



Capacity building and lessons to be learned for the institutionalization of sustainable energy policies in the municipalities' operations

Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE)

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Report on post twinning activities

Deliverable 3.3. Report

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Preface

This report is prepared within the framework of **GREEN TWINNING** project (IEE/11/964/SI2.615949), supported by Intelligent Energy Europe.

Green Twinning aims at strengthening the capacity of public authorities in institutionalising sustainable energy policies into their operations. This will be accomplished through direct exchange of experience, peer-to-peer and twinning approaches between local authorities from the EU-12 that are experienced in the sector and learning ones from the EU-15. “Learning from each other – working together & avoiding repetition of past errors” is the project concept.

The project promotes permanent long-term partnerships and networking between “experienced” and “learning” local authorities towards achieving commonly agreed results in joint project implementation process.

The project will be carried out by a consortium gathering associations/networks of local authorities and consulting firms from Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Greece, Poland and Spain.

Project Partners

N°	Participant name	Short name	Country
CO1	Regional Union of Municipalities of Attica	PEDA	Greece
CB2	Exergia Energy and Environment Consultants S.A.	EXERGIA S.A.	Greece
CB3	Sofia Energy Centre	SEC	Bulgaria
CB4	Association of Rhodope Municipalities	ARM	Bulgaria
CB5	Polish Network "Energie Cités	PNEC	Poland
CB6	Municipality of Giurgiu	Giurgiu	Romania
CB7	Building and Civil Engineering	ZRMK	Slovenia
CB8	Energy Agency of La Ribera	AER	Spain
CB9	Municipality of Vrhnika	Vrhnika	Slovenia
CB10	Harghita County Council - Energy Management Agency	HCC-EMA	Romania



Serviciul Public de Management Energetic Harghita
Harghita Megyei Energiatakarékosági Közszolgálat

Abbreviations

AER	Energy Agency of la Ribera
CO2	Carbon dioxide
CoM	Covenant of Mayors
EACI	Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation
EC	European Commission
EE	Energy Efficiency
EU	European Union
GHG	Green House Gases
H2020	Horizon 2020 programme
IEE	Intelligent Energy Europe
PoE	Pool of Expertise municipalities
PoL	Pool of Learning municipalities
RES	Renewable energy sources
RUE	Rational use of energy
SEAP	Sustainable Energy Action Plan

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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is leading the global fight against climate change, and has made it a top priority through its related EU energy policy and ambitious initiatives.

One such major initiative is the Covenant of Mayors (CoM), which recognize the leading role of local authorities in mitigating climate change through sustainable energy management and Green House Gases (GHG) emission mitigation actions. Nowadays, more than 4600 local and regional authorities have signed the CoM and have committed to reduce their CO₂ emissions by more than 20% by 2020 through low carbon measures in their territories and implementation of sound local energy and climate policies.

Nevertheless, one of the major barriers that local authorities face in their transition towards low carbon communities is their lack of technical and financial capacity in the fields of sustainable energy policy and implementation. It is to be noted that although the impressive numbers of CoM signatories, only 2800 Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP) have been submitted in this context and very few have been implemented.

Green Twinning project aims at strengthening the capacity of public authorities in institutionalizing sustainable energy policies into their operations. This will be accomplished through direct exchange of experience, peer – to - peer and twinning approaches between local authorities from Spain that are experienced in the sector and learning ones from the EU-27 (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and Slovenia). “Learning from each other – working together & avoiding repetition of past errors” is the project concept. Spain is in many aspects one of the more advanced in its sustainability between other EU countries and can act as a magnet “pulling” less advanced local authorities towards sustainable energy policy and implementation.

The project will be based, among others, on the establishment of twinning agreements between a Pool of Learning (PoL) and a Pool of Expertise (PoE) municipality for the development and implementation of SEAPs.

2. Sustainability of twinning partnerships

Municipalities' capacity building strategy of Green Twinning project is based on two main activity group: organization of capacity building activities such as training sessions for PoL municipalities and helpdesk; and establishment of twinning agreements between PoL and PoE members.

Two kind of twinning agreements have to be created within Green Twinning Green Twinning project framework: informal and voluntary agreements.

10 informal twinning partnerships were formulated at the beginning of project activities and including former PoE and PoL members. And 10 voluntary agreements have been created with counterparts outside the consortium, not directly participating in, at the end of the project.

Differences between informal and voluntary partnerships can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Green Twinning project have allocated some funds for informal twinning activities. Concerning voluntary twinning agreements, only some funds were allocated for Nea Smyrni-Castelló de la Plana study visit.
- 2) Informal twinning agreements activities have been used as pilot activities for improving twinning partnerships effectiveness and sustainability

This report deals with identifying mechanisms and collecting partners' recommendations that allow twinning partnerships to go on beyond the Green Twinning project life time. Deliverable 3.3 pretends to be a strategic document outlining methods and actions that ensure the sustainability of twinning activities and the achievement of long term effects beyond the IEE project end.

With this objective, project partners are to examine:

- Twinning approaches that could last on a long-term by extending existing twinning agreements after the project end;
- Twinning agreements that could be promoted to municipalities outside the PoL during and after IEE funding.

3. Methodology

In order to ensure the achievement of long-term results after the end of project and twinning agreements, Green Twinning project partners have examined the following issues:

- 1) Twinning approaches that could last on a long-term basis by extending twinning agreements after the project end
- 2) Voluntary twinning agreements. Those have been promoted to “learning” municipalities outside the PoL during and after IEE funding

That is the reason the present report is structured around two parts. The first part will outline the methods or activities, listed by informal twinning participants, able to keep twinning agreement alive after the end of IEE project. The second part will review the voluntary twinning partnerships created outside

4. Informal twinning agreements extension

The sustainability of informal or official twinning agreements will be assessed in the present chapter with the information collected by means of:

- 1) Twinning effectiveness evaluation questionnaire distributed through twinning participant entities and;
- 2) The collection of existing best practices and ideas used by the Consortium (PoL and PoE representatives and the Consultants) to ensure the continuity of the relationship between twin municipalities beyond the project life time

The referred questionnaire was circulated among twinning agreements participants in order to gather the opinion of municipalities’ representatives (politicians and civil servants) and project consultants about the twinning activities/partnerships in order to evaluate the barriers, challenges, impacts and, definitely, the effectiveness of twinning agreements.

Furthermore, the survey included some questions about post twinning activities or how making the partnership keeping alive after project end.

On the other hand, work plan activities (chiefly face-to-face meeting organized) foresaw a discussion about the continuation of the twinning agreement.

The information collected with the survey and minutes of face-to-face meeting have served to compose the present chapter.

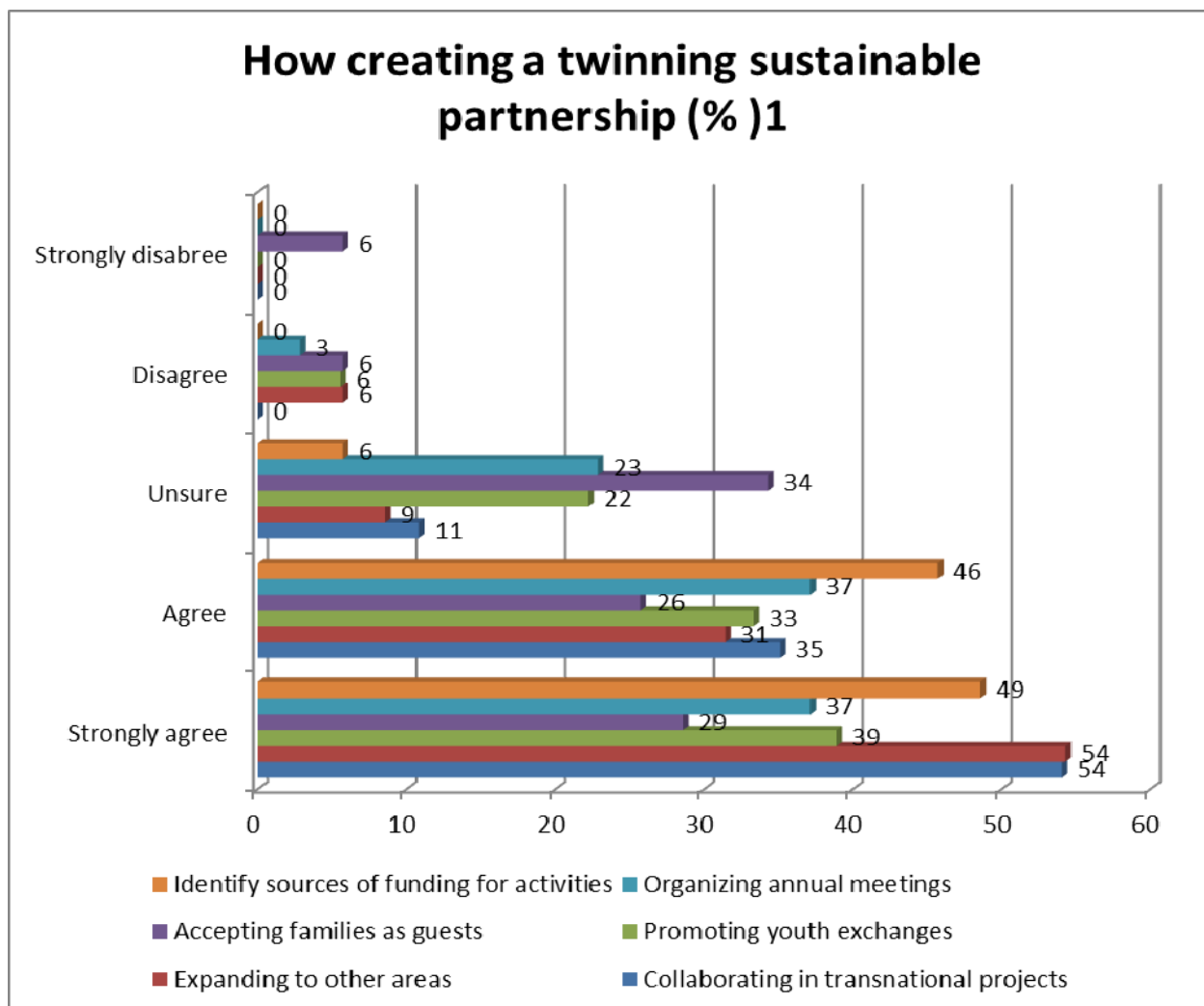
The first part of this chapter emanates from the data obtained with the twinning evaluation questionnaire, distributed through informal twinning participants.

As mentioned above, besides experiences, obstacles and results observed by twinning participants, the questionnaire included some questions concerning their partnerships sustainability. For that purpose, AER listed a series of mechanisms or activities that could serve to keep partnership alive. These responses are analysed in the following paragraphs.

As can be observed in the following graph, 89% of participants considered that the collaboration in transnational projects (e.g. H2020 programme) would be useful to keep their partnership alive. In fact, the municipality of Motril (Spain) and Smolyan (Bulgaria) are going to submit a common European project proposal. When survey participants were asked to evaluate the idea of expanding twinning partnerships to other activities (culture, traditions, etc.), 85% of them strongly agree or agree.

Besides, 78% of twinning participants thought that “promoting youth exchanges” was an interesting tool. Although this topic is highly positive rated, it is important to highlight that 22% of participants were not sure about its usefulness. Participants answer more or less in the same way when was analysed the following tools “to encourage families or associations in both cities to accept families from the other city as guests” and “organizing annual meetings”. In both potential measures the percentage of participants answering “strongly agree” or “agree” with those statements are over 50%. However, 22% are not sure and 6% disagree regarding youth exchanges promotion. Even lower, 34% of respondents are not sure and 12% disagree or totally disagree when are asked about families exchanges.

Table 1. How creating a sustainable twinning partnership (first part)

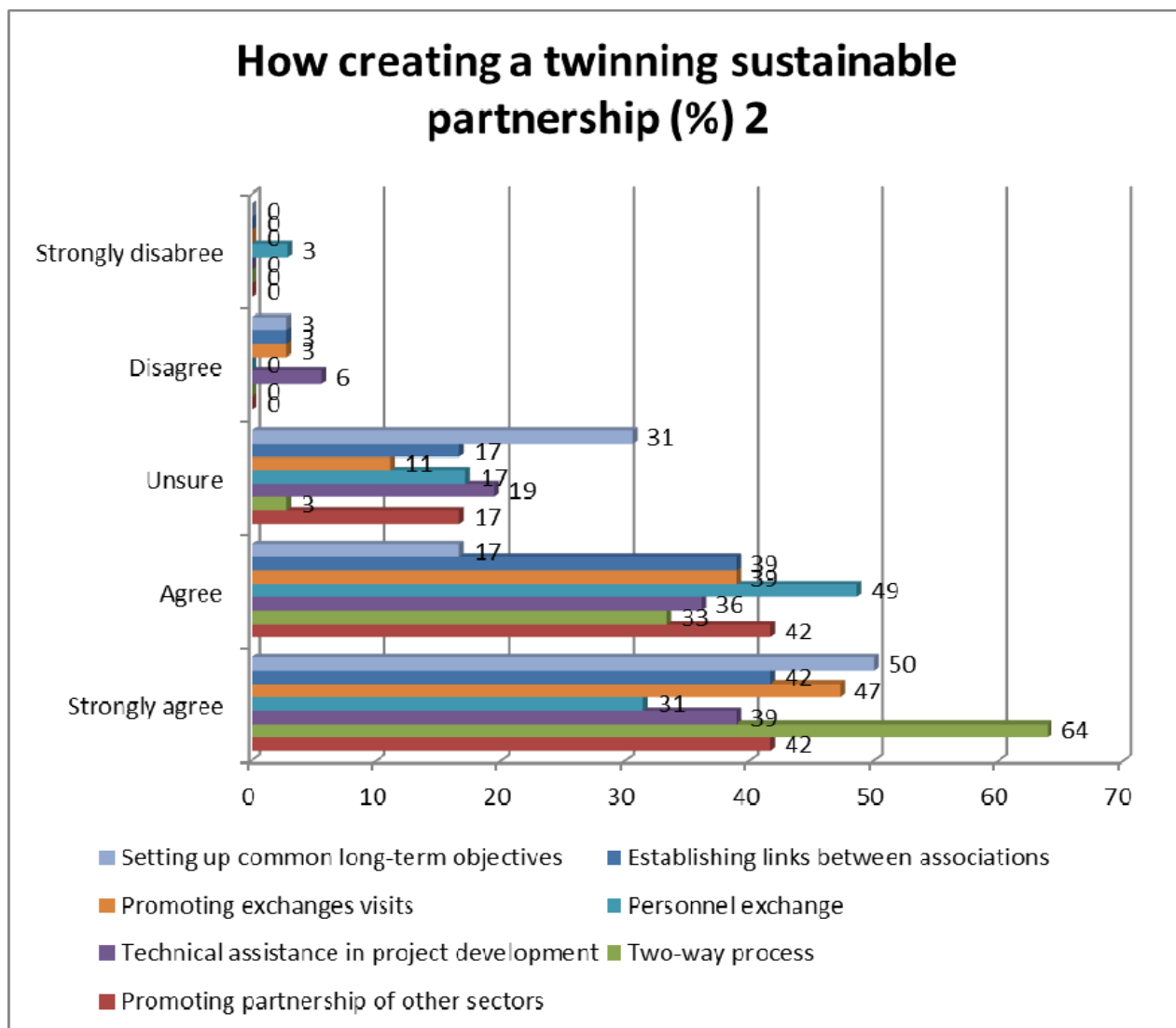


Moreover, survey participants were to value the possibility of using the organization of an annual meeting as a tool. 74% believed that this action could improve twinning sustainability and 23% of them were not sure. Only 3% disagree with this possibility.

Lastly, 95% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” about the question if “to identify and deploy sources of funding to cover twinning activities” would be positive. It is clear that funding or co-funding tools would help to go on with twinning activities.

As can be seen from the graph below, for creating sustainable partnerships, more than 80% of questionnaire respondents considered that “promoting partnership and cooperation of municipal factors” would push partners to continue with twinning activities. Furthermore, 97% confirmed that designing a two-way twinning process, where both counterparts would benefit, would be a relevant mechanism.

Table 2. How creating a sustainable twinning partnership (second part)



More than 75% of survey respondents, as can be observed above, agree about the following issues: usefulness of receiving technical assistance in project development, “personnel exchange” activities, “promoting exchange visits of persons, material and information” and “promoting the establishment of links between non-governmental associations, youth bodies and trade associations”.

Finally, only 67% of respondents considered that “setting up common long-term objectives (such as CO2 reduction targets)” was positive for the continuation of twinning relationship. But 31% of them were not sure and 3% disagree about it.

On the other hand, the effectiveness questionnaire raised the question about if participants' institutions were interested in going on with the twinning activities and, if so, how they thought it was possible.

Another question introduced in the survey was about the interest of twinning participants in going on with twinning activities and, if so, were invited to indicate was possible to keep the twinning partnership alive once Green Twinning project was over.

The result was encouraging because 100% of replies were affirmatives; all the institutions were interested in going on with the twinning activities.

Some other methods or actions mentioned in order to keep Green Twinning action alive after IEE funding are listed below:

- To establish thematic work groups consisting of representatives of both cities and/or maybe also other interested cities and relevant stakeholders
- Getting support from Consultants in maintaining cooperation
- Implementation of common projects/actions supporting sustainable development, and some other municipal aspects such as culture, tourism, municipal management, etc.
- Collaboration in concrete projects
- Stating twinning partnership on the next level on other municipal areas such as sport, culture, etc.
- Appointing civil servant as twinning partnership responsible
- Establishing an official annual schedule for twinning activities

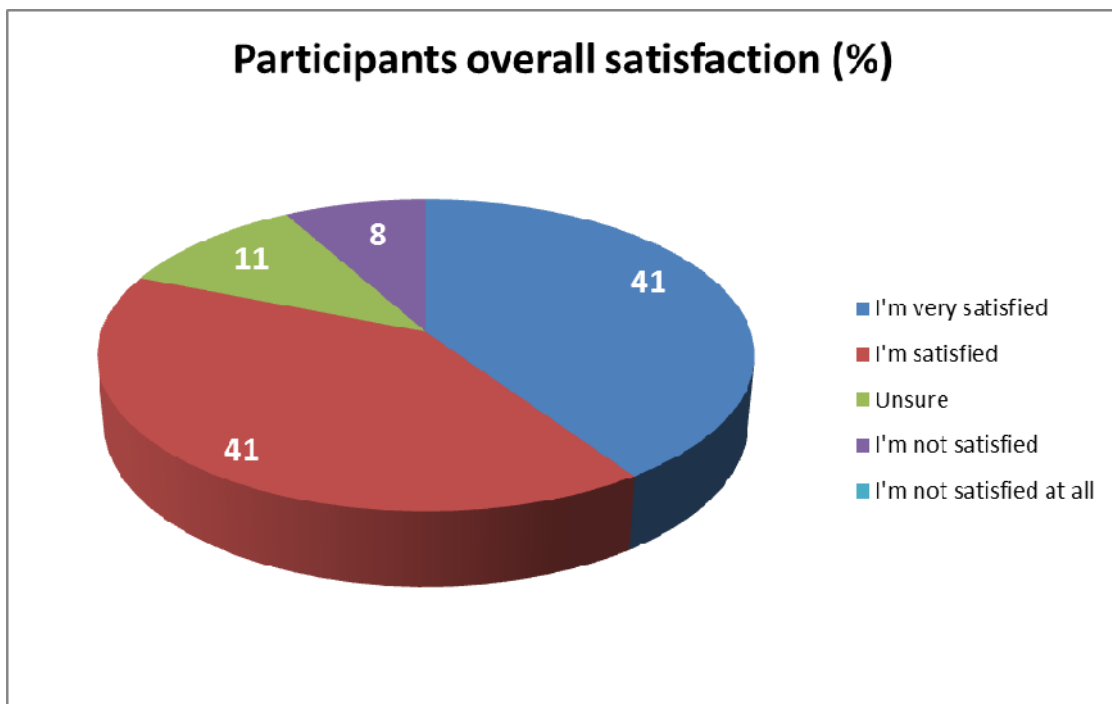
Some other methods highlighted by project consortium members are, for instance, the dedicated partners search tool for municipalities in the project website http://green-twinning.eu/?page_id=100. In this page, municipalities are invited to sign voluntary twinning agreements in order to exchange know-how in sectors related to the development and implementation of a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP).

A very interesting proposal is the "Pay it forward" approach. It consists on a "learning" municipality in a first partnership and taking an "experienced" role with a second partnership. Definitely, a "learning" city commits to transfer to another city the knowledge gained with a previous twinning partnership. This method has been used with Nea Smyrni (Greece), a voluntary twinning participant, which act as PoL with Castelló de la Plana (Spain) and, later, share the experience with the municipality of Agioi Anargyroi-Kamatero (Greece).

Finally, level of overall satisfaction of informal twinning members is also an interesting element in order to evaluate the willingness of involved municipalities. It is analysed in the following paragraphs.

Respondents were asked about the outcome of twinning cooperation and 82% of them were satisfied or very satisfied with twinning activities results. The fact that only 8% of them stated that were not satisfied is a remarkable result.

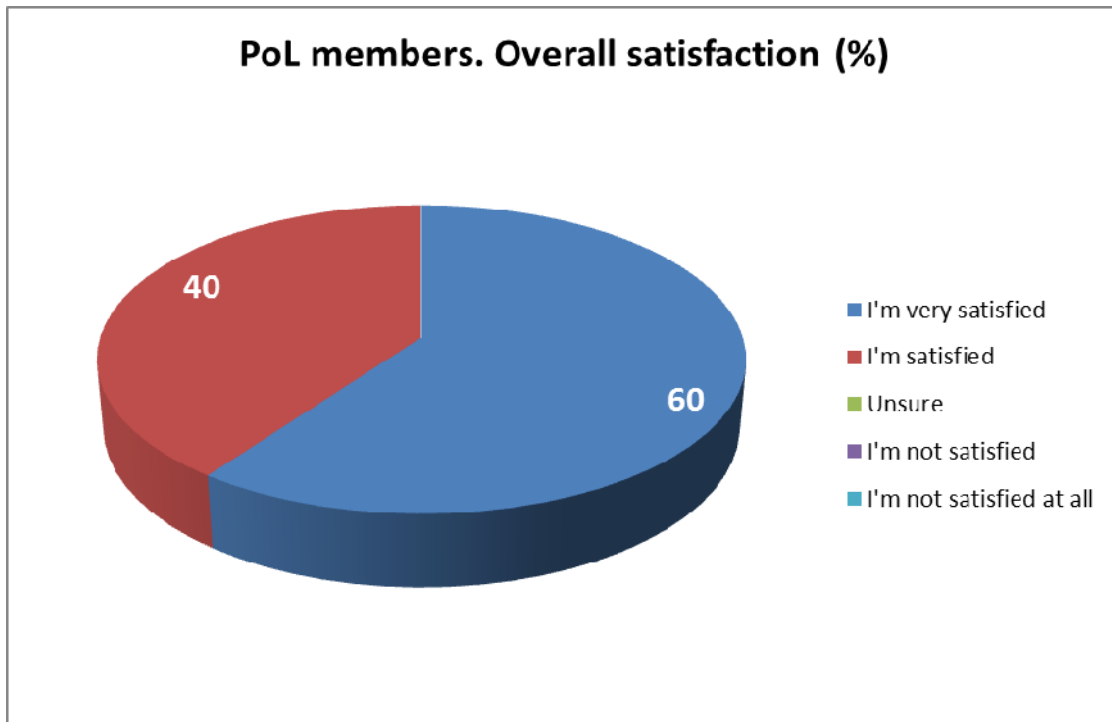
Table 3. Characterized the outcome of twinning cooperation



Analysing the PoL and PoE response to the question separately, it is possible to observe significant differences.

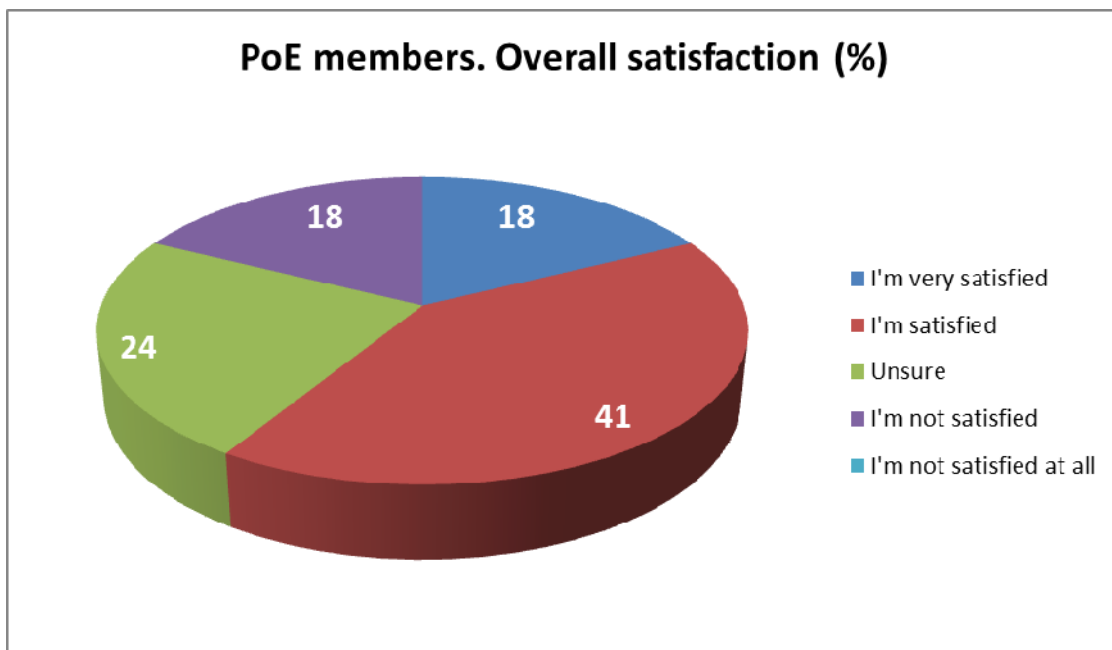
In particular with PoL answers, 100% of participants are very satisfied (60%) or satisfied (40%) as can be observed below.

Table 4. Overall satisfaction of PoL participants



In case of PoE, 41% answered that was satisfied, but 24% is not sure about the level of satisfaction and 18% is not satisfied with twinning results.

Table 5. Overall satisfaction of PoE participants



5. Voluntary twinning partnerships

Within Green Twinning project framework project partners must promote the constitution of 10 voluntary twinning agreements between municipalities outside the PoL.

As a consequence the following voluntary twinning partnerships have been created.

- 1) Municipality of Albal (Spain) – Municipality of Agios Dimitriou (Greece)
- 2) Municipality of Alginet (Spain) - Municipality of Rudozem (Bulgaria)
- 3) Municipality of Borsec (Romania) - Municipality of Sfantu Gheorghe (Romania)
- 4) Municipality of Castelló de la Plana (Spain) - Municipality of Nea Smyrni (Greece)
- 5) Municipality of Idrija (Slovenia) – Municipality of Bolzano (Italy)
- 6) Municipality of Kocevje (Slovenia) – Municipality of Idrija (Slovenia)
- 7) Municipality of Lanjarón (Spain) - Municipality of Paiania (Greece)
- 8) Municipality of Lubin (Poland) - Municipality of Dzierżoniów (Poland)
- 9) Municipality of Nea-Smyrni (Greece) - Municipality of Agioi Anargyroi-Kamatero (Greece)
- 10) Municipality of Pałecznicza (Poland) - Municipality of Niepołomice (Poland)

6. Conclusions

And from now on?? What will happen with the informal twinning partnerships once IEE funding is over? This is a very interesting question!

For that purpose, AER prepared and circulated a questionnaire among Green Twinning project participants. The twinning effectiveness evaluation survey was a good opportunity to gather the opinion of municipalities' representatives (politicians and civil servants) and project Consultants about the twinning activities/partnerships in order to evaluate process (identifying barriers tackled, challenges overtaken and impacts achieved), the level of satisfaction found during the whole process and their interest in going on with the twinning activities.

As a result of the information obtained through the mentioned questionnaire, 100% of informal twinning municipalities and their respective Consultants are interested in going on with their twinning process.

Besides, the level of satisfaction of twinning participants was unbeatable. 100% of PoL respondents were very satisfied or satisfied. Meanwhile, 41% of PoE survey participants were satisfied and only 18% were not satisfied with twinning results. Moreover, 100% of PoL survey participants considered was benefited by twinning.

Furthermore, survey participants considered that some of the ways for creating a sustainable twinning partnership are the followings:

- Ensuring a two-way twinning process. Both counterparts must result in benefits
- Identifying and deploying sources of funding to cover twinning activities
- Expanding twinning partnership to other municipal activities (culture, traditions, etc.)
- Collaborating in transnational projects (EU funding)
- Promoting partnership and cooperation of other municipal sectors (industry, educational sector, etc.)

Concerning voluntary twinning agreements, 10 partnerships initiated their activities at the beginning of 2014 with the exchange of municipality participants contact list and even a pair of study visits were carried out. One organized by AER and the municipality of Castelló de la Plana and receiving Nea Smyrni representatives.

And the second study visit for the voluntary twinning agreement between Nea Smyrni (experienced) and Agioi Anargyroi Kamatero (learning) was carried out, organized by PEDDA and Nea Smyrni municipality. During this second study visit the two municipalities exchange experience on sustainable energy issues while Nea Smyrni, transferred all the knowledge gained through the informal twinning with Castello de la Plana."

Therefore, sustainability of twinning partnerships created during Green Twinning project is definitely guaranteed.