



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

A GLOBAL NETWORK OF REGIONAL CENTRES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Key messages

To support a global good with limited resources, Austria has partnered with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and regional economic organisations and their member states to establish regional Centres for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CREEE). The centres provide technical and advisory services to accelerate the energy transition across the globe. Their success and sustainability rely on the political will, engagement and ownership of participating countries during the transition process.

● Keywords

[Environment and climate](#) | [Global goods and challenges](#) | [Multilateral institutions](#) | [Poverty and inequality](#)

● Key partner

[Austria](#)

Challenge

Promoting access to sustainable energy sources and enhancing the deployment of renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency improvements is an important contribution to the fight against climate change, to the protection of the environment and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It requires the right business enabling environment and regulatory frameworks to attract private sector participation and investment, as well as co-operation among states to tackle regional and common challenges. Austrian development co-operation alone could not directly support the sustainable energy transition in developing countries on a global scale. Further, many developing countries considered the concept of regional sustainable energy centres financially beyond reach.

Approach

Austria prioritised a multilateral-bilateral approach that built on existing regional co-operation, thereby leveraging and strengthening existing institutions and frameworks. Together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Austrian Development Co-operation entered into a

partnership with Regional Economic Communities such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Community (SADC), and East African Community (EAC), to establish regional Centres for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CREEE), seven of which were financially supported by Austria. The centres aim to create an enabling environment and support the implementation of renewable energy and energy efficiency policies and technologies. To kick-start the centres, Austria:

- **provided initial financial support** in the form of grants to support the inception phase of the centres and their annual work plans
- **assisted in the identification of host countries** for the regional centres
- **helped establish relevant policies** and provided political and technical advice as a framework for setting up the centres
- **facilitated the participation of other international stakeholders** such as the EU Commission, World Bank, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and Spanish, Swedish, German and other development co-operation partners
- **seconded experts**, building on Austrian expertise in sustainable energy.

The Global Network of Regional Sustainable Energy Centres is hosted by UNIDO in Vienna to promote South-South and triangular multi-stakeholder partnerships. This aligns with Austria's effort to position Vienna as a platform for international energy diplomacy.

Results

Centres have become relevant regional institutions. The centres are hosted by institutions or member states in the respective regions, enjoy high-level support from energy ministries and are well connected at regional and international levels.

Centres respond to the needs of national governments. The centres provide technical and policy advice and concrete implementation activities, support regional co-ordination as well as investment and entrepreneurship promotion and facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building, for example, through short-term training and information programmes. To maximise benefits, they also facilitate the integration of other development programmes into existing regional initiatives.

Despite progress, financial sustainability has not yet been achieved. Most centres are actively mobilising resources, generating income by providing payable services, or have succeeded in gaining support from other bilateral providers based on good performance. However, most centres still largely depend on financial contributions from international co-operation partners. In some cases, national legislation does not allow for communal (regional) budgeting.

Lessons learnt

- **Benefits of a multilateral-bilateral approach.** Austria's financial and political support provided critical resources and facilitated the engagement of other development partners. Local Austrian Development Cooperation coordination offices aided local stakeholder dialogue. UNIDO's access to political decision makers and reactivity ensured continuity of operations where challenges arose.
- **Managing diverse geographic contexts:** Each process is led by regional economic communities and their member states, with different approaches to cross-border co-operation. Challenges resulting from engaging and monitoring across remote locations, diverse levels of leadership and

capacity, and the interests of different Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and non-DAC partners in the regions needed to be managed.

- **A scalable model allows expansion based on limited resources:** Developing a model and applying it flexibly in different regional contexts allowed Austria and UNIDO to focus their support on the creation and set-up of the centres, stretching limited resources to a global scale.
- **Regional ownership is critical but remains challenging:** Success in obtaining local or regional support and financing from member states has varied across regions. Highlighting the added value of the centres is essential to creating ownership.

Further information

ADA, *Sustainable energy*, <https://www.entwicklung.at/en/themes/water-energy-and-food-security/sustainable-energy>.

UNIDO, *Global Network - Regional Sustainable Energy Centres*, <https://www.gn-sec.net>.

OECD resources

OECD (2020), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Austria 2020*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/03b626d5-en>.

To learn more about Austria's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Austria", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bd516a04-en>.

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