

Life Ecoempower project

September 25, 2023

ECOsystems EMPOWERing at regional and local scale supporting energy communities - Empowering Energy Communities and their key role in the decarbonization of Europe and tackling climate change

Driving Sustainability in Europe's Green Transition

Energy communities will be central to the EU Green Deal strategy. They have the potential to help reducing greenhouse gas emissions noticeably and quickly, as half of all European Union citizens could be producing their own electricity by 2050, meeting 45% of the EU's energy demand (Delft, CE Delft, September 2016). Energy communities require stronger local actions and citizen-owned

initiatives. The ECOEMPOWER project – funded by the EU Life-program – shall promote and support the establishment of local offices (One Stop Shops) for the set up and development of Energy Communities in Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece and Italy.

Energy communities have gained increased attention, since they promote collective approaches to energy transition by actively involving citizens and small businesses. Such communities come in many shapes and forms. They encompass various organizational models, legal forms, activities, and technologies for renewable energy production, ranging from wind and solar to bioenergy and hydroelectric power. They engage in joint generation and supply, energy sharing, energy services, cooperative electro-mobility, fostering social and community empowerment and more. The benefits of these collective energy initiatives include strong environmental benefits, improved public acceptance of renewable installations, reduced energy poverty, enhanced social cohesion, energy autonomy, access to innovative financing schemes, and provision of distributed flexibility for improved energy network resilience. Yet, the model is new and a wide-spread establishment of such communities needs capacity building and empowerment.

How ECOEMPOWER will foster EU energy transition?

The ECOEMPOWER project aims to support regional authorities in triggering and facilitating energy communities. It establishes a One Stop Shop (OSS) as a physical and virtual hub where citizens and stakeholders can access integrated services and digital tools for setting up energy communities. The OSS raises awareness about the benefits of collective energy initiatives, assists in project feasibility analysis, business model development and capacity building. And it fosters networking between energy communities, public authorities, and technology providers.

The regional One Stop Shops for energy communities will be developed and tested with the active participation of 5 regional authorities- in Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece and Italy. Within those regional authorities, there will be active involvement of 15 Pilots, each of them corresponding to one local energy community project according to the EC definitions of Renewable or Citizen Energy Communities (RECs / CECs). Pilots have been chosen to represent various stages of development of the energy communities and associated needs.

Fundamental for the project is the interdisciplinary consortium of 10 partners coordinated by [Fondazione Bruno Kessler](#), through the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#). In addition to FBK there are other 2 research centers such as [Università degli Studi di Trento](#) (Italy) and [Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Energie Environnement](#) (France); five public bodies/association such as [Provincia Autonoma di Trento](#) (Italy), [Association Centrales Villageoises](#) (France), [Energie- & Umweltzentrum Allgäu](#) (Germany), [Pražské společenství obnovitelné energie](#) (Czech Republic) and [PERIFEREIA STEREAS ELLADAS](#)/Region of Central Greece (Greece) and renowned industrial partners as [BAUM consult](#) (Germany) and [UBITECH Energy](#) (Belgium).

What will ECOEMPOWER deliver?

ECOEMPOWER will create services to support energy communities, both existing and yet to be established. The services will be tested in the pilot sites, where the communities and their stakeholders will be actively involved and engaged. This experience will then be valorized as a methodology and policy recommendations will be created to support regional One Stop Shops and energy communities in all Europe. 100 replicators will be involved already during the first year of project activities.

Luigi Crema, director of the [Centre for Sustainable Energy of FBK](#), underlines the impact of the project: “Energy communities hold a key role in the decarbonization of Europe and tackling climate change. They have the difficult but powerful role to empower local communities and enable them to engage in a path benefitting the individuals, the community, and the environment as well”.

ECOEMPOWER Project Kick-Off

On September 19th and 20th, the ECOEMPOWER consortium met for the official project kick-off in Trento, Italy. Over 20 representatives of 10 project partners from the European countries Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece and Italy came together for the first time. With the project kick-off they sealed the official start of their ambitious undertaking. The main topic of the first day was to get to know each other, agree on a common understanding of all project aspects, co-create first elements of a project identity and get an insight in every work package. The second day was dedicated to visit energy communities and cooperatives in the region and some renewable energy plants collectively operated and that will be part of the energy communities.

“With this kick-off meeting we paved the ground for the next three years activities and we are now looking forward to a fruitful international cooperation of European regions. With this project we can contribute effectively to Europe’s decarbonization, as well as working for the well being of the local territories and population” says **Diego Viesi** from FBK, the ECOEMPOWER coordinator.



About ECOEMPOWER

ECOEMPOWER – *ECOsystems EMPOWERing at regional and local scale supporting energy communities* – is a three-year project, funded with more than 1 million EUR in the LIFE program and sub-programme Clean Energy Transition. This sub-programme continues to support the delivery of EU policies in the field of sustainable energy, in particular, the European Green Deal, the Energy Union (2030 energy and climate targets) and the European Union's 2050 long-term decarbonisation strategy. The LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme aims at facilitating the transition towards an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and -resilient economy by funding coordination and support actions across Europe.

The ECOEMPOWER consortium is an association of 10 partners from 6 European countries, forming a balanced team of complementary institutions including 5 public bodies/associations, 3 research centres and 2 private companies. ECOEMPOWER has officially been launched on September 1st, 2023 under the coordination of Fondazione Bruno Kessler and runs until 31st of August 2026.

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