Report on experiences and showcases of successfully implemented learning groups

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Preface

PROSPECT+, building on the previous H2020 project PROSPECT, will enable capacity building in regional and local authorities in order to finance and implement effective and efficient sustainable energy plans, including their proper monitoring and verification and also ensuring that such plans are using synergies from other local plans. The learning programme will advance through 5 learning modules covering public buildings, private buildings, public lighting, transport, and cross-sectoral topics. PROSPECT+ will focus on improving decision-making of cities in project selection for financing and assessment to ensure that their projects are finance ready. The ambition is to ensure that over 200 EU cities in at least 20 EU MS will improve their capacities when it comes to implementing projects from sustainable energy and climate plans (SECAPs) and similar sustainable plans.

WHO WE ARE

	Participant Name	Short Name	Country	Logo
1	Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy Stichting	IEECP	NL	
2	European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and the Environment	FEDARENE	BE	
3	EUROCITIES ASBL	EUROCITIES	BE	
4	Energy Cities/Energie-cites Association	ENC	FR	
5	University of Piraeus Research Center	UPRC	GR	
6	OÖ Energiesparverband	ESV	AT	
7	Energy and Climate Agency of Podravje	ENERGAP	SI	
8	Tipperary Energy Agency	TEA	IE	
9	Ayuntamiento de Valladolid	INNOLID	ES	
10	Association of Energy Managers of Towns and Regions of the Czech Republic	SEMMO	CZ	
11	Adelphi research gemeinnützige GmbH	adelphi	DE	

Executive Summary

Within the course of almost four years, the PROSPECT+ project designed and implemented a peer—to—peer **Capacity Building Programme** to strengthen knowledge and upskill municipal and regional governments and/or their associated energy agencies across Europe on using innovative financing schemes when planning/implementing energy efficiency measures. The primary objective is to promote knowledge and experience sharing about innovative financing schemes for implementing effective climate and sustainable activities that can lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and boost energy savings at the sub-national level. The programme run from March 2022 to December 2024 and was divided into four **Learning Cycles**. Each Learning Cycle saw **facilitators**, **mentors** and **mentees** exchanging practices to develop various measures included in their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans or other planning documents.

The purpose of this analysis was to explore the perceived added value, challenges, and overall impact of the programme. This report showcases a qualitative analysis of participant experiences from successfully implemented groups. Data was collected from various sources: semi-structured interviews with external mentors, written feedback from facilitators, internal monitoring tools and testimonials from mentees. By addressing the highlighted challenges and building on its strengths, the PROSPECT+ Capacity Building Programme has the potential to achieve even greater impact and engagement in future iterations, within and across more EU Member States.

Key themes emerged across several participants, regardless of their role as mentee, mentor or facilitator, in favour of the **programme added value**, inter alia: high levels of satisfaction were evident from the in—person study visits and peer mentoring, attributed to the opportunity to engage in more in-depth discussion with mentors and mentees compared to online meetings. Also, synergies emerged across peers because of the programme interactive Steps stretched across 6—8 months.

Despite the positive feedback, participants highlighted some **challenges**. Both mentors and facilitators deemed the CBP working document (titled 'Action Plan') too detailed and long, and logistical challenges were mentioned when carrying out one or more Steps. A few noted that matchmaking of some learning groups did not account for the substantially diverse backgrounds of mentees. Some mentors had limited knowledge about overcoming the lack of a harmonised policy framework for non-EU countries, they however attempted to provide a satisfactory learning experience based on other peers' practices. From these insights, **improvements** include increasing the sessions frequency for specific financing scheme and more personalized mentoring opportunities.

Chapter 1 outlines the basic elements and structure of the PROSPECT+ programme for the readership, whereas Chapter 2 summarizes the evaluation methodology of this report. Chapter 3 outlines key findings from the thematic qualitative analysis. Here, facilitators/internal mentors and mentees' lessons learnt are analysed separately. Chapter 4 draws recommendations based on common themes that emerged in Chapter 3 across all participants. The report concludes with a list of actionable steps to replicate the programme and better address future participants' requirements.

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1 Introduction

Cities are major contributors to pollution and climate change, nevertheless, they also possess the potential to achieve significant emissions reductions, set replicable practices for boosting green investments[1], as well as develop ambitious programmes to sustain renewables, energy communities, sustainable mobility and so forth.[2] However, the **financing of sustainable energy and climate initiatives** by local and regional authorities (LRAs) is primarily constrained by insufficient internal capacity and expertise to identify the most suitable and cost-effective financing instrument and related implementation strategy, especially in small municipalities.[3]

To address this challenge, the HORIZON 2020 project PROSPECT+ (2022—2025) has been providing support to more than 200 EU cities and regions, enabling them to effectively implement their local energy and climate strategies through innovative financing instruments, building on the previous PROSPECT edition.[4] Within the course of almost four years, the PROSPECT+ project designed and implemented a **peer-to-peer Capacity Building Programme** to strengthen knowledge and upskill municipal and regional governments and/or their associated energy agencies across Europe on using **innovative financing schemes** when planning/implementing energy efficiency measures, which can lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and boost energy savings as well as – to a lesser extent – renewable energy sources (RES) production at the sub-national level.

With the project reaching its end in February 2025, this reports primary focus is on exploring the perceived added value, challenges, and overall **experiences** stemming from participating in the programme. This report showcases examples of participants' experiences from **successfully implemented groups**.

1 JRC Publications Repository - Covenant of Mayors: 2021 assessment (2021). Available at https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128104

2 Climate Change and Renewable Energy: National Policies and the role of communities, cities and regions (2019). Available at https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2019/Jun/IRENA_G20_climate_sustainability_2019.pdf

3 Central and Eastern European Sustainable Energy Union – Policy recommendations for CEE municipalities (2023). Available at https://eu-mayors.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-01/Policy%20recommendations%20for%20CEE%20municipalities.pdf

4 https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/752126/reporting

2 Background of the Capacity Building Programme

"The Step 2 session gives me the possibility to learn more about mentees' local contexts. I can also read the information in the Action Plan that they provide [...] They also fulfilled the Action Plan with the Transferability Analysis, the SWOT Analysis, which gives me a lot of information. And we comment everything in Step 4."

Alicia Villazan Cabero. Valladolid, Spain (facilitator and internal mentor from Agencia de Innovación de Desarrollo Económico de Valladolid)

This chapter provides a brief overview of the PROSPECT+ Capacity Building Programme (hereinafter CBP) learning programme's methodology. For a detailed explanation and more information, you can consult the report *Detailed structure and plan for the CBP*, in addition to the resources onto the PROSPECT+ project website.[5]

2.1 The learning programme

PROSPECT+ aimed at developing and implementing an easy and replicable peer-to-peer learning programme to support European local and regional authorities to implement and finance their sustainable energy and climate actions using innovative schemes. Peer-to-peer learning is defined here as **sharing of knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience** among matched peers.

The innovative financing schemes covered in PROSPECT+ (often used together with grants or other forms of subsidies – process known as "blending") are:

- Energy Performance Contracting (EPC)
- Citizens Finance (crowdfunding and cooperatives)
- Internal Contracting (intracting)
- Soft Loans
- Revolving Funds
- Third Party Financing
- Incentives for e-mobility
- EE projects bundling
- Energy communities
- ELENA
- Green Bonds
- Guarantee Funds

5 https://h2020prospect.eu/learning-programme

These schemes are classified under five thematic areas presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Five thematic learning modules under PROSPECT+

The PROSPECT+ learning programme was implemented in four Learning Cycles (LC), as presented in Figure 2 below. For each LC, an engagement campaign was launched at a European level, where mentees could register informing the consortium about their preferred learning module(s) and financing scheme(s) to be covered in the learning programme. These roles are briefly explained in section 2.2 below.

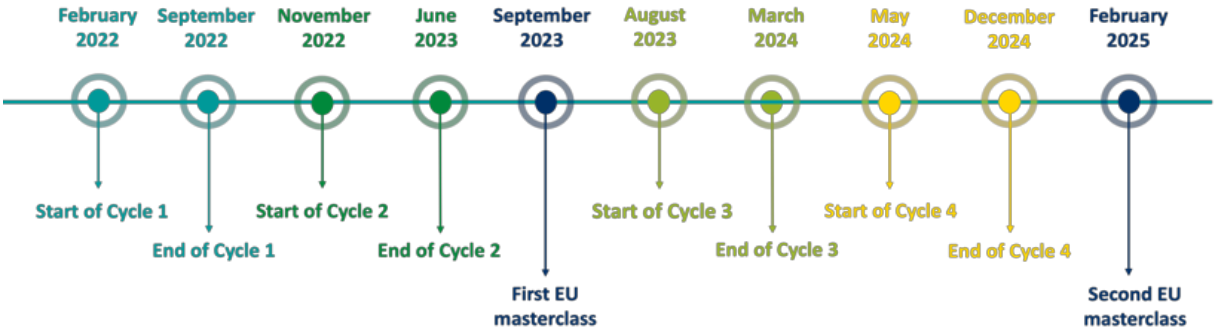


Figure 2. Schedule of Capacity Building Programme Learning Cycles under PROSPECT+

2.2 Participants and roles

Each group had the involvement of three types of participants:

- **Mentor**: an individual representing a local or regional authority having direct experience with or specific expertise in financing a sustainable energy and climate action through an innovative scheme and is willing to share insights to a mentee.
- **Mentee**: an individual representing a local or regional authority who wants to learn from an experienced or expert peer on financing a sustainable energy project using an innovative scheme and is interested to apply what they learned in their own context.
- **Facilitator**: a member of the project consortium who is assigned to support the learning interactions between the mentor and mentee(s) of a specific learning group. The facilitator creates and manages effective processes that enable the learning participants to achieve their learning objectives and produce the expected learning outputs and/or outcomes. The mentors and mentees of each learning cycle are selected and matched so to ensure that their experience and needs are aligned and complementary.

"Facilitating our groups is straightforward and the most efficient way to do it since we have the entire process of the learning programme in our hands (as internal mentors and experts). [...] Nevertheless, overall, facilitating groups is very time consuming, especially when mentees are not very responsive."

Megan Gignac. Linz, Austria (facilitator and internal mentor from OÖ Energiesparverband)

2.3 Types of learning groups and methods

PROSPECT+ focused on three learning methods for achieving its peer-to-peer learning objectives, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Three peer-to-peer learning methods under PROSPECT+

Peer mentoring is a **one-to-one** relationship between a mentor and a mentee and is characterized by "positive role modelling, promotion of raised aspirations, positive reinforcement, open ended counselling, and joint problem solving".[6] The peer mentoring visit is characterised as an activity during which the mentor visits the mentee to understand the learning context and to carry out mentoring activities. A mentoring visit can include a mix of different mentoring activities, such as workshops, presentations, interviews, and excursions.

Study visits involve a peer group composed of **1 mentor** and between **3—5 mentees**. The mentees from the peer group should have similar learning needs and objectives. In the study visit programme, the mentees observe first-hand how the mentor has implemented its sustainable energy or climate action project using an innovative financing scheme and get insights and recommendations directly from the mentor. The study visit is composed of one study visit (2 days) and three online engagements (1-4 hours each).

Local mentoring is specific for local groups, in which mentees and mentor are in the same country (or region) and/or speak the same language and have common backgrounds and plans. These learning groups are designed to overcome the language barrier to accessing PROSPECT+ learning programme and are composed by **1 mentor** and up to **7 mentees** plus one interpreter where needed. The programme follows the above schedule of one study visit (2 days) and three online engagements (1-4 hours each).

These learning methodologies and activities were organised into a four-step learning process replicated within each of the four Learning Cycles, which is presented in the next section.

6 Topping, K. J. (2005). Educational Psychology, 25(6), pp.361-645, doi: 10.1080/01443410500345172. Available at https://andymatuschak.org/files/2005%20Topping.pdf

2.4 The structure of the Learning Cycle

Figure 3 illustrates the different steps of the PROSPECT+ CBP, which unfolds in four learning cycles (each of 4 – 8 months duration). In each learning cycle, participants can follow **up to six Steps**, in which both online and physical meetings take place. These are described as follows:

- At least **3 online meetings** are envisioned (Steps 1, 2, and 4)
- **1 in-person meeting** of 2 days (Step 3)
- 30 mentees among the most advanced ones are selected and invited for a **bi-annual Masterclass**, an in-person workshop in Brussels, Belgium (Bonus step).

Figure 3. Overview of the PROSPECT+ CBP methodology to support cities/regions on their way to adopt innovative financing for their local energy and climate actions.

Source: PROSPECT+ internal repository

Last, but not least, each learning group works on a common online document, defined as the **Action Plan**, which includes detailed explanations of all Steps, additional resources, tools, and guidelines to complete the cycle for mentees (Figure 4). The Action Plan is available in English and in other local languages, depending on the type of groups: EU or local. Specifically, participants can be matched at the EU groups, having mentees and mentors from different countries working together on one specific theme, or local groups, in which the mentees and the mentor are in the same country (or region) and/ or speak the same language and have common backgrounds and plans.

> "Actually, being a national group made the exchange more preferable: language, same context, governance structure. The desire is to extend to other countries, to see other examples."
>
> **Laurent Chanussot. Villeurbanne, France (external mentor from Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Energy Environment Agency – AURA-EE)**

Figure 4. PROSPECT+ Action Plan and guidelines documents.

Source: PROSPECT+ internal repository

3 Methodology for reporting on experiences

The peer-to-peer learning method used in PROSPECT+ (as described in Chapter 2) was evaluated by facilitators, internal and external mentors, based on the dynamics of these groups, the effectiveness of the learning process, challenges encountered, and potential areas for improvement. The reporting followed the below schedule:

A midterm review was conducted between July and September 2023 on the facilitation and mentoring process under the **Learning Cycles 1 and 2** by IEECP and Eurocities. The objective of the review was to assess to assess how well each LC's actual mentoring process adhered to the pre-defined plan and gather insights or possible enhancements. This allowed to revise the programme for potential improvements. The review included the analysis of the feedback collected through the Facilitators' Monitoring Tool in PROSPECT+ (Excel sheet filled-out by facilitators after each Step), and through one-on-one meetings with all **facilitators/internal mentors**.

The final review was conducted between June and November 2024 by IEECP and Eurocities. The focus was on **all Learning Cycles**. The original guiding questions of the 2023 midterm review were used to collect feedback and fine-tuned in 2024, including experiences from **external mentors** (see Appendix I). A total of 7 external mentors were interviewed. The main results based on facilitators and mentors' experiences as well as examples from successfully implemented groups are presented in chapter 3 that follows net. The data analysis is structured based on the following four categories:

Showcases of successfully implemented learning groups. Not only did the data collected through the above methods contributed to the reporting of participants' experiences, but it also supported the identification of examples showcasing successfully implemented learning groups. Based on mentors and facilitators feedback, section 4.3 below reports cases of learning groups representing cities and regions, which planned to develop and launch sustainable energy and climate action projects using innovative schemes in their own local contexts. Notably, these **examples are non-exhaustive** and, certainly, several other groups provided successful results.

Once the successfully implemented learning groups were identified based on their facilitators and/or mentors' feedback, each example was analysed based on a few **selected criteria**, illustrated in Table 2 – adapted from various authors in Suškevičs et al. (2018)[7] and used by Enseñado & Heemann (2020)[8]:

Table 2. Learning groups outcomes and indicators (adapted from the literature)

Learning outcomes	Indicators
Cognitive change	Acquisition and/or co-creation of knowledge, enhanced problem comprehension
Relational change	Attitudinal change towards stakeholders/actors e.g. gaining a better understanding of others' inter- ests and viewpoints and acquiring a more critical understanding of one's own role; actual changes in relationships e.g. trust building, facilitated conflict resolution, and changes in power relations
Action-Orientation	Changes in actor networks e.g. new connections among stakeholder networks, informal shadow network developed, direct focus on action. This can include staff time required, time needed for implementation, legislative / regulatory framework / governance related efforts and communication factors
Wider Capacities	Enhanced capacities beyond the scope of the intervention; capacities spanning across different levels of scales governance and/or social organizations and time frame implementation

The illustrated criteria were first employed in the report *Success Stories from PROSPECT*.[9] Building on and going a step further from the previous project edition, mentors and facilitator' experiences were triangulated with mentees' ones, ensuring the same successful learning outcomes were perceived and recorded by all participants.

As an additional step, we also looked at which mentees had filled-in the **PROJECT Finance Readiness Tool**[10] designed under PROSPECT+. Completing this tool enabled mentees to lock-in some key learnings of the programme with a downloadable and sharable version of their Learning Cycle outcomes. This Tool is established under PROSPECT+ in response to most common challenges for LRA, i.e. lack knowledge regarding the different financing schemes, available options, capacity to secure the right financing, accessing alternative (e.g. non-grant), and ultimately, difficulty to demonstrate the "bankability" of the planned strategies.[11] This Tool supported mentees in determining the financial readiness of their project(s), defined as the **ability of a project to secure financing** from either public or private financing institutions within a certain time frame as shown in Figure 5. It also showcases the maturity of a project and its ability to gain resources to close its funding gap(s). The Tool includes all **aspects expected to be reviewed by a financial institution** to successfully receive funds.

7 Suškevičs, M., Hahn, T., Rodela, R., Macura, B., & Pahl-Wostl, C. (2017). Learning for social-ecological change: A qualitative review of outcomes across empirical literature in natural resource management. Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568

8 Enseñado, E.M. and Heemann, J. How can peer-to-peer learning support energy transition in cities and regions? 2020. Edited by Van den Dool, L. and Schaap, L. in Strategies for Urban Network Learning. Book Chapter. Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan.

9 https://h2020prospect.eu/sites/default/files/PROSPECT_reports/D44_PROSPECT_success_stories_updated.pdf

10 https://h2020prospect.eu/project-finance-readiness-tool

11 Caputo, P. & Pasetti, G. (2015), Overcoming the inertia of building energy retrofit at municipal level. The Italian challenge. In Sustainable Cities and Society, 15, pp. 120–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2015.01.001.

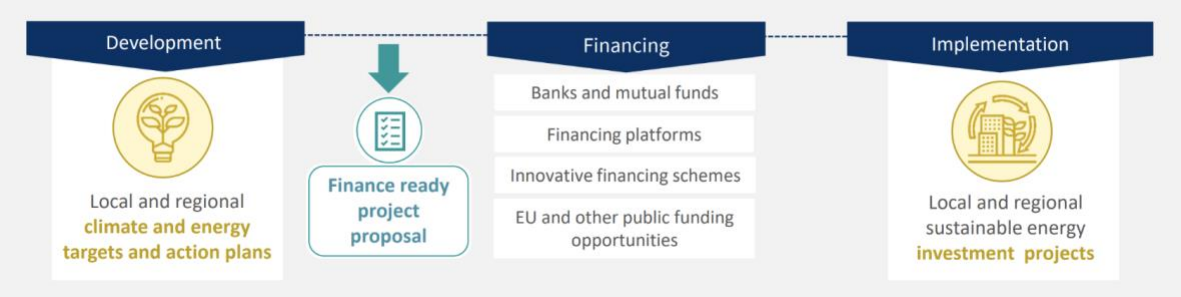


Figure 5. Overview of the Financial Readiness Tool fit from project development to implementation.

Source: PROSPECT+ Step 0 Webinar on Building Financial Readiness by adelphi (May 2024).

Collecting insights based on the facilitators/internal and external mentors' perspective is only one of the components of the PROSPECT+ monitoring method. More details on the overall monitoring methodology are included in the report *Monitoring guidelines for the success of the Capacity Building Programme*.[12]

Notably, we ought to make a data collection plus methodology distinction between the information sources used to compile the reports mentioned in the paragraph above, as shown in Figure 6.

The *Inventory of energy sustainable measures and verification of achieved impacts* is based on data collection from the online questionnaire regularly distributed by facilitators-to-mentees after the end of the Learning Cycle (6 months and 1 year upon the end of their LC). Mentees are asked to provide information regarding their individual projects' progress.

The *Summary of the monitoring outcomes of the CBP* is based on evaluation and satisfaction surveys filled-in by mentees, mentors and facilitators after Step 4, hence at end of the Learning Cycle. Participants are asked to evaluate their overall satisfaction with the CBP experience.

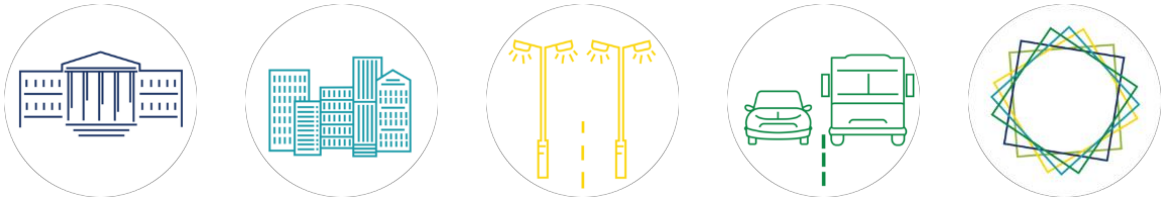
Figure 6. Distinction between two core monitoring reports under PROSPECT+.

[12] https://h2020prospect.eu/sites/default/files/reports/PROSPECT%2B_D4.1__Monitoring_guidlines.pdf

4 Experiences from Participants' Learning Groups

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the qualitative analysis of participants' experiences with PROSPECT+ learning groups. Overall, a total of 50 learning groups were hosted under the Prospect+ project, divided into the following thematic areas:

50 Learning Groups



9 Public Buildings*

7 Private Buildings*

2 Public Lighting

6 Transport

26 Cross-sectoral

*These figures include one learning group that tackled both Private and Public Buildings (see also Annex I).

4.1 Internal Mentors/Facilitators' Perspectives on Learning Groups

The Prospect+ project has 5 partners acting as internal mentors: OÖ Energiesparverband (ESV), Energy and Climate Agency of Podravje (ENERGAP), Tipperary Energy Agency, Valladolid City Council (Innolid) and the Association of Local Energy Managers (SEMMO).[13]

4.1.1 Overall Facilitation and Mentoring Experience

During the midterm review in 2023 and the final data collection in 2024, internal mentors/facilitators were asked to express their written feedback in an Excel file, regarding their overall experience in terms of 1) achieved expectations and 2) challenges. Results are reported below.

Achieved Expectations. When asked about how the facilitation/mentoring process unfolded across the Learning Cycles -- compared to their initial expectations – 80% of internal mentors/facilitators reported that facilitation alongside mentoring is manageable, providing full control of the learning groups. While 40% commented that having a dual role (being both facilitators and internal mentors) is time consuming, especially in the case of non-responsive mentees. This confirms the results from the midterm review, where some internal mentors claimed not to have expected the amount of work that goes into facilitation (e.g. setting up meetings, confirming travel arrangement and following up on timely input from all participants). This impacted their capacity to provide timely reporting. In the final review, the percentages of responses do not amount to 100% because one internal mentor/facilitator

13 https://h2020prospect.eu/who-we-are

aligned with both claims – adding that facilitation became increasingly easier after familiarising with the CBP content and Action Plan document in the aftermath of the first Learning Cycle.

Challenges. As showcased in Figure 8 below, the majority of internal mentors/facilitators (33%) reported two main challenges: the first being the need for having **flexibility,** as an important element when planning sessions with their learning groups, either for online meetings or site visits, in order to accommodate all mentees and mentors' availability and successfully complete all the CBP Steps within the given timeline of 6—8 months. The second challenge referred to **dropout cases.** Despite the flexibility the PROSPECT+ CBP could provide – some learning groups experienced dropouts due to **external factors**, inter alia changes in participants or participants' affiliations agenda/priorities, workload within the municipality, municipal staff availability, motivation, personal circumstances (see Figure 7).

Approximately 17% claimed that the **Action Plan document was too lengthy**, especially Step 4 and had very detailed requirements for mentees, several surveys to fill-in, as well as several feedback sections to complete – which could have been replaced by a session with mentors-mentees at the end of Step 4. Other facilitators/internal mentors encountered difficulties due to the **poor command of the English language** within their learning groups.

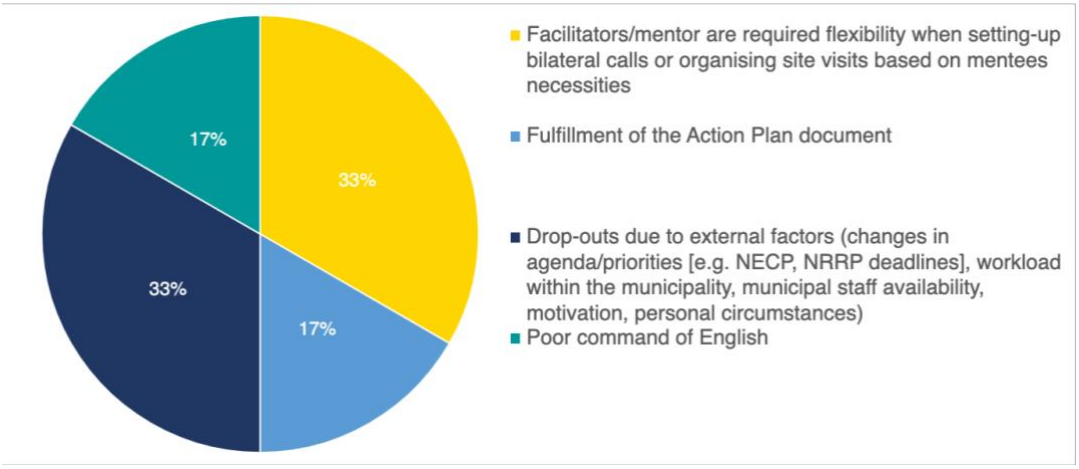


Figure 7. Challenges of facilitation/mentoring of PROSPECT+ learning groups.

4.1.2 Experiences from the Study Visits and Peer Mentoring

This section outlines the main topics covered and the main areas of interest and capacity gaps emerged during the in-person meetings. Also, it identified extra topics apart from the mentor's main project based on learning groups expression of interest. Overall, **in-person meetings** are a unique opportunity to step-up from general information to detailed and complex project readiness activities, fully understanding the benefits and rationale behind innovative financing schemes. All internal mentors/facilitators agreed on the following statements:

Study visits allowed a greater degree of flexibility as additional topics were added based on mentees requests, aside from the Action Plan learning objectives. Study visits would be hosted by mentors,

additional experts could join the in-person meeting, plus other local stakeholders bringing their own expertise and experience.

- Notably, some visits included components showcasing valuable municipal initiatives within the area of climate action or/and energy transformation but not strictly linked to capacity-building for broader use of innovative financing instruments.

Peer mentoring visit arrangements have shown a degree of flexibility, with either mentors or mentees travelling as required. It was observed that mentees' travel to mentors' location also in case of some peer-learning (one-on-one) groups has added value.

4.1.3 Usefulness of the PROSPECT+ Capacity Building Programme

This section dives deeper into the added value of the Capacity Building Programme, the matchmaking process and points out future improvements, based on internal mentors/facilitators' experiences with their implemented learning groups as in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Facilitators/internal mentors' feedback on major benefit/added value for the learning groups (in percentage).

"The most useful is the in-person, face-to-face meeting, that is when the most important and valuable words are said."

Mgr. Tereza McLaughlin Váňová. Prague, Czechia (facilitator and internal mentor from Association of Energy Managers of Cities and Municipalities (*Sdružení energetických manažerů měst a obcí*)– SEMMO)

Figure 8 below shows the responses regarding the matching process and elements that draw the internal mentors/facilitators attention in their specific learning groups.

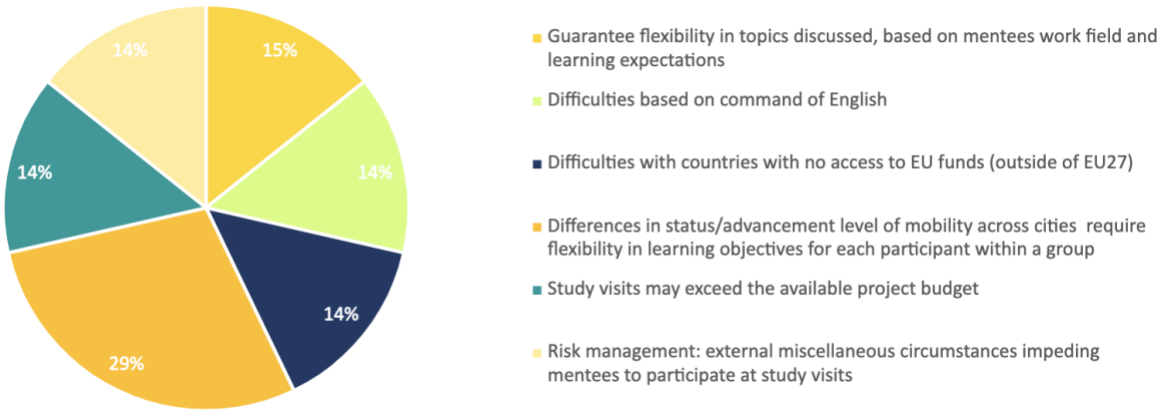


Figure 9. Facilitators/internal mentors' feedback on the matching process (in percentage).

No issues were pointed out by internal mentors/facilitators regarding the matching making process nor the learning groups' outcomes based on such process.

> "[...] move away from the division of "public building vs public lighting" groups. In all our groups, we end up talking about [it] because the mentees are interested in both. All municipalities have both buildings and lighting infrastructure."
>
> **Megan Gignac. Linz, Austria (facilitator and internal mentor from OÖ Energiesparverband)**

Lastly, internal mentors/facilitators were asked to express their feedback on **effectiveness of the process and what could have been done differently**. Improvements points are as follows:

- The Action Plan is too detailed, and mentees need to be motivated to complete all sections.
- Materials were often shared via email as the chosen platform (SharePoint) was not easily accessible for some users.
- Flexibility is key when transferring knowledge on innovative financing schemes with different mentees (e.g. discussions on financing actions on mobility would spark advice on other aspects other than implementing sustainable mobility).

4.1.4 PROSPECT+ Replication and Future Involvement

When asked about whether learning groups' participants are driven or willing to continue taking part in other replication activities that the programme offers, 33% of facilitators/internal mentors replied that there's strong interests by mentees in the **Community of Practice (CoP)** activities continuation. Conversely, another 33% claimed that the activities offered by PROSPECT+, such as the CoP or **Innovative Financing Ambassadors** are scarcely pursued at the end of the Learning Cycle.

The participation to the **Masterclass**[14] (as a bonus step for most advanced mentees) has received highly positive feedback and 17% of respondents would like to replicate the experience. Results are illustrated in Figure 10.

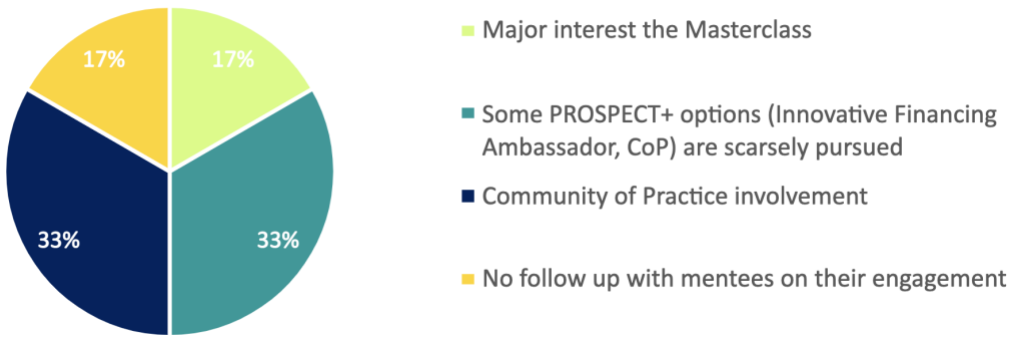


Figure 10. Facilitators/internal mentors' feedback on replicability and future participants' engagement (in percentage).

14 https://h2020prospect.eu/news-events/prospect-masterclass-was-success

PROSPECT+
Before the programme I knew a little about energy communities, now I have more knowledge and I am able to discuss the topic with my peers and colleagues from the municipality.
The examples provided were clear and strong!
Sera Freitas, Lisboa E-Nova – Energy and Environment Agency of Lisbon
Cross sectoral
Citizen finance

4.2 External Mentors' Perspectives on Learning Groups

4.2.1 Overall Mentoring Experience

External mentors were asked to express their feedback regarding the 1) achieved expectation and 2) challenges and improvements points based on their overall experience. Results are reported below in Figure 11.

Achieved Expectations. A total of 32% of external mentors claim the CBP organisation and approach is successful.

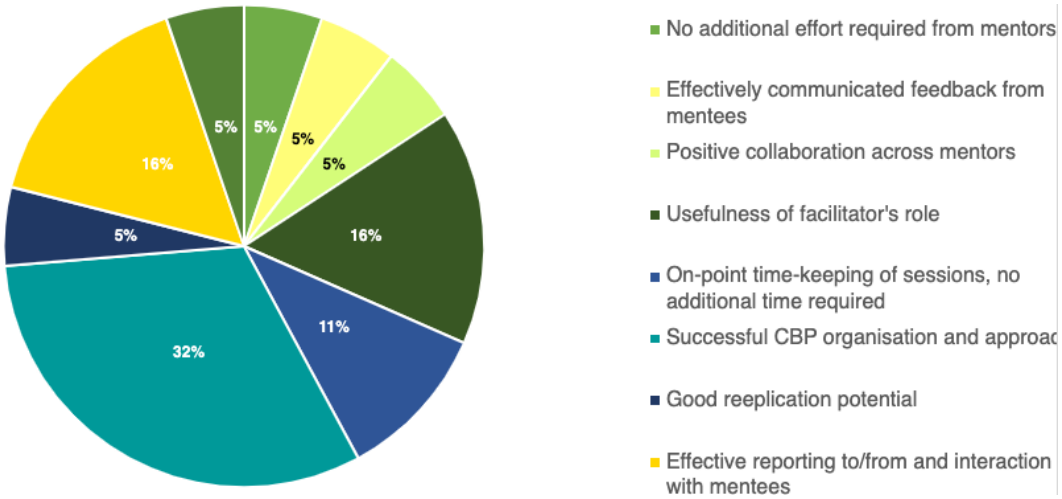


Figure 11. Challenges of facilitation/mentoring of PROSPECT+ learning groups.

To be considered in future iterations of the CBP, the following improvement points:

- length of the Action Plan document (too detailed),
- matchmaking among countries with too different contexts, and
- study visit holds no added value to 'ELENA application' mentoring groups.

4.2.2 Experiences from the Study visits and Peer Mentoring

This section outlines the main topics covered and the main areas of interest and capacity gaps emerged during the Learning Cycles in-person meetings. On top of the internal mentors/facilitators' statements, the following points have been remarked by external mentors:

- **Mentor hosting:** valuable exchange of experiences and best practices, additional mentor-side experts can join the site visit, plus other local stakeholders, e.g. e.g. building owners, ESCOs and other companies.
- **Mentee hosting:** the advantage for mentors is gaining an in-depth understanding of mentees context.
- **Facilitators** have a fundamental supporting role (logistics and financial aspects).

- Online-only sessions were effective for specific groups, some learning exchanges were not dependent on-site visit (ELENA, theory on policies and intervention practices).

Preparatory work. Figure 12 below illustrates their feedback when asked whether their preparation for their mentoring activities was sufficient.

Important note: mentors in general and facilitators in PROSPECT+ are not required to research **participants' local context** (regulations, governance, internal buy-in, their decision-making potential, their level of experience) prior to the start of the Learning Cycle.

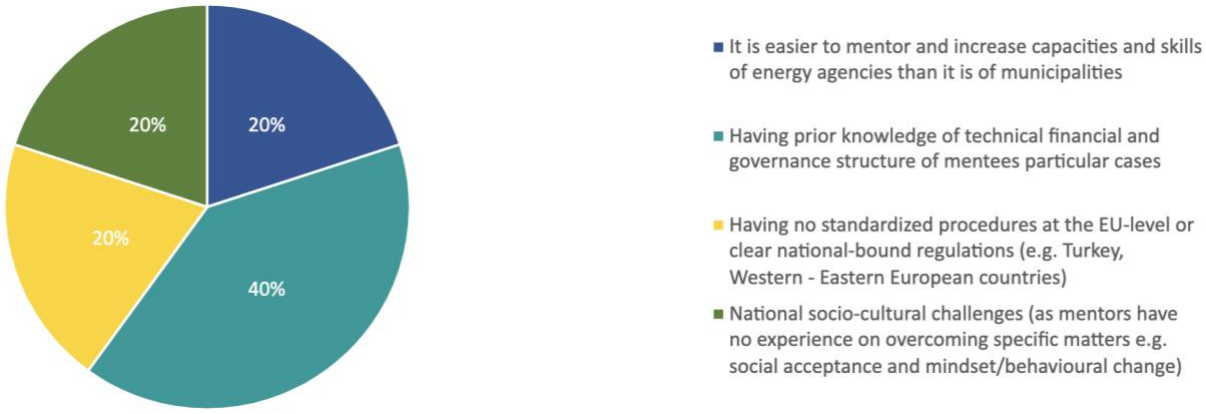


Figure 12. Understanding mentees local context: factors affecting the learning process (in percentage).

Based on the above results, the following remarks emerged from the analysis:

- 40% of interviewees claimed that **prior knowledge** of mentees' contexts is needed, and 20% mentioned the effectiveness of having **standardized procedures** to achieve successfully learning groups. The case of Turkey or substantially different context among Western and Eastern European countries are examples of mentors' challenges.
- 20% of interviewees stressed that **energy agencies** are considered entities with the necessary **know-how** working with municipalities to increase their capacities and skills.
- In terms of **socio-cultural** challenges, e.g. mentality, how to motivate tenants of buildings where project is implemented.

Two external mentors claimed that even if mentor-mentee matching was not ideal, due to either topic-wise or contact-wise aspects, this mismatch was counterbalanced by the CBP approach focusing on enabling knowledge exchange across different contexts. The learning groups were in the end successful in completing the CBP, having increase cross-boundaries knowledge on both the mentees and mentors-side.

4.2.3 Usefulness of the PROSPECT+ Capacity Building Programme

This section dives deeper into the added value of the Capacity Building Programme, the matchmaking process and points out future improvements, based on external mentors' experiences with their implemented learning groups. Several elements are in line and confirm the above findings:

- It is helpful if mentor-mentees had **prior collaborations** (past or on—going).
- Mismatching may be due to mentees applying for the CBP with a **different interest** than their actual willingness to implement the project.[15] On the contrary, some learning groups were an optimal match – based on external mentors' feedback – albeit **different contexts** (e.g. Western vs. Eastern EU).
- The CBP further supported existing knowledge exchange plus renewed **future collaboration** opportunities based on the CBP structure (which mentors can use and replicate to develop more projects).
- The **mentor exceptional experiences and knowledge** of standardizes EU-level procedures (e.g. ELENA) overcomes mentees different background.

15 This is why the additional question on expressing candidates' interest in the programme themes was added to the PROSPECT+ Application Form from Learning Cycle 2 onwards.

Furthermore, external mentors highlighted the added value of the PROSPECT+ CBP step-by-step peer learning, and of the tool suite offered by the project, which is considered incredibly useful to better understand e.g. the mentees' project financing readiness (this is specifically valuable in the case of energy performance contracting or green bonds as innovative financing schemes).
To summarise, external mentors value the CBP content as an essential stepping stone for mentees to start with their projects, based on other peers' good practices. However, as an additional improvement, more technical documents could be included to support/help in the **actual implementation** (see Figure 13).

A full overview of PROSPECT+ Tools is available on the website as open-access resources at https://h2020prospect.eu/tools.

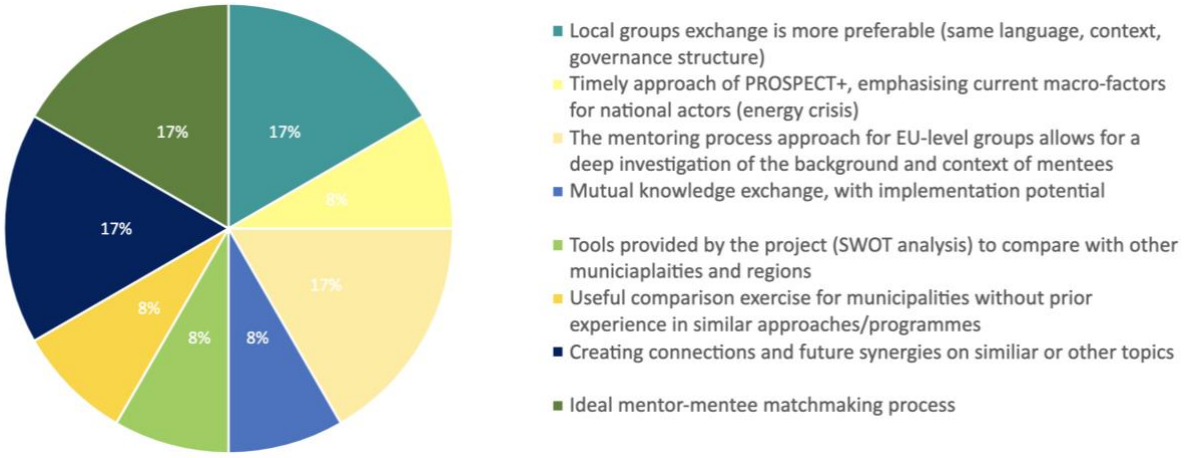


Figure 13. Understanding of potential main advantages of mentoring PROSPECT+ learning groups (in percentage).

Among future improvements, external mentors list the following:

- Financial support to mentors to develop the tools for project implementation.
- Continued facilitator's role to maintain the programme high-quality, consistency of outputs, Action Plan fulfilment, schedule, and logistics.
- Added value of facilitator having minimal technical knowledge of certain topics (energy communities, EPC, or others).
- No need for technical background knowledge of facilitator in case of ELENA applications.

4.2.4 PROSPECT+ Replication and Future Involvement

Figure 14 highlights the main insights from external mentors on the PROSPECT+ CBP replicability potential and continued engagement of mentees and participants as a whole.

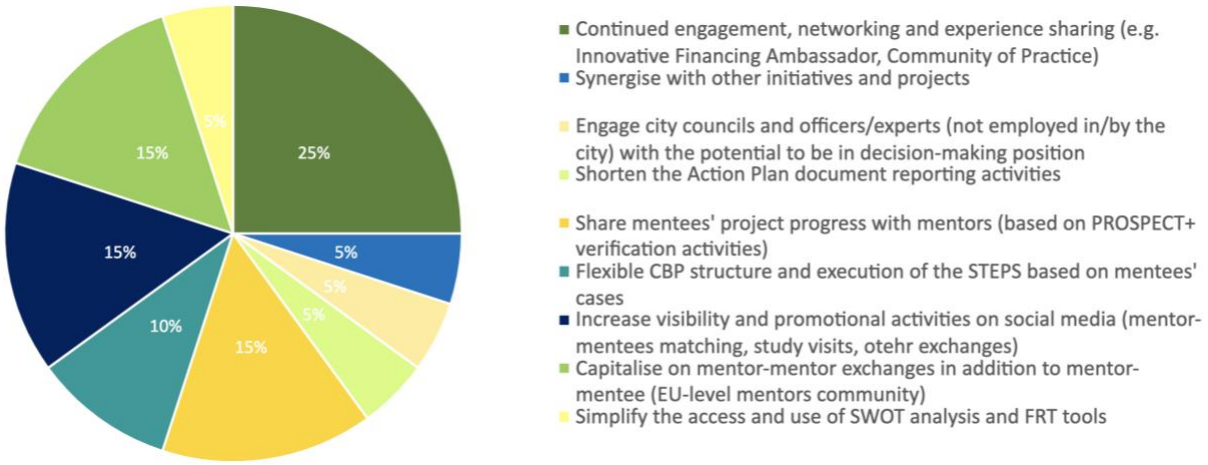


Figure 14. External mentors' feedback on replicability and future participants' engagement (in percentage).

Observing the above results in detail:

- 25% of respondents suggest organising a round of **mentees-mentor update** after e.g. one year period. For instance, under the CoP or another event, where:
  - mentees present their projects progress, and
  - the project consortium presents the results of the verification process. The common rationale expressed by mentors is to enable continued networking and experience sharing opportunities.
- 15% of mentors expressed their interest in having an **EU-level or pan-European community of mentors**, aside from the mentor—mentee learning process.
- Another 15% of respondents highlight the crucial role of PROSPECT+ to maximise the social media impact of all experiences, from online to in-person meetings, to celebrate and simultaneously promote all activities.16
- Other suggestions worth mentioning include focusing on the continuation of practice-oriented sessions such as Masterclasses and other hands-on events. Others focus on the involvement of city councils' representatives, as in some countries they lack knowledge on EU policies and implementation, or how other countries act on certain activities.

"The study visit was focused on brainstorming ideas rather than a passive listening of mentor's experience. It was very useful […] Some mentees connected later with the city of the mentor and with some mentees […] to further develop other projects or studies."

Sanela Mikulčić Šantić, Energy-climate Office in Krizevci Municipality, Learning Cycle 2

16 It should be noted that in term of outreach potential under PROSPECT+ the consortium recorded that – during the 3rd engagement campaign preceding Learning Cycle 3 – FEDARENE, Eurocities and Energy Cities have reached a total of 34,448 contacts via public newsletter (including articles on PROSPECT+) and 6,844 contacts in their member cities, regions and energy agencies (with messages tailored and dedicated to PROSPECT+). Further, a total of 5,410 targeted potential participants from other personalized mailing (figures from the monitoring activities under the Summary of monitoring outcomes report by UPRC).

4.3 Showcases of Successfully Implemented Groups

The learning groups saw the involvement of participants from **28 countries** in total, meaning that the progress in exchanging experiences among peers, as well as strengthening knowledge and capacities to apply innovative financing schemes was made across Europe as in Figure 15.[17]

- LC1: 20 (+1) mentees, 4 internal mentors, 5 external mentors = 29 (30) participants
- LC2: 24 mentees, 6 internal mentors, 4 external mentors = 34 participants
- LC3: 44 mentees, 8 internal mentors, 6 external mentors = 58
- LC4: 76 mentees, 5 internal mentors, 4 external mentors, (according to our latest monthly meeting) = 85

Figure 15. Overview of PROSPECT+ participants map including EU-27 countries and other eligible associated countries.

Source: PROSPECT+ internal repository

17 Eligible countries are EU-27, the United Kingdom and H2020 associated countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The countries participating in PROSPECT+ between 2022 and 2024 are hereinafter listed in alphabetical order: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine.

Source: Satisfaction survey results under monitoring activities until LC3 led by UPRC (May 2024)

Within the scope of this report, we have selected cities and regions that planned to develop and launch sustainable energy and climate action projects using innovative schemes in their own local contexts. **Successfully implemented learning groups** have been weighted against the criteria detailed in the methodology chapter and presented in the following sections:

- One story from the experience of a Facilitator/Internal Mentor (INNOLID) on Guarantee Funds applied to Transport (**Learning Cycle 1**).
- One story from the experience of an External Mentor (Municipality of Albertville plus Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Environment Agency - AURA-EE) and their Facilitator (Energy Cities) on intracting (internal performance contracting) applied to Cross-sectoral projects (**Learning Cycle 3**).

Successfully implemented learning group #1: INNOLID as Facilitator and Internal Mentor

Introduction

In this example, INNOLID (based on in Valladolid, Spain) covered the role of facilitator and internal mentor. INNOLID has substantial experience in implementing guarantee funds for sustainable mobility and other financing schemes, thanks to the development of innovative projects under H2020 and other European funding programmes. To reach the objectives of this learning groups, INNOLID mentors shared their insights on different plans and policies supported by the city of Valladolid, *inter alia*, its Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), Integrated Sustainability Urban Development Strategy (INNOLID 2020+), Green City Accord. The fact of having been selected like one of the seven Spanish cities within the "100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030" EU Mission, reinforced the strength of this group.

Three mentees joined the learning groups representing the municipalities of Fyli (Greece), Cantemir (Moldova) and Soria (Spain).

Mentor organisation	INNOLID, Ayuntamiento de Valladolid, Spain
Thematic area(s) (LC)	Transport (LC1)
Learning method	Study visit in Valladolid
Learning objective	To increase knowledge on guarantee funds to incentivise e-mobility from a technical, financial and governance perspective.
Mentees' objectives	Based on the Action Plans, discussions covered safe public transport for inhabitants, selecting the appropriate sites for e-bikes charging points, reaching climate neutrality targets within the city by 2030.
Period	April 2022 – July 2022 (Study visit in June 2022)

Results[18]	• Investment costs in Fyli for the replacement of taxis and cars with electric bicycles: 317,830 Euro
	  ○ **Started**. End data estimated to 8 months after signing the contract with the project concessionaire.
	  ○ Under PROSPECT+, the project **advanced** from brainstorming onto development of installation sites
	• Investment costs in Soria for development of Soria App: 328,000 Euro + for solar installation for the generation of renewable energy and the electrification of the city's public buses: 3,450,000,000 Euro
	  ○ **Delayed**. Both projects start date were delayed due to external circumstances
	  ○ Under PROSPECT+, the projects **advanced** from development to planning (albeit current delays)
	• Investment costs in Cantemir for purchasing 3 buses with a capacity of 20 seats to transport the population of the Cantemir region on 3 routes: 2,000,000,000 Euro.
	  ○ **Started**. Project started at the initiative of the Municipality of Cantemir by contracting a company to elaborate the feasibility study.
	  ○ Under PROSPECT+, the project **advanced** from the conceptualisation phase to the feasibility study.

More information	Guarantee funds under PROSPECT+: https://h2020prospect.eu/glossary-financial-terms Soria App (Web application - Citizen App for Android, IOS) is an information system integrated with automatic information collection systems (sensors, which may include cameras with visible spectrum). Plus, as an information hub, it offers citizens and tourists all useful mobility services in the city. www.soria.app

18 These figures are derived from the results of the verification of mentees' individual projects progress up to Learning Cycle 3 – led by IEECP – and described in the methodology chapter. A full overview of verification results and summary of impacts of the CBP will be provided in the next report by IEECP at the end of the project in 2025.

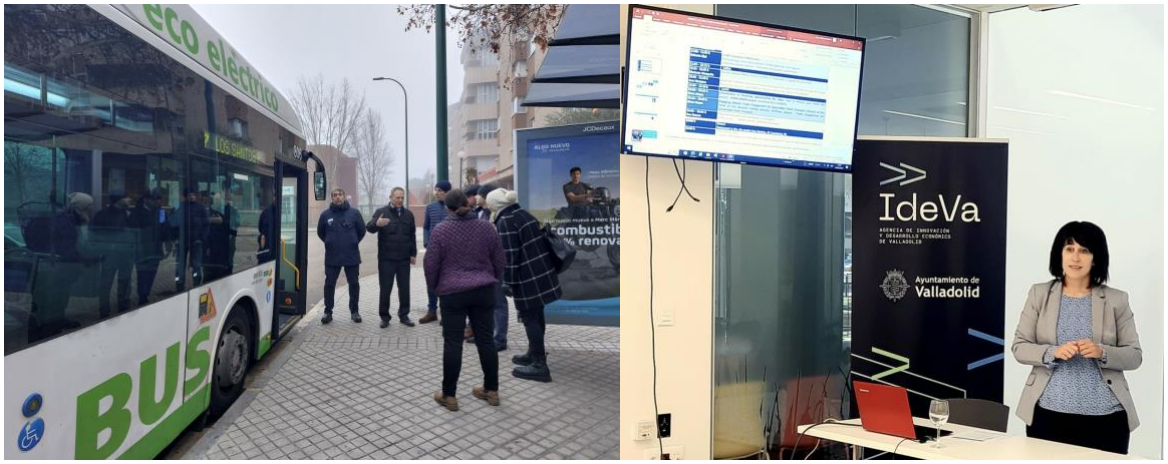


Figure 16. Study visits of multiple learning groups during PROSPECT+ in Valladolid, Spain

Guarantee Funds are a type of collective investment scheme that ensures the payback of a pre-determined percentage of the invested capital on a specific date in the future. In this scheme

- Loans are provided to the borrower by a commercial lender or financial institution.
- Should the loans default or the borrower fail to meet the payment under the established conditions, another entity – the guarantor - absorbs the credit risk and/or covers the loss.

They guarantee a way of transferring the credit risk from a creditor to another entity.

Cognitive change

Based on the mentor's feedback, all mentees were **highly motivated** during the Learning Cycle. Each participant had expertise working in several networks and initiatives regarding climate, energy efficiency and green cities, which showcased their high engagement from the beginning. All the mentees presented some project or ideas from the start of the Learning Cycle.

The **study visit** hosted by the mentor was **practice-oriented**, showcasing implemented actions. All mentees had the opportunity to have interviews with people with experience in the development of sustainability projects, which was very enriching for mentees learning good practices and find **actions and solutions replicable in their areas**.

"The study visit in Valladolid was very organised. We had a very productive agenda. All the presentations during the 2 days were full of examples and now I can say that after seeing the organisation of Ecological transport it is possible to implement in Cantemir."

Learning group on Transport (C1_Trans1), mentee from Cantemir Municipality (Moldova), "Ecological transport for the Cantemir Eco town" project

Relational Change

After the visit in Valladolid and the case studies shown by the mentor, mentees have recognized stakeholders' engagement as crucial to reach success and maximum impact. Involving citizens, private sector and all relevant actors in their cities is seen like a challenge and a risk. Nevertheless, good practices shown in Valladolid have demonstrated show this issue can be overcome and turned into an opportunity.

Action-Orientation

Mentees recognised the potential for PROSPECT+ Capacity Building Programme to **inspire** more local authorities and contribute to overcome the challenge of limited knowledge on innovative financing schemes, or lack thereof challenge. The City of Fyli reported that already during the Learning Cycle, they had internal **dissemination actions** with the Mayor.

Wider change

The main challenge for City of Soria is getting **robust stakeholders' engagement** because sometimes it is difficult for citizens and the private sector to get involved and change their habits and daily routines. This global and transversal vision is recognised as vital for ensuring urban planning interventions have maximum impact and to enhance global strategies and policies in the City.

In this group, participants emphasized the importance of a **global perspective and transversal implementation for mobility and sustainable transport solutions**, projects, and policies to achieve real impact a success developing this kind of projects. The visit and material presented by the mentor shown the different actors and stakeholders that participated in each project to have global vision about the different roles required, and how important is involve public institutions, private sector, and citizens. Strategies focused on becoming a climate-neutral city throughout a **participatory process and citizen's engagement** is also another good practice shown by the mentor that could be useful for other cities.

PROSPECT+
What our mentees say
"Having the Innovation Agency of Valladolid as a mentor, was useful not only regarding our e-bicycles project but also on the general perspective of transportation planning and adoption of eco-friendly transportation means. Particularly, on our project, I got useful guidance on the equipment used and on security measures taken."
Spyridoula Zachari, Fyli Municipality
Transport
Incentives for e-mobility

Successfully implemented learning group #2: Mentor: Albertville and AURA-EE & Facilitator: Energy Cities

Introduction

In this success story, the local French learning group learned about how the mechanism of intracting (standing for "internal performance contracting") can be successfully implemented, under the mentoring of the city of Albertville and the facilitation of Energy Cities. The mentees' organisations represented a total of five municipalities in France, namely Ville de Grenoble, ALEC Montreuil, SIGERLy, Mairie de Rive-de-Gier and Commune de Nevers.

Mentor(s) organisation	**Municipality of Albertville plus Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Environment Agency (AURA-EE)**
Thematic area(s) (LC)	Cross-sectoral (LC3)
Learning method	Local mentoring in France
Learning objective	To increase knowledge on internal contracting (intracting) with a cross-sectoral approach.
Mentees' objectives	Projects included a deeper understanding on how to deploy intracting in the various territories, developing and disseminating the intracting approach, alongside the development of an energy efficiency and sufficiency plan. Plus, mentees the Commune de Nevers worked on "intracting equity capital": an internal tool for financing energy efficiency and the ecological transition.
Period	December 2023 – May 2024 (visit in April 2024)
Results[19]	• Investment costs in Rive-de-Gier for to have a multi-year energy efficiency action plan and dedicated financing resources with the implementation of an intracting fund: 300,000 Euro (planned for 2024) • Launch of an intracting fund in 2024 announced in Ville de Grenoble
More information	Intracting under PROSPECT+: https://h2020prospect.eu/glossary-financial-terms AURA-EE: https://en.auvergnerhonealpes-ee.fr/ Intracting in Albertville: https://energy-cities.eu/how-to-finance-the-energy-transition-albertville-has-a-solution/

[19] See Footnote 17

Internal Performance Contracting (Intracting) is kind of in-house third-party financing scheme – which offers opportunities especially for public authorities and comparable institutions.

- Different to performance contracting, in the case of intracting the financial and technical service is delivered not by an external agent but through a unit within the same organisation.
- Depending on the formal, institutional and budgetary setting this arrangement can offer particular benefits to all participants.

Figure 17. PROSPECT+ Step 3 in Albertville

Source: How to finance the energy transition? Albertville has a solution! - Energy Cities

Relational Change

During the visit in Albertville and the Learning Cycle overall, the mentor exchanged their experiences with mentees, showcasing how the application of intracting as a simple management tool, has enabled to finance a series of energy-savings actions, otherwise postponed. Mentees have recognized that intracting can reach success and maximum impact when departments and/or previously 'siloed' stakeholders' groups are encouraged to innovated together. Under communication factors, a practical step to take is the improvement of trust and dialogue, where **technical staff and the finance department collaboratively work** to design a budget for energy savings and efficiency initiatives. AURA-EE explained also the advantages and disadvantages of the mechanism. As a results of the mentors contribution, the cities of Nevers, Grenoble and Rive-de-Gier are **now setting up** their own intracting funds.

Action-Orientation

Mentees wished to focus on a series of conditions for improvement: i) develop and **disseminate** the intracting approach, ii) build a **practical plan** energy efficiency and sufficiency, and iii) apply the appropriate **accounting and financing tool(s)** for implementation. Specifically, the learning groups focused on the practical development of the individual mentees' projects and facilitated engagement of various stakeholders and/or staff. With the success of some of the mentees and the continued support of AURA-EE in the territory, this training programme is expected to expand in a near future to all French cities and will provide them with a set of resources and toolkits for replication. The performance of these schemes can be verified, for example, through technical equipment that would measure the level of illumination and energy consumption.

Wider capacities

Regarding the overall mentor's work and opportunities to deploy intracting, in the framework of PROSPECT+, Albertville could also share its experience with the Belgium cities of Ghent, Antwerp, Etterbeek and Jemeppe-sur-Sambre, as well as with Zagreb and Kharkiv in a previous edition of the project.[20]

20 https://energy-cities.eu/how-to-finance-the-energy-transition-albertville-has-a-solution/

5 Recommendations

PROSPECT+ has been **significantly supporting cities and regions** to fulfil their role as drivers of the energy transition. The findings from this report have benefitted the current project in several ways, including showcasing projects from successfully implemented groups monitoring across more than 200 Local and Regional Authorities' SECAP measures or other sustainable energy projects. Furthermore, this analysis provided **actionable insights** for refining the programme to better serve its peer-to-peer learning objectives and participants.

The main **lessons learned** emerging from this analysis are summarised and categorized by topic in Table 3. While there have been challenges during PROSPECT+'s implementation, the monitoring results also confirmed the overall success of the learning programme. Participants reported high satisfaction levels, and the exchanges effectively supported them in achieving their learning objectives. For reference, description of the programme and its learning cycles are detailed in Chapter 2.

Table 3. PROSPECT+ Summary of lesson learned

Topic	Lesson learned
Overall mentoring experience	• Facilitators and mentors use discussions and case-based learning to deepen participants' understanding of complex financing mechanisms. • Varying prior knowledge among mentees highlights the need for adaptable approaches, in order to ensure that all mentees can benefit from the learning process. • The 4-step approach is well-received, with suggestions to add meetings based on group needs for an even more personalized experience (either following a more theoretical approach or more practical one). • Since participants commented on the complexity in terms of filling out the required documentation, this process can be more i) streamlined to make it more efficient, and ii) shortened/tailored even further in case mentees' projects are at an early development stage.
Matching mentor-mentees	• Matching participants is a complex process on itself. Overall, either type of learning groups reported an overall satisfactory learning experience, with facilitators/mentors going the extra mile to provide additional information sources and supporting material. • Some mentors point at difficulties when mentoring mentees outside of the standardised EU policy frameworks for certain innovative financing schemes. Similar challenges emerged within groups with Western and Eastern policy background. This can be improved by enlarging the baseline of mentors and implementing a more deliberate matching strategy. • Provide additional post-session resources tailored to mentees' needs, or access to mentors for follow-up consultations, can be beneficial to reinforce learning outcomes from the programme. • The matchmaking needs to take into consideration – to a certain extent – participants' technical expertise and projects' status. This points at the need for a more tailored mentoring experience, starting from matchmaking and throughout the Learning Cycle duration. • An important issue about matching participants of different countries is the language, which can be a barrier for the exchange of knowledge. To this end, local learning groups are a successful approach.
Usefulness of the PROSPECT+ CBP	• The Financial Readiness Tool served mentees to evaluate their project and scheduled activities, using a format that is understood by investors to show the bankability of a project (similar to EU cities facilities, yield, IRR etc.)

	• The tool is already publicly accessible in different languages on the PROSPECT+ website.[21] • More understanding is needed in terms of how the project can support with available financing across the EU, and benefits of regional and EU networking and partnerships.
Accessibility	• For non-EU participants, visa challenges and differing relevance of EU instruments can pose hurdles, yet the feedback from participants demonstrated that the CBP programme remained valuable. Many participants expressed interest in further learning cycles and recommended it to colleagues. • Participants' prior level of knowledge and project status (early-stage, planned etc.) to both ensure more equitable learning opportunities within learning groups, and for more advanced mentees to focus on the financing scheme implementation phase while skipping sessions introducing the basic principles of, inter alia, green bonds, revolving funds etc.
The role of mentors	• Mentors play a pivotal role in simplifying technical jargon and using real-world examples to make innovative concepts accessible and engaging. • Guarantee that mentors' expertise is levelled with mentees' knowledge levels and needs is extremely important. • In the future, suggestions from external mentors' interviews include having mentors and/or facilitators' supporting mentees in terms of reporting schedule, use of tools, next steps etc., without mentees having to rely on the lengthy instructions included in the current Action Plan edition. • External mentors emphasized their strong interest in staying updated on mentees' progress throughout the project, especially during the verification of impacts achieved, rather than waiting for the final report at the end.
PROSPECT+ replicability and future involvement	• Unexpected staff departures pose continuity challenges. Based on PROSPECT+ experience, the suggestion is to plan for a backup contact for each official enrolled mentee in next iterations. • Part of participants also registered for the Community of Practice (CoP), and some eventually decided to apply to become a PROSPECT+ Innovative Financing Ambassador and they plan to organise local meetings about innovative financing instruments. Both the PROSPECT+ CoP and the role of Ambassador have proven useful to engage more cities and regions beyond the at the sub-national level. • Mentees with implemented projects are more likely to follow-up on their engagement. •

21 https://h2020prospect.eu/project-finance-readiness-tool

6 Conclusions

Over a period of almost four years, the PROSPECT+ project successfully developed a P2P learning programme, conducting four Learning Cycles, for a total of **50 learning groups** exchanging experiences and knowledge on innovative financing schemes. The programme involved representatives from more than 200 EU cities (including individual mentees who participated in multiple cycles).

This report presented the comprehensive monitoring process to collect feedback from participants, track critical aspects of the programme and draw key lessons. This process enabled adjustments to the learning programme during the project duration – based on participant needs and feedback – and has aided in identifying enhancement opportunities for the programme future replications. Figure 18 presents a visualisation on the most relevant results within the scope of the reporting on experiences of learning groups by mentors and facilitators.

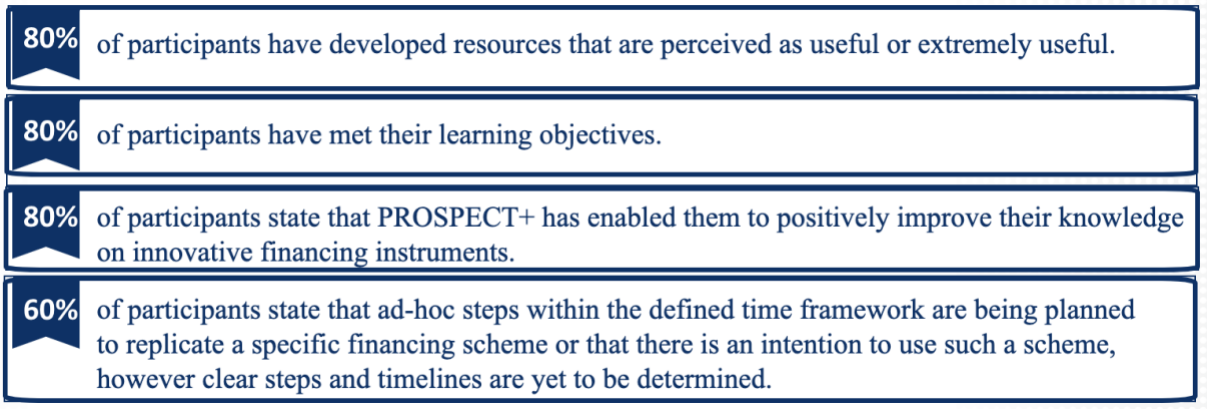


Figure 18. Relevant results from the monitoring activates of the CBP.

Source: PROSPECT+ internal monitoring outcomes up to LC3

Some key strengths emerged from the analysis, among the most relevant is the **role of mentors** within the peer-to-peer learning programme, who demonstrated to be instrumental in facilitating understanding, bridging knowledge gaps, and fostering meaningful discussions across mentees with different needs. Streamlining the **involvement of more experts** and/or stakeholders in the field during in-person meetings can expand the know-how exchange potential of the study visit or peer mentoring experiences. In the current edition, PROSPECT+ saw the involvement of ESCOs, industry experts etc during study visit, made possible by the external network, expertise, and outstanding preparation of facilitators/mentors. In relation to diverse groups' necessities, the **tailored approach** of PROSPECT+ guaranteed flexibility to adapt mentoring styles to EU or local groups features, ensuring all participants could benefit effectively. The latter proving a successful matchmaking process. Finally, the programme sparked **continued collaboration** after the end of the Learning Cycles and inspired participants to expand their learning journey in applying appropriate innovative financing schemes to finance their energy efficiency measures. Stemming from this comprehensive analysis, the PROSPECT+ programme and methodological approach have the potential to achieve even greater impact and engagement in future iterations.

Appendix I: Questions to internal mentor/facilitators and external mentors

Internal mentors/facilitators feedback – collected via a shared Excel sheet	
1	**Overall Facilitation/Mentoring Experience** • How did the facilitation/mentoring process compare to your expectations? • Was everything going according to the foreseen plan?
2	**Study Visit** • Since internal mentors usually do not have the opportunity for the extra-check of the draft agenda prior to the study visit, what was the study visit like? What were the main topics covered and the main areas of interest and capacity gaps? Did the study visit include any extra topics apart from the mentor's main project? • Have you investigated the participants' local context (regulations, governance, internal buy-in, their decision-making potential, their level of experience?
3	**Usefulness of PROSPECT+** • What may be the major benefit/added value for the participants in the LCs? • How do you assess the matching process? This is considering whether mentees' needs and expectations were met, based on your experience. • For future reference, can participant selection, matching or/and group composition be improved in your view (and how)? • If you could change other things about the process, what would it be? / Do you have any specific feedback on effectiveness of the process and what could have been done differently?
4	**PROSPECT+ replication / future involvement** • Are participants driven or willing to continue taking part in other replication activities that the program (CoP/Ambassadors) offers? • What, in your opinion, may be the cause of this kind of interest or the various decisions made regarding involvement?

External mentors feedback – collected through 1—hour semi-structured interviews	
1	**Overall Facilitation/Mentoring Experience** • What did the mentoring process look like as compared to what you expected when you applied to join the programme?
2	**Study Visit** • Did you have the necessary capacity to plan the study visit as you had anticipated when you applied? • Do you think you got enough information from your investigation regarding the local context (laws, internal buy-in, governance, potential for decision-making, and experience level) of the mentees/participants? Did you have to investigate it more?
3	**Usefulness of PROSPECT+** • What were the potential main advantages of mentoring your group? Was particularly useful to their mentees, e.g. regardless of national context differences or their level of expertise? • Do you think your and the mentees' needs were matched optimally? In terms of knowledge exchange, learning experience etc. • What could be improved, if anything? How did the collaboration go with your facilitator? Did they provide you enough support, or more or less than you anticipated?
4	**PROSPECT+ replication / future involvement** • For future reference, what is your opinion of the level of quality and efficacy of participant selection, matching, and/or group makeup? • What other ways could the procedure be enhanced going forward, in your opinion? / Can these be improved?

Appendix II: List of PROSPECT+ Learning Groups per Learning Cycle

PRIVATE BUILDING	PUBLIC BUILDING	TRANSPORT	PUBLIC LIGHTING	CROSS-SECTORAL
C1_PrB1 C1_PuB-PrB1	C1_PuB1 C1_PuB2	C1_Trans1	C1_PuL1 C1_PuL2	C1_Cross1 C1_Cross2
	C2_PuB5	C2_Trans1		C2_Cross1 C2_Cross2 C2_Cross3 C2_Cross4 C2_Cross5
C3_PrB1	C3_PuB1 C3_PuB2 C3_PuB3	C3_Trans1		C3_Cross1 C3_Cross2 C3_Cross3 C3_Cross4 C3_Cross5 C3_Cross6 C3_Cross7 C3_Cross8
C4_PrB1 C4_PrB2 C4_PrB3 C4_PrB4	C4_PuB1 C4_PuB2 C4_PuB3	C4_Trans1 C4_Trans2 C4_Trans3		C4_Cross1 C4_Cross2 C4_Cross3 C4_Cross4 C4_Cross5 C4_Cross6 C4_Cross7 C4_Cross8 C4_Cross9 C4_Cross10 C4_Cross11

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