI – Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Nice Côte D'Azur
- CMRC – Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale
- FAMP – Federación Andaluza de Municipios y Provincias
- U-Space Espana S.L.
- CRAS S.r.l.

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1. What is LIFE - SMART?

LIFE-SMART (Support small Municipalities towArds Energy Transition) is a European project that helps **small municipalities in Greece, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal** plan and manage their **local energy transition**.

Many small towns want to save energy, reduce emissions and use renewables — but they often **lack technical staff, know-how and coordination**. LIFE-SMART was created to solve this exact problem.

The project runs for **30 months** and is co-funded (95%) by the **EU LIFE CET Programme**.

2. Why is the project important?

Small municipalities are key players in climate action — but they face major barriers:

- limited technical staff
- lack of energy planning expertise
- low citizen awareness
- difficulty accessing funding and designing projects

Without targeted support, they cannot effectively implement **Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs)** under the Covenant of Mayors.

LIFE-SMART strengthens their capacity so that local climate action becomes real, not just plans on paper.

3. What does LIFE - SMART do?

The project works through five regional clusters (Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal) and delivers three main actions:

1. Creation of Inter-Municipal Technical Structures (IMTS)
2. IMTS Activities
3. Transfer & Replication Across Europe

N°	Pilot Areas	Ctry
1	Municipality of Aristotle	GR
2	Municipality of Volvi	GR
3	Valle dell'Ustica Union (Comuni di Vicovaro, Mandela, Roccagiovine, Licenza e Percile)	IT
4	Ayuntamiento de Baeza	SP
5	Ayuntamiento de Begíjar	SP
6	Ayuntamiento de Canena	SP
7	Ayuntamiento de Ibros	SP
8	Ayuntamiento de Lupión	SP
9	Ayuntamiento de Rus and ELA de El Mármol	SP
10	Ayuntamiento Torreblascopedro	SP
11	Ayuntamiento de Villatorres	SP

N°	Pilot Areas	Ctry
12	Município Avis	PT
13	Município de Alter do Chão	PT
14	Município de Castelo de Vide	PT
15	Municipio de Marvão	PT
16	Câmara Municipal de Sousel	PT
17	Município de Monforte	PT
18	Ville de Biot	FR
19	Mairie de Saint-Martin-Vésubie	FR
20	Commune de Saint Vallier de Thiey	FR
21	Commune de Saint Martin Vésubie	FR

3.1 Creation of Inter-Municipal Technical Structures (IMTS)

In each country, LIFE-SMART sets up permanent inter-municipal technical teams made of:

- **trained municipal staff**
- **external energy experts**
- **regional coordination bodies-project partners**

These teams help municipalities to **design, manage and implement energy transition actions** together.

3.2 Inter-municipal Energy Structures per Country-GREECE

The Greek pilot areas of study include the neighboring Municipalities of Volvi and Aristotelis, located in Central Macedonia. The two territories share similar energy profiles, demographic characteristics, and strong seasonal fluctuations in energy demand due to tourism, creating a solid foundation for joint energy-transition planning.

The **Municipality of Volvi**, covers approximately **783 km²** and is divided into six municipal units. It has around **22,000 permanent residents**, with a population **exceeding 80,000 in summer** due to strong tourism activity. The **Municipality of Aristotelis** extends over about **747 km²** and consists of three municipal units.has a permanent population of roughly 18,300 inhabitants, which increases significantly during tourist seasons.

The IMTS was formally activated in March 2024 through a collaborative effort led by ANATOLIKI S.A.The collaboration was formalised through a Mutual Agreement signed by all parties, establishing a structured framework for joint action. Operating as an inter-municipal technical hub, the IMTS coordinates experts and municipal staff to support energy planning, project preparation, and implementation.

A comprehensive educational programme on energy transition was delivered on 25–26 February, tailored to the operational needs of municipal staff. The training programme was delivered by the energy expert member of the IMTS, staff members of ANATOLIKI

as well as a national expert on enery poverty. The IMTS members contributed to the programme design by identifying local priorities and selecting the most relevant personnel to participate. This targeted capacity-building effort improved the municipalities' technical readiness, enabling staff to better understand energy-transition pathways and support the preparation of future projects.

The IMTS implemented multiple awareness-raising initiatives addressing citizens, youth, and businesses, fostering stronger community engagement in the energy transition. Energy literacy among the wider public was promoted through outreach activities such as an information stand at the 1st Mountainous Race in Paleochori (May 2025) and an educational event in Volvi (September 2025), where students and residents engaged with interactive tools, including energy-producing bicycles, to better understand sustainable energy practices. In parallel, targeted workshops were organised for local businesses in Ierissos and Ouranopoli (September and November 2025), informing

participants about developments in the energy sector such as the incorporation of Renewable Energy Sources in business and opportunities for energy upgrades mainly regarding the refurbishment in touristic buildings and electrification in cooling and heating.

Through close collaboration between experts and municipal representatives, the IMTS supported the structuring of local energy priorities and strengthened inter-municipal cooperation.
Full energy analyses and efficiency studies were carried out, providing a solid technical knowledge base for decision-making and investment planning. By combining technical expertise with local operational knowledge, the structure helped align both municipalities around a shared vision for climate neutrality and long-term energy resilience.

One of the most tangible achievements of the IMTS was the advancement of project maturity for the energy renovation of two public buildings, one in each municipality. The expert, working closely with municipal teams, carried out the necessary energy analyses and efficiency studies and completed all preparatory documentation — including Energy Performance Certificates — required for the tendering process. Beyond these projects, the IMTS strengthened inter-municipal cooperation by creating economies of scale, establishing a permanent communication channel, and supporting a more unified approach to local climate objectives.

The continuation of the IMTS is formally secured through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by ANATOLIKI S.A. and the participating municipalities. The structure will provide ongoing technical advisory services, training programmes, and awareness actions, while remaining open to additional municipalities interested in joining the cooperation framework. A diversified funding model — combining municipal agreements, and future EU funding opportunities — is planned to ensure financial resilience and long-term operation.

3.2 Inter-municipal Energy Structures per Country-ITALY

The Italian target area corresponds to the **Valle dell'Ustica Union** and includes five small municipalities - **Vicovaro, Mandela, Roccagiovine, Licenza, and Percile** - located northeast of the Metropolitan City of Rome (CMRC), with a total population of **fewer than 6,000** inhabitants. The IMTS was established through a Memorandum of Understanding signed between CMRC and the Union in March 2024.

The IMTS is composed of a representative from CMRC, responsible for coordination and general supervision, a technician from the Union, and two external experts selected to provide support especially for energy efficiency and RES plant planning and management.
Over the past few months, IMTS members participated in training and energy literacy initiatives organized by the SMART project partners' staff. The first set of initiatives included a seminar, a webinar, and an online workshop targeted at municipal staff,with a total of 53 participants. The second set included awareness-raising workshops held in three local primary and middle schools, three public assemblies, and participation in a local festival with a dedicated stand.

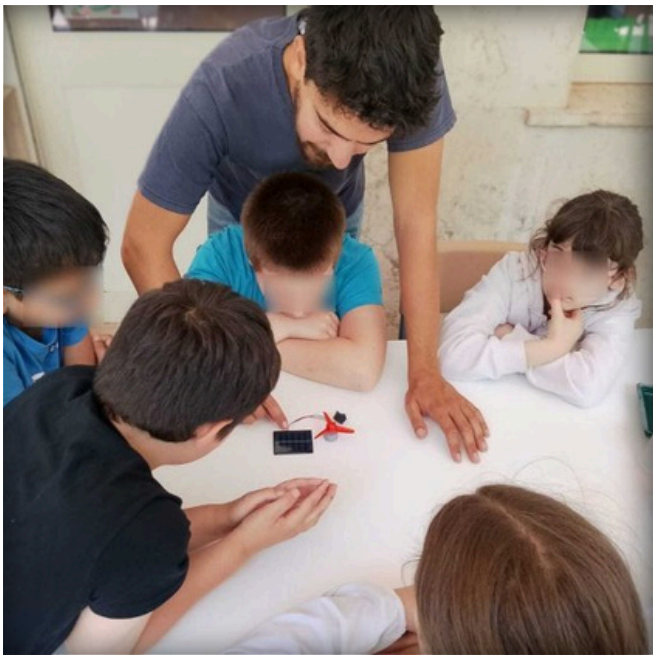
The IMTS members collaborated with the partners' staff to build a knowledge base, elaborating a baseline report that collects data on local energy consumption and opportunities for RES (Renewable Energy Sources) production. They also collaborated on defining and preparing the implementation of a local energy strategy. According to the proposal, this process encompasses three steps: the first was the definition of a common vision. This led to the identification of three main fields of intervention, which were included as actions within the Union's joint SECAP approved by the five municipalities between 2024 and 2025:

1. The development of a local Renewable Energy Community (REC);
2. The renovation of the public building stock;
3. A slow tourism project focused on the Way of Saint Benedict.

Subsequently, the first of these three actions was developed into a strategy to support the expansion and activation of a former REC initiative - originally limited to the municipality of Roccagiovine - to the entire Union. This resulted in a program structured into four types of short, medium, and long-term activities:

- Administrative steps to formalize the expansion of the Roccagiovine REC and the adhesion by consumers and producers
- Knowledge-deepening activities
- RES system implementation
- Promotional activities

Some of these activities, especially under types 1, 2, and 3, were carried out as part of the LifeSMART project, while others will continue after its conclusion. Specifically, a call for new Valle Ustica REC members was launched, alongside a list of companies and technicians willing to provide services for the purchase and installation of residential RES plants locally. The REC is now ready to register its first configuration, including all municipal connection points and σeveral private ones. Furthermore, 32 public rooftops were identified as suitable for PV plant installation in the medium-to-long term, with an estimated total capacity of 515 kWp, requiring an investment of approximately €620,000.



3.2 Inter-municipal Energy Structures per Country-SPAIN

The Spanish target area selected by the Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FAMP) with the support of USPACE encompasses **eight municipalities in La Loma Occidental region**, located in the centre of Jaén province within Andalusia: Baeza, Begíjar, Canena, Ibros, Lupión, Rus (and Authonomous Local Entity of El Mármol), Torreblascopedro, and Villatorres. With **a total population of 34,031** inhabitants, the region represents a typical rural European context characterized by small-scale municipalities: seven of the eight have populations under 5,000 inhabitants, ranging from 806 in Lupión to 4,267 in Villatorres. Only Baeza exceeds this threshold with 15,677 inhabitants. The region is characterized by a predominantly agricultural landscape dominated by olive cultivation, which constitutes the economic backbone of the territory. Despite their small size, all municipalities demonstrate strong institutional commitment to environmental sustainability and all are signatories to the Covenant of Mayors, and Baeza is also a member of the Spanish Network of Cities for Climate. Five municipalities developed a Master Plan in 2020 defining a common Smart Territory model incorporating environmental protection actions.

The IMTS in La Loma Occidental was formally established on 8 October 2024 through a collaborative agreement signed by

the participating municipalities and key supporting institutions. Its main objective is to create a stable, the participating municipalities and key supporting institutions. Its main objective is to create a stable, joint working structure bringing together political representatives, municipal technical staff, and external energy experts to coordinate efforts, build local capacity, and drive the planning and implementation of energy transition actions across the territory.

Following the activation of the IMTS, an intensive capacity-building programme was delivered to municipal civil servants and political representatives (mayors and councillors) (between November 2024 and February 2025 to strengthen skills on energy transition. Training materials were made available for continued use, and participants gained practical, directly applicable skills such as basic energy knowledge, tools for the energy transition of municipal

assets, financing tools for energy transition through the development of renewable energies and Climate change adaptation.

A comprehensive energy literacy strategy was rolled out across all eight municipalities to improve citizens' understanding of energy issues and build public support for local energy-transition initiatives, with the IMTS actively involved in

designing and delivering the activities. It combined nine permanent information points with practical materials such as a trifold brochures with specific measures for energy saving in the household divided by season or booklets in diptych format for children to colour in and learn about energy-saving actions they can do themselves at home.

It also included an online awareness campaign via the FAMP's social media, and four targeted workshops for different groups (children, parents, and seniors), covering themes such as household energy savings, sustainable mobility, and renewables to encourage participation and long-term uptake of municipal actions.

The main outcome of the IMTS work has been the Joint Strategy for the Energy Transition of La Loma Occidental, co-developed through a participatory process with all IMTS members as a shared action plan responding to common needs across the territory. The mission of this strategy is to facilitate a fair and sustainable energy transition in the municipalities of La Loma Occidental through the cooperation between all the municipal governments that form part of this region and the provincial government of Jaén, which is the province in which La Loma Occidental is located.

The strategy is structured around five strategic areas of action, which are the lines of intervention that will enable the objectives to be achieved: regional energy governance and inter-municipal cooperation, promotion of local renewable energies, improvement of energy efficiency in buildings, sustainable and low-emission mobility, and public awareness and participation in the energy transition. It was officially presented in February 2026 together with a formal protocol signed by all members, including the consolidation of the IMTS itself to ensure continuity beyond the project, which confirms their commitment to keep working together and to seek funding to implement the planned actions.

Although the strategy comprises a set of detailed measures, it prioritises realistic measures with strong potential to secure funding through grants and short-to-medium-term support schemes. The action selected, as it has the most options for obtaining financing from local, regional or national authorities in the short/medium term, is the Installation of photovoltaic self-consumption systems in municipal buildings.

3.2 Inter-municipal Energy Structures per Country-PORTUGAL

The Portuguese pilot area is located in the rural Alto Alentejo region and includes six small and medium-sized municipalities characterised by low population density and limited internal technical capacity in energy and climate planning.

To address these structural limitations, the Intermunicipal Technical Structure (IMTS) was formally activated on **24 April 2024**, through a Cooperation Protocol signed by AREANATejo, the six municipalities and the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre. The structure operates until **March 2026**, in line with the LIFE-SMART project duration.

The IMTS combines regional coordination, specialised external expertise and municipal technical focal points, creating a stable and replicable supramunicipal governance model.

Between the **second half of 2024 and throughout 2025,** structured training activities were delivered to municipal technicians, focusing on financing tools, NZEB (Net Zero Energy Buildings) strategies, renewable integration and EPC (Energy Performance Certificates) models. Regular coordination meetings were held during the entire 2024–2026 period.

The energy planning and investment structuring process was developed within the framework of the SECAP update, in accordance with the Covenant of Mayors methodology. In this context, Baseline Emission Inventories (BEI) were prepared as the analytical foundation of the mitigation pillar, alongside Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (RVA), which underpin the adaptation pillar. These components ensure the technical consistency of the diagnostic phase and provide the basis for defining strategic priorities and the measures to be implemented.

Building on this analytical foundation, six Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) were updated and aligned with the 2050 horizon between late 2024 and 2025. In 2025, priority renewable energy and energy efficiency measures were identified and technically structured to ensure feasibility and strategic coherence.

From 2025 onward, Implementation Plans and Business Plans have been developed and are currently in their final consolidation phase, with completion scheduled for March 2026. These plans include detailed technical diagnostics, financial modelling, CAPEX and OPEX estimations of what (e.g. buildings renovation, infrastructure etc..., and the identification of appropriate funding sources to support implementation.

Awareness sessions and workshops were carried out throughout **2024–2025,** with final presentation of updated SECAPs and implementation strategies taking place in early **2026**.

The IMTS significantly strengthened the technical capacity and investment readiness of small municipalities. The joint involvement of six municipalities enabled economies of scale, knowledge sharing and greater territorial impact.

Although the formal protocol ends in **March 2026**, the IMTS will continue operating from **April 2026** through its integration into AREANATejo's Energy Desk. Services will include technical support for SECAP implementation, renewable energy advisory, funding assistance and continuous capacity building, delivered primarily by AREANATejo's internal technical team.
This ensures the long-term sustainability of the IMTS model beyond the LIFE-SMART project.

3.2 Inter-municipal Energy Structures per Country-FRANCE

The IMTS implemented in the Alpes-Maritimes pilot area delivered concrete, coordinated, and operational support to four municipalities: Biot, Saint-Martin-Vésubie, Saint-Vallier-de-Thiey, and Tende. The IMTS functioned as a multi-actor coordination and technical assistance mechanism, producing tangible outputs that directly supported local energy transition actions.

At institutional and governance level, the IMTS delivered a formal collaboration framework, materialized through a collaboration charter signed by all partners. This charter formalized the collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Nice Côte d'Azur (CCI NCA), municipalities, and the external technical expert, ensuring structured cooperation throughout the project.

At municipal level, the IMTS delivered four tailored municipal action plans, developed in close collaboration with local teams and based on on-site assessments, data collection, and technical analyses. Each action plan provides a clear overview of priority steps for energy transition and identifies one concrete priority action to be implemented within the project timeframe. These plans translate strategic objectives into operational roadmaps adapted to local capacities and constraints.

Through the mobilization of an external technical expert, the IMTS delivered high-value technical studies and implementation support, based on the priority actions identified, including:

- An energy audit of a high-consumption municipal building, including associated action plans;
- A diagnosis of the building management system of a high-consumption municipal facility;
- A photovoltaic potential study for three high-consumption municipal buildings;
- Preparation of a detailed technical specification document (CCTP) for the installation of photovoltaic panels at a school complex, and support in drafting a public funding application.

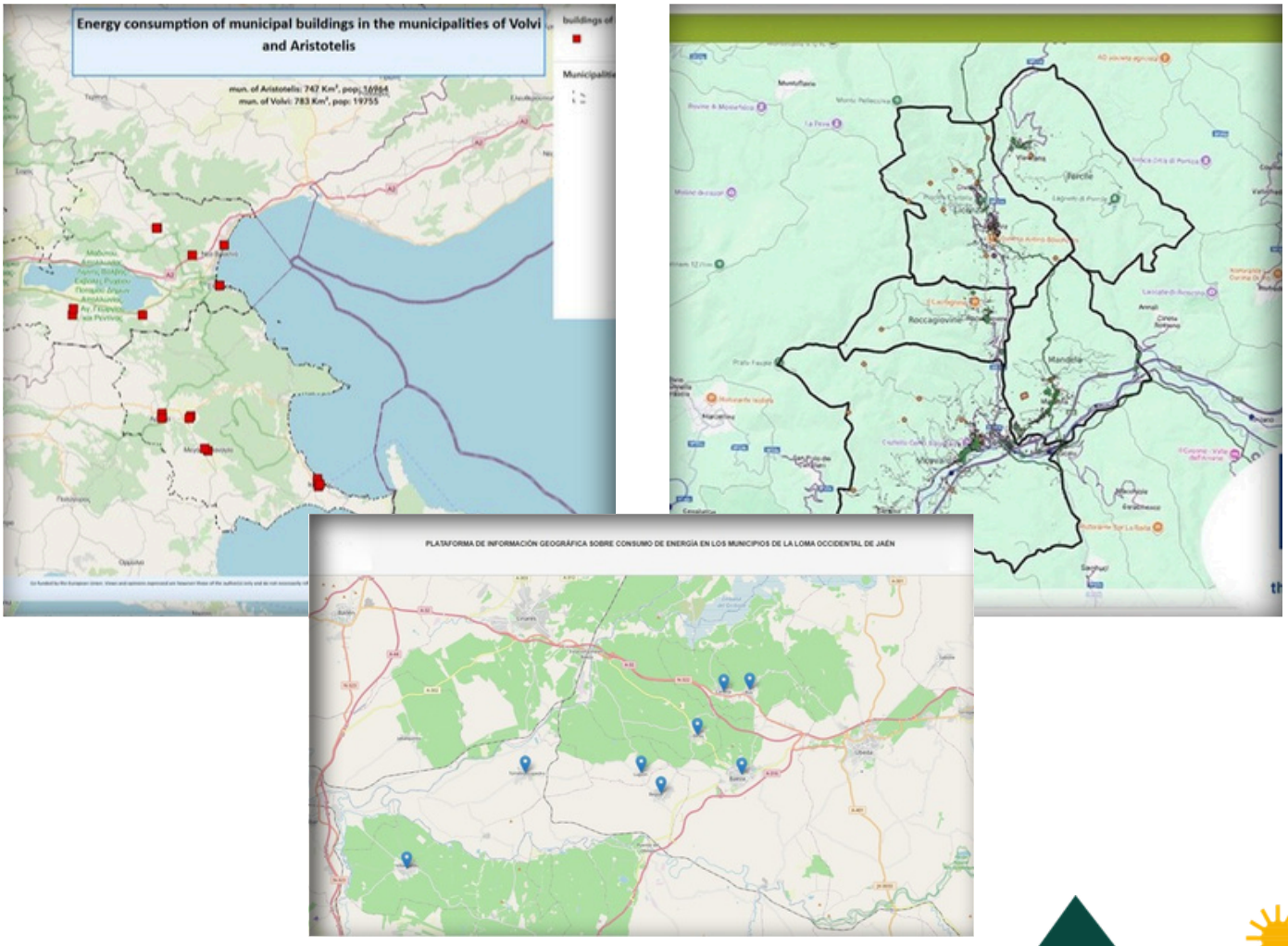
In parallel, the IMTS delivered **capacity building and awareness-raising actions** targeting municipal staff, local stakeholders, and citizens. A **shared eco-gesture awareness campaign** was co-designed and implemented across the four municipalities, promoting energy-saving behaviors within municipal services and public facilities. This common campaign strengthened coherence and mutual learning across territories.

The IMTS also delivered knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement activities through the organization of workshops, thematic events, and training sessions. These included **workshops during the Assises Azuréennes de la Transition Énergétique** (June 2024), **a photovoltaic-focused afterwork event** (October 2024), **and an Energy Transition Event** (March 2025). These events enabled the dissemination of best practices, peer-to-peer exchanges between municipalities, and direct interaction with technical experts and energy stakeholders.

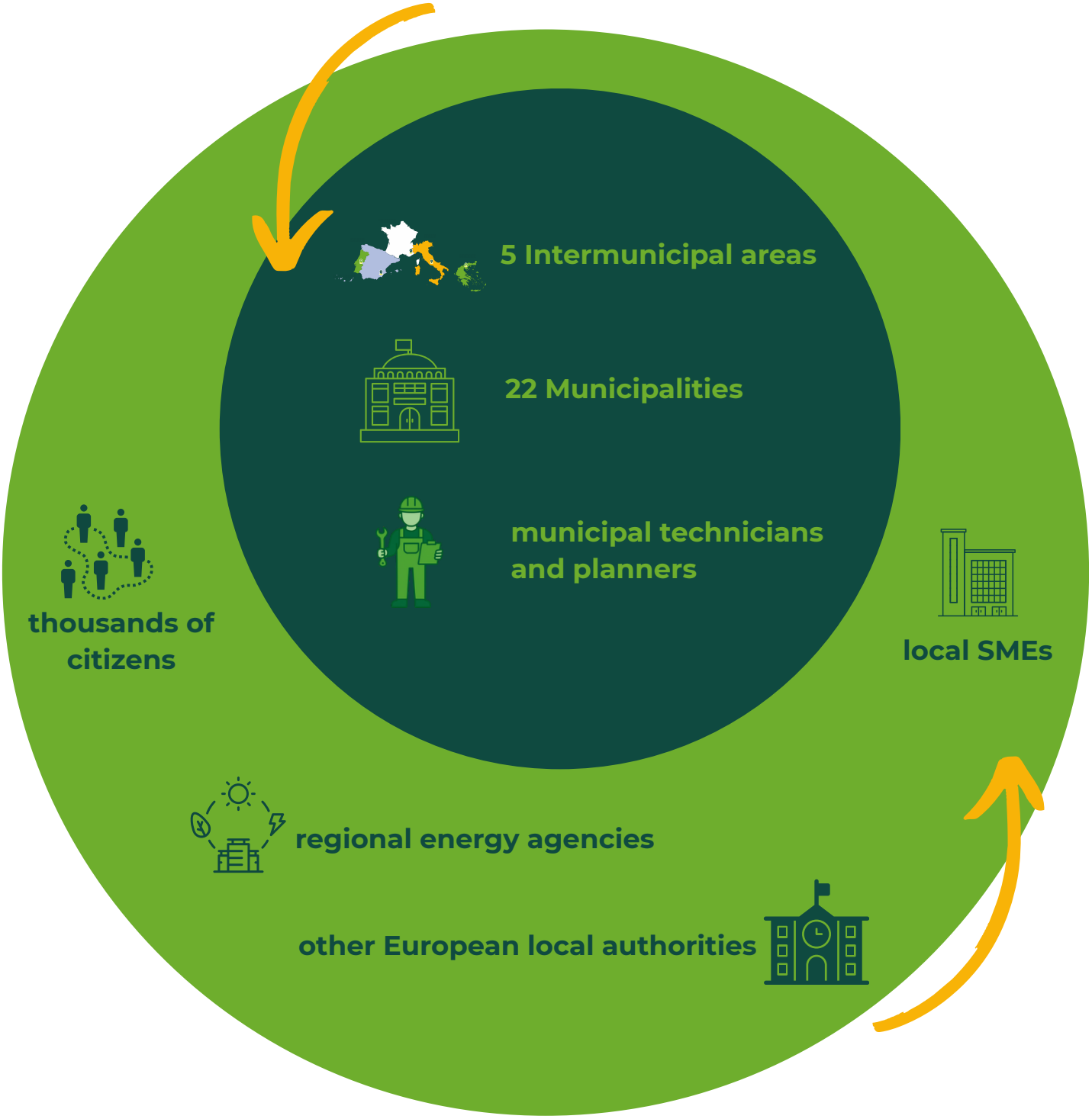
Finally, the IMTS is currently organizing for March 2026 a **joint municipal workshop** to identify common challenges and solutions, and the preparation of a **dedicated event connecting municipalities from the territory with financing structures.** This event will present the results achieved within the SMART project, support access to funding, and encourage replication of IMTS-supported actions across the wider territory.

3.3 Transfer & Replication Across Europe

All tools, methods and models are documented and shared so that other European municipalities can replicate the LIFE-SMART approach.



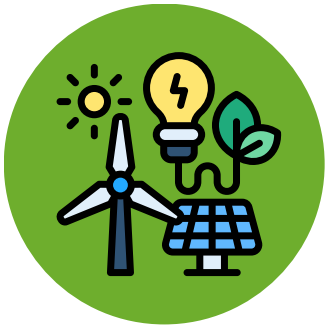
4. Who benefits?



5. What results did LIFE-SMART deliver?

LPIs Capacity Building and Awareness related

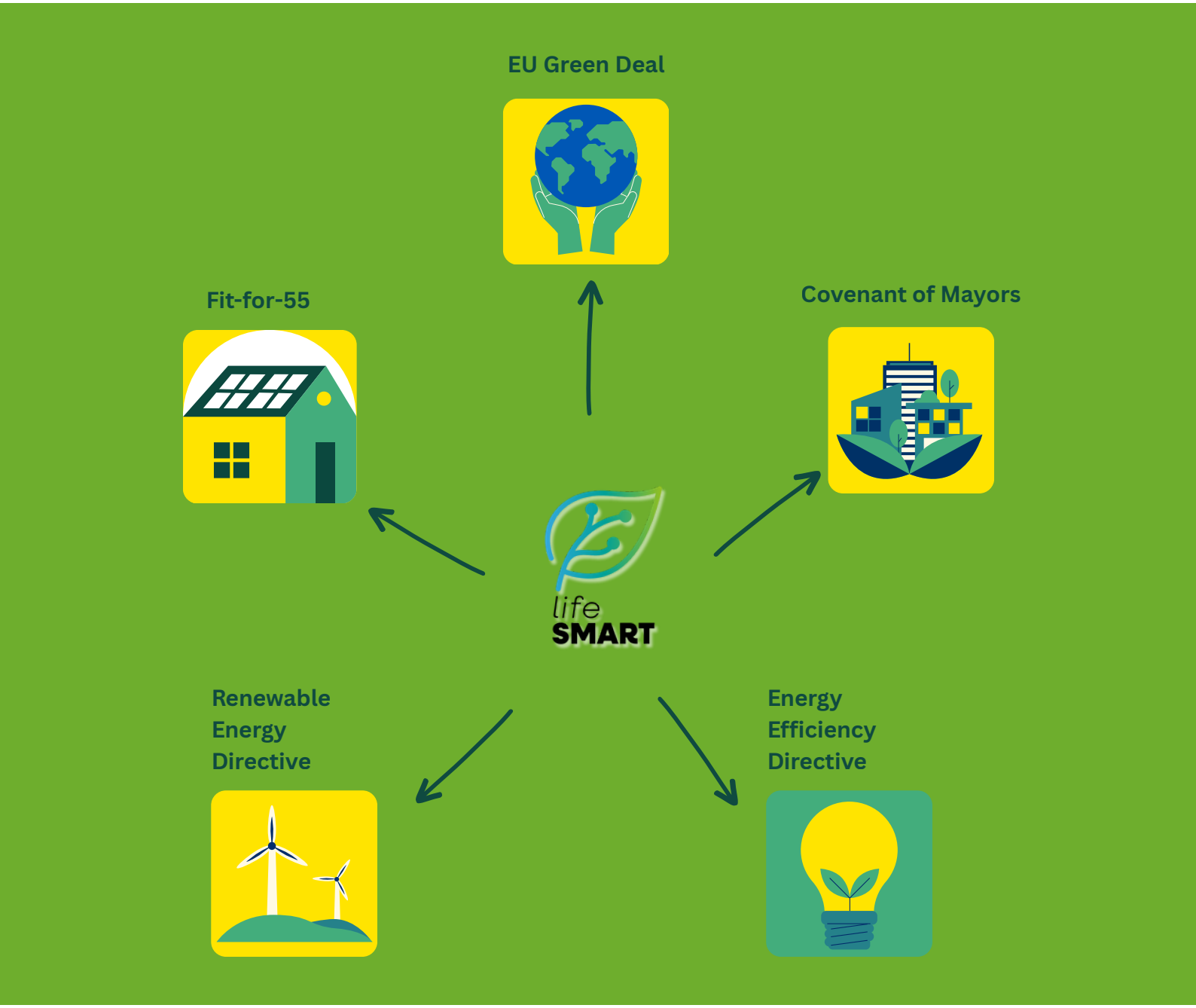
200 people were trained



1122 people were reached by energy literacy activities

10 new job positions were created

6. How does LIFE-SMART contribute to EU climate goals?



The LifeSMART project concluded with its final meeting on March 10–11, 2026, in Rome, Italy.

life SMART

Coordinator:

ANATOLIKI S.A. ORGANIZATION FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Partners:

areanatejo

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