



## D5.5 Report on the sustainable energy mentoring programme (Final)

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# 1. Introduction

The startup sustainable energy mentoring activities have been an integral part of WP5 of START2ACT and interact closely with the related work packages. The goal has been to engage young, innovative companies at an early stage, so they would understand the importance of energy efficiency while growing their businesses. The format of the sustainable energy mentoring activities was presented by startups.be and discussed among all partners at the Training of Trainers event in March 2017.

As this format of consultancy, i.e. energy advise to young startup companies, is a novelty in the consultancy domain, Startups.be has been developing a strategy that will be rolled out by the START2CACT partners in the countries BE, BG, CZ, HR, HU, PL, RO, SK, UK. Advise on energy efficiency tailored to the needs and interests of startups have been delivered to startups in the partner countries. An online questionnaire, developed in the frame of WP2 by CentERdata, was delivered to each participant of the mentoring session in order to monitor progress and obtain feedback from the participants.

With this report, we are also aiming at building up the sustainability of the START2ACT approach after the project. By publicly describing the progress of this novel format of consultancies to European startups, this report may be used as a 'case study' in order to engage other companies in adopting this strategy and replicating the START2ACT approach in other regions.

## 2. Overall progress and findings

To gather individual feedback for the deliverable, the WP5 leader collected answers and insights via personal talks scheduled on Skype or phone.

### Background of partners:

By evaluating the startup activities, it is vital to mention that most organizations are not part of the startup ecosystem *per se*. Their expertise lies in energy-related services, and by default their outreach is closest to the SME community. To bridge this gap, the mentoring activity handbook included an introduction to the startup field, explanation to the most used methodologies and terms. During the 3-day Training of Trainers and progress meeting in March 2017 partners discussed their perception of startups and strategies were exchanged how to reach the startup support organizations.

### Outreach:

Most partners involved in WP5 used their contacts to reach startup support organizations – incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces, to introduce the project. Besides the existing relationships, the WP5 lead, Startups.be also suggested startup contacts from the region. It appeared that co-working spaces were the most open to the extra programme of startup mentoring, which was practical because they had event space and they branded the mentoring activities as an extra service in their portfolio. However, it was challenging to maintain the interest, which was at first always positive, but in the holiday season such contacts were prioritised on a lower level. Not only the usual suspects, but event organisers were a relevant target group as well.

The continuous effort of all partners resulted in the organisation of **71 successful mentoring sessions**. During these sessions the partners succeeded in reaching out to **418 startups representing 2019 entrepreneurs**.



	Number of mentoring sessions	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached	Number of online surveys	Number of surveys on paper
Startups.be	6	51	156	0	60
SOFENA	13	69	343	18	55
ENVIROS	3	21	44	16	23
EIHP	7	23	350	23	0
GEO	5	52	159		
KAPE	4	98	193	0	69
ENERO	4	28	147	0	19
SIEA	5	33	249	9	9
CT	24	58	378	26	26
<b>Sum</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>261</b>

#### Timing:

Most startup activities took place between August 2017 and May 2019. The extension of the project by six months has also proven to be instrumental in that it allowed the partners to utilise the Winter 2018-2019 and Spring 2019 period, during which several startup mentoring sessions were conducted.

#### Survey:

By default, it is difficult to engage any companies to participate in online questionnaires. There is quite some noise already in the ether and many organizations are trying to reach startups/SMEs asking them to fill in surveys. This challenge is acknowledged, and partners were encouraged to share best practices in the consortium how they achieve more responses. One practice – which is less environmentally friendly – was to print out the questionnaire and participants filled it out on-site (i.e. on paper), after which the START2ACT partner inputted it electronically. It was time-consuming, yet the level of engagement was usually quite high at events with personal connections, so we realized a higher response rate. Another idea was to send extra educational material or promotional code together with the survey link to the participants, strengthening the notion that they gained something extra when they dedicated their time filling in the questionnaire. To sum it up, actions were undertaken to gain more engagement for an activity which is not popular at any industry. Experimentation and feedback along the way helped to achieve the expected results. Over the whole period of the project more than 350 surveys were filled in by the startups, of which 74% was filled in on paper.



## 3. Feedback

### 3.1 Bulgaria - SOFENA

SOFENA is a non-governmental organisation and non-profit legal entity established in 2001 to assist Sofia Municipality in developing a sustainable energy policy. It provides assessments of energy consumption and of the potential of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

In Bulgaria, it proved to be a good practice to invite startup companies next to SMEs to the business breakfasts. Of course, it would not replace the mentoring, yet it was a great complementary way to reach the target. Following this practice, it was important to differentiate between the feedback forms and divide them into 3 groups: young SME/startup/normal SMEs.

SOFENA (Sofia Energy Agency) organised 4 business breakfasts together with their partner organisations in order to facilitate a higher attendance rate. Around 80 people participated during the four business breakfasts, out of them a quarter identified themselves as startups or young SMEs. As a best practice, SOFENA always sent extra information about the project along with the registration form before the events.

In terms of reaching out, contacts were established with local accelerators and startup organisations which moved slower than expected. At first contact, there was interest and willingness, yet to get to practical, organizational steps it took time and effort. To gain some more traction, SOFENA was advised to contact the Bulgarian Business Forum which could be a good partner for dissemination and startup contacts.

On 12th of February 2019 mentoring took place in the city of Stara Zagora in which ZARALAB business incubator took part. 17 participants – young entrepreneurs and start-ups took part in it and filled in surveys.

A second mentoring event was organized by Sofia Energy Agency SOFENA on 09th of May 2019 with the support of ITS Stakeholder Energomonitor. The event took place in the Smart Classroom in the Incubator Building of Sofia Tech Park. The co-organizer – Energomonitor supported SOFENA in the organization of the event and assisted in accessing and inviting start-ups to take part in it by publishing it on the site of Energomonitor. In addition, the invitation was disseminated among the members of BESCO – the Bulgarian Startup Association. More than 25 participants took part in the event, representatives of young companies and start-ups.

- Mrs. Zdravko Georgiev, the Executive Director of SOFENA, opened the meeting.
- Mr. Nadya Nikolova-Deme from SOFENA presented the “Trias Energetica” methodology and outlined the importance of CO2 emissions reduction. Shortly the ways of behaviour were illustrated and the soft measures that can be applied in the office to save energy and costs were presented.

The event ended with demonstration of smart equipment for energy saving offered by Energomonitor. Moreover, the participants were informed about the way they can benefit from the opportunities that the START2ACT project can offer to them – by using the platform and the e-learning modules. During the break and after the event open discussions and exchange of opinion took place and at the end the participants filled in surveys about the effectiveness of the mentoring and their satisfaction from it.

A third mentoring event for start-ups under the START2ACT project was organized by Sofia Energy Agency SOFENA with the cooperation of Gabrovo Regional Administration on 17th of May 2019 at Desita – M Centre in the city of Gabrovo. Energy startups were invited to talk about their business/products and views on the future of energy. This



enriched the agenda and increased the participation in the mentoring. SOFENA was supported by our partners from Gabrovo Regional Administration in the organization of the event and inviting start-ups to take part in it. More than 15 participants took part in the event, representatives of young companies and start-ups. Mrs. Zdravko Georgiev, the Executive Director of SOFENA and Mr. Nadya Nikolova-Deme from SOFENA presented the same programme as on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. During the break and after the event open discussions and exchange of opinion took place and consultation was held for the interested participants about the energy saving and efficiency in the office and at home.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
20/12/16	Plovdiv	1	7
19/4/17	Vraca BCCI	1	3
20/6/17	Varna District Authority	3	10
17/11/17	Sofia BIA	13	91
17/10/18	Sofena Office	1	4
18/10/18	Sofena Office	1	10
19/12/18	Sofena Office	1	2
20/12/18	Sofena Office	1	2
11/1/19	Sofena Office	1	10
14/1/19	Sofena Office	1	12
12/2/19	Stara Zagora CCI	10	73
9/5/19	Sofia	24	70
17/5/19	Gabrovo	11	39

### 3.2 Czech Republic - ENVIROS

ENVIROS contacted startup organizations like the Prague Startup Center, incubators of universities (Ostrava, Prague), and Impact Hub with the goal of establishing collaboration with other event organisers to increase the number of participants (experiment).

The work package originally recommended 5 events with 30 participants at each, however according to ENVIROS experience and expertise, they preferred to experiment with smaller groups which works better in their situation. It resulted in smaller numbers of participants, but yielded a higher degree of engagement, thus impact. As explained above, such experimentation and according feedback to the partners, was encouraged as long as it would not derive significantly from the work plan and planned KPIs.

According to their experience, indeed, startups were busy, which made it hard to schedule sessions/events with them. As startups prefer to hear more about the practical aspect of energy saving solutions, discussion style mentoring was applied: questions like how much can you save were addressed in group discussions.

First mentoring session took place in collaboration with the Prague Startup Centre. Overall 41 participants, out of which 16 startups (Pitch Night by Prague Startup Center) participated in the event. It was divided in two parts: first part was a presentation about the START2ACT (online energy saving platform), the other was about startups pitching their businesses.

Feedback: good participant turnout, yet the problem was that if you do it in collaboration with other events, not all participants are interested in energy efficiency, therefore you need to calculate with a smaller number of survey respondents.



Challenges identified were mostly regarding the online survey, e.g.: how to make a difference between young SMEs and startups and how to engage companies to fill in the feedback form. They tried to hand out paper copies, however it proved to be quite long according to the first feedbacks. June, the month before summer holidays was also difficult in terms of setting up meetings and reaching out, thus in autumn the activities continued.

A second mentoring session on energy efficiency, which was private was held in collaboration with Impact Hub (Ostrava/Prague). Here the START2ACT aims and activities were presented and specifically S2A Interactive Energy Saving Platform was introduced. Afterwards a discussion was animated on the startup's experiences with energy savings and possibilities on how to save energy when they do not want to invest a lot of money. Also, lots of individual questions were addressed along with many practical cases.

A third mentoring session was held in Brno. 3 startups were reached during this session.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
22/6/17	Prague	16	37
25/3/19	Ostrava	2	4
16/4/19	Brno	3	3

### 3.3 Romania - ENERO

ENERO is an independent non-profit technical consultancy and research centre active in the energy field in Romania. Their primary focus is energy services and they work mostly with SMEs. They opened their business breakfasts also up for startups and 2 startups participated in the events. This approach proved to add up to the total reach besides the standalone mentoring, and it was an efficient way to work with the most interested startups.

In order to dive in to the startup sphere, they contacted by phone and/or by email startup hubs and co-working spaces across the country. Fortunately, the Romanian startup ecosystem does not concentrate only to Bucharest, but smaller cities like Cluj play an important role as well.

The Cluj Hub connection (via Geonardo) yielded the best results as they were open to co-create a session within their biggest tech event, TechFest, which was cost-efficient to reach a high number of startups at the same time. ENERO thus organized a workshop with the startups hosted at Cluj Hub on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. 8 startups attended, 20 participants, and a supplementary reach out to 34 people. However, the biggest difficulty has been finding topics or events which attracted the incubators/co-working spaces. From first experience and contacts, it seemed that energy efficiency as a standalone topic did not cut through the noise and made the external partners interested. To solve that, the suggestion of the WP lead to combine the mentoring with educational and inspirational activities (such as TechFest) was applied. It made it possible for the participants to learn about the energy topic more in-depth in combination with "hot" topics.

Within Tech Fest 2017, ENERO, in co-operation with local partners (Co-work Timisoara and The Grape Iasi), organised other 2 workshops dedicated to energy efficiency for startups. In Timisoara, on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017, 10 people took part in the mentoring session, and other 65 people were declared by the participants to be informed by the information gained during the workshop.

Then on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017, another workshop for startups was organised in Iasi, hosted by The Grape (a coworking space), with 13 participants and other 30 people who were going to be informed about the energy savings opportunities debated during the meeting. Mr. Bogdan Grig Moldoveanu conducted these workshops. There were



discussions about energy consumption at workplace, energy saving potential, technologies and methods. Participants were interested in lighting and thermal energy savings and also in alternative energy providers on the local market.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2018 ENERO organised a second mentoring session within The Grape, where the owners were interested in hosting a workshop dedicated to energy savings methods, aiming to train the startups hosted there. There were 12 participants, 10 of them filled in the questionnaires, and other 21 people would be informed about knowledge gained during the workshop by the ones who took part in the event. During the Q&A session, participants were interested in some additional technical aspects related to energy efficient tools and energy saving features of office equipment.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
10/10/17	Timisoara	6	65
30/10/17	Cluj Napoca	8	34
14/11/17	Iasi	6	30
3/4/18	Iasi	7	21

### 3.4 Poland - KAPE

KAPE was created by an Act of the Polish government and is promoting and implementing world class standards and practices in the fields of Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Development, on the basis of creating optimal energy efficiency solutions for their customers.

In the first half of the year, KAPE was also busy realising the Business Breakfasts. Afterwards they started the implementation of the mentoring activities. To prepare for that, they contacted local incubators and co-working spaces, namely: Sobusy Biurco and the Talents Incubator who all showed interest in collaboration and organising events together.

Also, academic incubators were contacted and met during meetings. KAPE’s feedback is that some of them were only interested in cooperating if they received a fee or honorarium. This issue did not come up yet and will be a topic for discussion with the consortium. This resulted in a series of 2 events, on October 11th and 22nd 2017, KAPE organised with Academic Business Incubators (AIP) a mentoring session on energy efficiency: building, energy monitoring, heating and cooling, lightning, office equipment, water saving, tariffs. A third event was organised as Talents Incubator - Płóńsk, invited KAPE to the launch event of electric vehicles as the first public transport in Płóńsk. This event, on the 7th of March 2018, featured meetings with residents, authorities, local companies, and also startups. KAPE inserted a track about the START2ACT project and its services in the programme. 18 startups attended by 53 people.

Besides academia, a contact was established with the Foundation for Enterprise Development and its “Your Start-up” programme.

On the 1st of August 2018, KAPE organised with the cooperation of the Institute of Entrepreneurship Creating Startup Academy a mentoring session on energy efficiency: building, energy monitoring, heating and cooling, lightning, office equipment, water saving, tariffs. During this session KAPE strongly promoted the web based S2A tools.

The WP lead also connected KAPE to Startup Poland, a central startup association in the country. After the first discussions, it turned out that they are a better partner for dissemination, than for organizing events together.



Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
6/11/17	Warsaw	10	11
22/11/17	Warsaw	8	11
7/3/18	Płońsk	18	53
1/8/18	Warsaw	62	118

### 3.5 Hungary - GEO

Thanks to previous European projects and good partnerships in the community Geonardo started the outreach from an advantageous position. They contacted co-working spaces and incubators to entice them joining the project. Business Breakfast invitation were also shared with these partners to increase the dissemination effort and spread the word. Most promising collaboration partners were the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Climate-KIC Budapest. This was followed up by a collaboration with InnoEnergy’s workshops, and a contribution to their roadshow by inserting energy mentoring. GEO also collaborated closely with the Budapest Enterprise Agency.

Multiple workshops were organised in the framework of Startup Safari Budapest, both in 2018 and 2019. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 the first part of the workshop the START2ACT project was detailed, after which some of the participants shared good practices and examples. In the last part questions came up regarding system thinking, sustainable energy consumption and energy monitoring. On the second day the participants were further engaged through group works during the workshop. The three groups came up with ideas/suggestions for more efficient practices in their specific everyday activities at work and at home.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 a startup mentoring session happened in the framework of the Design Terminal's Mentor programme in Budapest. There were startups not just from Hungary, but from Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The participants were really active regarding to the energy saving topic. They primarily asked questions regarding implementing energy conscious thinking from the beginning in the startup’s company profile and culture.

According to Geonardo’s experience, smaller workshops with a specific audience worked better compared to the bigger mentoring sessions.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
19/4/18	Kaptár co-working space	18	21
20/4/18	Muse co-working space	7	13
17/4/19	Muse co-working space	9	56
18/4/19	New Work Offices	11	54
9/5/19	Budapest Design terminal	7	15

### 3.6 Croatia - EIHP

The Croatian partner, The Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar’s (EIHP) is not only well-versed in the energy field, but also built an impressive network of entrepreneurship support organizations both in Croatia and in Europe. Given that background, EIHP possesses good outreach capacity to companies, and used these personal connections to spread the word. They also contacted most of the big incubators in Croatia through direct contacts and explained to these partners the objectives of EIHP and START2ACT. EIHP has also a well-established contact with the **Croatian Chamber of Economy**. With the help of the chamber’s startup unit, a beneficial connection between EIHP and the startup scene was established, which resulted in the engagement of Croatian startups with the START2ACT project.



Over the last months, they finished the organisation and implementation of business breakfasts, and then focussed on the startup activities. In September 2017, five companies that had received information about the project through internet channels and business breakfast, were not met in person, but EIHP received information throughout personal contacts that these companies checked the website and available tools. EIHP considers these companies trained.

Energy startup mentoring programmes started in October 2017, mostly as a combination of existing events, trainings and collaboration with local incubators/co-working spaces and event organisers. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, there was a joint project presentation for start-up companies in Split. This was just partly successful. Participants were active and interested in project topic. However, we had 28 listed participants but only 13 were present at the session. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a meeting between HELB and EIHP representatives was held with as main topic: “How to engage small companies in energy efficiency projects connected to their working premises”. The company is involved in many projects related to energy efficiency and therefore, they were interested in our tools developed in project as well as e-learning. The meeting was held in our premises in Savska cesta 163. The last mentoring session was a Joint project presentation for start-up companies in Zagreb Zicer business incubator held on 9th of April 2019. More than 100 companies were contacted but only one attended.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
12-14/9/17	Zagreb/Osijek	5	72
30/5/18	Split	13	90
11/10/18	Zagreb	1	1
15/10/18	Zagreb	1	163
6/2/19	Zagreb	1	5
	Zagreb	1	16
9/4/19	Zagreb	1	3

### 3.7 Slovakia - SIEA

The Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency was mainly busy with organising the business breakfasts and on-site visits, combined with performing energy audits. After desk research and understanding the local ecosystem, they concluded that for WP5 (the startup mentoring activities), Bratislava is the most relevant city. The Slovakian startup ecosystem is relatively small, in a phase where it is developing quickly, yet still concentrated in the capital.

The challenges SIEA faced are similar to those of the other partners: contacts are hard to establish in the startup field as most of their regular activities are targeting a different audience; thus, more personal relations are at hand. Best practices and further contacts from the local startup ecosystem were sought. To recruit entrepreneurs and people at Startups SIEA kept inviting them for the Business Breakfast and other S2A Events via emails sent through their stakeholders and their databases.

Startups mentoring sessions has been organized based upon some of the project conference calls and good results mentioned by our consortia partners when approaching the incubators/accelerators and co-working. In Slovakia, although the startup community is still under development, some incubators are already working. We have approached the management of the incubators and co-working spaces to provide mutually beneficial start up mentoring program.

Mentoring sessions were organized as group discussion in collaboration with:



- 0100 Campus in Bratislava (Sept 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018), one of the most influential co-working spaces in Slovakia;
- Centire (October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018), a company that organizes open seminars and workshops for startups and SMEs;
- Investeers, a venture capital company;
- University in Žilina (February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019). (Within the event Design Sprint - strategy for successful innovations.);
- Neology (February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019), a venture capital company.

This approach has shown the biggest potential, mainly due to the fact that startups usually do not manage their own premises and they only start to think about setting bigger structures including offices. Therefore, the Start-2-Act presentation was presented focused on possible areas to save energy in the office. Practical examples (as how much energy we can save by implementing particular measures) and basic principles for efficient behaviour regarding the area of heating, lighting, using and purchasing the electric appliances were presented. Videos from the e-learning program were shown and open discussion was well accepted. To make the content relevant, our energy efficiency expert, Mr. Ján Magyar has made presentations

All presentations have been accompanied by Energy Alcohol Free Bar – the generous sponsorship by local importer of energy drinks Powerking and for those preferring the more healthy choice Alcohol Killer – product based on natural ingredients and produced in Slovakia.

Contacts were also established with the National Energy Cluster and Innogy, a well-known company offering innovative energy services, in fields of storage technologies, electromobility and energy efficiency.

As a recommendation SIEA raised to the consortium the suggestion for a better branding for the START2ACT’s offer for startups as these young, starting companies are usually short of time and sensitive to practical offers where they see the return on their invested time.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
4/9/18	0100 Campus Bratislava	5	40
10/10/18	Centire Bratislava	8	23
26/2/19	Žilina University	5	20
27/2/19	Slovak Technological University	8	175
1/03/2019	Investeers	6	30

### 3.8 Belgium – SBE

Startups.be contacted a number of energy startups and experts to engage them in the project. Outreach moved ahead slower than expected which might be the result of the summer holidays schedule.

Contacts were made with local energy startups like Opinum, YouKnowWatt, with green incubators like GreenBizz Brussels and also with energy experts from PXL (Hasselt). Belgium is thankfully buzzing currently with startup hype, and there are more and more startup support programmes focusing on green energy. Meetings with Ghent Watt Factory (smart city accelerator), GreenVille (cleantech center) and EnergyVille (an association of the Flemish research institutes KU Leuven, VITO, imec and UHasselt in the field of sustainable energy and intelligent energy systems) were held in the autumn months.



The team experimented to insert a short mentoring session into existing events, which did not meet the expectation as the interest of the participants did not necessarily intersect with energy efficiency. Lesson learned is that it might work better to organise smaller-scale, standalone events with the participation of startup companies and experts around interesting, trending topics in the energy domain.

Consequently, after the Prague 2018 project meeting, it was agreed to try to combine regular mentoring sessions (i.e. mentoring about the business plan, the value proposition, funding and so on) with a subsequent “lightweight” S2A mentoring to improve the impact on and the response rate from start-ups.

Such a “lightweight” S2A mentoring session consists of approximately 10 to 15 minutes explanation of the S2A messages, focusing on the S2A Interactive Energy Saving online platform (on a SBE laptop). After this, the mentee is free to continue exploring the platform on his/her own. The mentee is informed before the regular mentoring session that a S2A part will be present and that a questionnaire will be given. No external speakers were invited for these sessions. SBE conducted a pilot testing this new approach on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at Start it @ KBC Leuven with 5 start-ups. Startups were interested and we obtained a 100% response rate on the surveys.

We suspect that this success can be attributed to different factors:

- The start-ups were in a setting where there were expecting to spend sufficient time and where not rushed to go to the next event/booth/meeting/...;
- The state of mind of the start-ups was open to receive information as they are used to so during “regular” mentoring sessions;
- There was undoubtedly a degree of thankfulness to the mentor for the (free) “regular” mentoring session, which lead to a increased willingness to do something “in return” (viz. filling in the questionnaire). The fact that the mentor/SBE has a good/recognizable “band”/reputation in the start-up ecosystem probably enhanced this effect.

After the successful pilot, SBE conducted the following "Lightweight 1-to-1" mentoring sessions:

- 15 June 2018, Corda Campus incubator in Hasselt
- 31 August 2018, Start it @KBC incubator in Leuven
- 10 September 2018, Corda Campus incubator in Hasselt
- 10 December 2018, Corda Campus incubator in Hasselt
- 17 December 2018, The Beacon incubator in Antwerpen

This approach was equally successful as the pilot was and allowed SBE to reach the aimed for number of startups.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
27/4/18	Start it @KBC, Leuven	5	13
15/6/18	Corda Campus Hasselt	16	49
31/8/18	Start it @KBC, Leuven	7	22
10/9/18	Corda Campus Hasselt	10	38
10/12/18	Corda Campus Hasselt	5	10
17/12/18	Start it @KBC, Antwerp	8	24



### 3.9 Carbon Trust – CT

During the initial few months of the startup mentoring activity, the Carbon Trust has taken two approaches towards recruitment. Firstly, they contacted over 100 incubator and accelerator organisations based in the UK to offer them the opportunity to host an energy efficiency mentoring session for their startups. We received a positive response from many of the organisations that we approached, which was a good proportion considering the timing just before the summer holidays. The first startup mentoring event took place on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, hosted at Cockpit Arts in London. 13 attendees were attracted.

Secondly, a few startups have contacted the Carbon Trust directly to request support through the START2ACT contact form on our website. Whilst all mentoring activities were originally planned to take place face-to-face and in group mentoring situations, we agreed with the project coordinators that if startups had approached us with specific enquiries it would be beneficial to set up one-to-one remote mentoring calls with them. We have found that this one-to-one approach allows startups to receive advice tailored to their individual businesses and needs, and have therefore received positive feedback so far. Five startups have participated in this manner to date, and each one of these has filled in the survey afterwards to allow the mentoring activity to be monitored.

Preparing for the startup mentoring activity has been a challenge, as Carbon Trust anticipates that each group of startups that they mentor will have a different set of needs and interests. To overcome this challenge, they created a presentation of 10 different topics that could be of interest to startups, including greening products and services, green marketing and choosing energy efficient premises. They then extracted the relevant sections and added new content when preparing for each individual events once they knew their target audience. Carbon Trust aimed to keep this content as flexible as possible and took into account requests from their incubator/accelerator hosts. For example, Carbon Trust's first mentoring host, Cockpit Arts, supported art and design startups that have limited control over energy use in their building, so they have asked to focus on personal footprints (at work and at home) and greening the supply chain of arts materials.

For the remote mentoring, they were more easily able to tailor the content for the recipients, as they shaped the calls around the particular questions that each startup has on greening their business. Before each call they determined which sector the startup was operating in, so that they could ensure that the most relevant Carbon Trust consultant was assigned to each startup. If certain resources were referred to during the call, Carbon Trust followed up with an email pinpointing further information that was relevant to the startup, so that they continued gathering information about energy efficiency.

Where the former group of incubators/accelerators responded that they do not have capacity to host a group session, Carbon Trust requested that they circulate information about the latter service (one-to-one phone service) to their startup contacts to ensure that they are still offered support. As mentioned under 'WP3: Interactive Online Platform', the Carbon Trust also ran a targeted email campaign to over 300 startup incubators and accelerators to inform them of the startup mentoring service, among the other START2ACT services.

Between October 2017 and May 2018, we planned additional events with four separate accelerator programmes, though all were cancelled due to low sign ups despite significant promotion by our co-hosts to their startup members. Any startups who did sign up were offered support through the phone mentoring programme instead, to ensure that they still received energy efficiency support. In June 2018 the Carbon Trust held a START2ACT mentoring session at the Alacrity Foundation in Newport in Wales and in July 2018 the third mentoring event was held at Kennington Park Workspace in London (an additional event was planned at the Metal Box Workspace in London, but this was



cancelled due to low sign ups). Given that business breakfasts were proving more difficult to organise, in April 2019 the Carbon Trust prioritised to mentoring with startups through events. Four mentoring sessions took place in London, which attracted a total of 16 participants. These were held at Salisbury House Workspace, Record Hall Workspace, Clerkenwell Workspace and Cockpit Arts. In both Record Hall and Clerkenwell Carbon Trust also set up a stand where Startups could ask any questions on energy efficiency.

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
26/9/17	Cockpit Arts London	7	8
11/4/18	Salisbury House London	5	126
11/6/18	Alacity House London	3	9
18/7/18	Kennington	7	99
12/4/19	Record Hall London	4	62
24/4/19	Cockpit Arts London	9	22

Date	Location	Number of startups reached	Number of people reached
9/8/17	Remote	3	4
15/8/17	Remote	2	6
18/8/17	Remote	2	12
23/8/17	Remote	1	1
23/11/17	Remote	1	2
9/1/18	Remote	1	2
15/1/18	Remote	1	1
19/1/18	Remote	1	2
23/1/18	Remote	1	2
6/4/18	Remote	1	5
11/4/18	Remote	1	1
13/4/18	Remote	1	4
31/5/18	Remote	1	2
21/6/18	Remote	1	1
22/6/18	Remote	2	1
26/6/18	Remote	1	1
9/7/18	Remote	1	1
13/7/18	Remote	1	1
30/7/18	Remote	1	2



## 4. Conclusions

Office equipment is the fastest growing energy user in the business world. It is assumed to raise from 15% to 30% in 2020. It has been proved that both sustainable procurement of office equipment (30-35%) as behavioural changes (65-70%) reduce the energy consumption. As young entrepreneurs and current startups will penetrate and populate future markets, the goal of the START2ACT project was to form future energy conscious entrepreneurs and engrain energy efficiency in company profiles and cultures. Also, as employees at work are a captive audience as they are observed by others, workplaces make consumers at large modify their behaviour. To realize this goal, START2ACT created a training kit, which was used in energy mentoring sessions. Based upon preceding surveys, individual interviews and knowledge sharing it was possible to form a view on the baseline perceptions, knowledge and behaviour of startups regarding an energy efficient company culture. Exchange of best practices was very useful to maximise the reach out. Starting from contacts with the local stakeholders and established relationships with startup support organizations co-creation of events, meaningful collaborations and standalone sessions the participating countries reached as many startups as possible. Incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces proved to be the most successful partners as they have the mindset and spaces for coaching sessions.

In most countries, the startup ecosystems are rapidly evolving creating more and more headlines and articles in the local media. Capitals are in general the breeding ground of startups, however incubators, accelerators and co-working spaces are popping up all over Europe. National **startup associations** like Startups.be, Austrian Startups, Startup Estonia or the German Startup Association collect information and showcase them in centralised platforms and maps. Not only at national level, but in many cases the most important cities also launch startup programmes like Startup Amsterdam or Startup Lisboa. More information about the European startup ecosystem players can be found here: [www.europeanstartupnetwork.eu](http://www.europeanstartupnetwork.eu), a network which was co-founded by Startups.be

Startups typically work in co-working spaces, offices provided by incubators or accelerators, or simply from home or public spaces. Usually when they achieve product-market fit and start generating revenue or acquired a round of financing is the moment when they start to consider owning an office. Use cases differ as there is no one-size-fits-all scenario, therefore it is better to ask startups in which stage of development they are for the moment, whether they participate in incubation or acceleration programme, and how many employees are working on the project.

The key lessons learned during the project comprise:

Regarding the process/project:

- Good branding of the project eases the entrance at organizations and startups.
- It is important to use the See, Act, Check principle. First introduce energy conscious thinking mechanisms, then find concrete energy saving possibilities and calculate their impact, and end by testing and implementing the solutions into the day-to-day life of the company and in its business strategy.
- It is good practice to not only focus on the saving measures of the current office equipment but also take into account the future scaling up strategies
- Be aware that startups are confronted with other barriers than SMEs. Their small size, restricted time available to invest in energy efficiency solutions, restricted knowledge of energy efficiency mechanisms, restricted financial situation, high failure rate is driving their priorities and thus their responsiveness to projects like START2ACT. Topics should be spot on their needs.



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Regarding the Survey:

- It is hard to engage companies in filling out online questionnaires.
- Enabling the companies to fill out printed versions at events increases the conversion rate
- Working with printed versions increases the workload of the administrative partner
- Linking promotional codes to the link of the online questionnaire increases the conversion rate

Regarding the mentoring sessions:

- It is not easy to engage startups. Personal contacts are essential.
- Timing is crucial. The summer period slows down all communication and thus organization of events. Response rates of potential participants are lower during the summer period.
- It is beneficial to interact with co-working spaces, incubators and accelerators as they have the space and mindset. It also lowers the barrier to get in contact with startups. Most likely, these stakeholders will want something in return such as a fee or free (generic) mentoring/coaching sessions for their startups.
- It is good practice to co-organise with existing events as this raises the number of addressed topics and thus the event is more attractive to participants. It will be cost efficient and through combined dissemination a higher participant number will be reached. Keep in mind the interest of the participant of the core event might not be equal to the topics in the mentoring session.
- Discussions in smaller groups with targeted audiences result in a higher level of engagement. Even one-to-one sessions can be organized, as they are outmost tailored to the startup's need.
- Topics should be customized for the specific audience. Startups prefer practical topics. Combination with educational and inspirational activities is appreciated.
- Mingling startups and SMEs ensures knowledge sharing. Just make sure to differentiate feedback forms according to the origin of the company.
- It is good practice to send information on the project together with the registration form.
- It is important to inform the trainers on the environment, culture, needs and threads of the target audience

More and more blog posts and articles by the partners or engaged energy startup companies were published once the startup activities of the project intensified. Curated content directed to new forms of energy and energy efficiency methods were in the focus, showing the impact of the START2ACT project.

Energy efficiency is clearly the topic of the future, yet it is difficult to argue when startups are busy accomplishing their short-term objectives. The challenge is to find a message which resonates with this specific audience, and therefore the key success factors of projects like START2ACT are: the right communication strategy, spot-on key messages and channels and collaborations with the right partners.

## 5. START2ACT Mentoring in Action

This section shows selected pictures illustrating the different START2ACT partners in action during the mentoring sessions.



Figure 1: Mentoring by SOFENA



Figure 2: Mentoring by SOFENA



Figure 3: Mentoring by SOFENA



Figure 4: Mentoring by SBE



Figure 5: Mentoring by GEO



Figure 6: Mentoring by GEO



Figure 7: Mentoring by ENERO



Figure 8: Using hardcopy surveys during the mentoring sessions



Figure 9: Sometimes you have to adapt to the startup style