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# HOW TO LAUNCH ENERGY COMMUNITIES

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SocialRES is paving the way towards energy democracy! We are researching new ways to empower citizens and foster their involvement within the energy sector. At the same time, we are promoting active collaboration and social innovation within key players of the energy transition: cooperatives, energy aggregators and crowdfunding platforms.

This info-pack provides some guidelines to make energy communities more effective. Drawing on different cases within SocialRES project, these guidelines will be useful for energy communities who are planning to launch a new project.

## 3 STEPS TO LAUNCH ENERGY COMMUNITIES

Energy communities offer many benefits. They can help to:

- Increase energy efficiency and energy savings;
- Save money (end users, municipalities and at national level);
- Enhance comfort for end users;
- Develop local employment;
- Fight energy poverty by specific price mechanisms and energy efficient buildings;
- Support social and community development;
- Empower citizens and build capacity.

There are three main steps to launch an energy community: understand, plan and act.

### Step 1: Understand

Energy communities talk to each other. They share knowledge and best practices, and help new communities learn about the options available.

### Step 2: Plan

This phase consists in mapping the technology better.

Stakeholders, governance model and other potential goals are set out.

### Step 3: Act

During this phase, the first activities are performed; the legal status and type of business model are established.

## HOW TO INVOLVE CITIZENS?

There are three key areas through which citizen involvement can be supported: municipal involvement, appropriate financial mechanisms and citizen ownership targets.

### Municipal involvement

The municipal support for social innovations in RES (renewable energy sources) can be mutually beneficial for the socially innovative project and the municipal government. It also gives legitimacy to the project, acting as a stamp of approval for investors. Local municipalities can also benefit from their involvement in energy communities. For instance, direct involvement of the local authority in a community-led project strengthens the ties between the local government and their electorate.

### Appropriate financial mechanisms

Economic viability must be ensured to make long-term success possible. Citizens cannot be expected to become prosumers through a philanthropic interest, there is the need for economic incentives as well.

### Citizen ownership targets

Authorities can also choose a bolder, top-down approach to citizen involvement by setting national and regional citizen ownership targets for RE (renewable energy) generation. With this policy, governments set targets for total capacity or a percentage of renewable energy sources owned by private citizens.

## WHY IS COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?

Good practices of energy democracy are the result of efficient collaboration between citizen initiatives and local authorities. Below are some useful practices for working with local authorities:

- Promote the participation of citizens and understand the ethics of this participation;
- Support citizen-led initiatives and engage with existing projects;
- Identify common objectives: environmental, social, etc;
- Local and regional authorities should adopt long-term objectives;
- Local authorities can buy locally generated renewable energy from community energy projects;
- Implement a collaborative approach and a more united relationship between communities and local authorities;
- Local authorities can raise projects' visibility and recognition;
- Local and regional authorities can adopt specific land-use or buildings-related regulations that favour the development of citizen or community-owned energy sources;
- Community or citizen ownership of energy initiatives developed by local authorities means citizens are better able to engage with energy systems;
- Exemplarity of the local authority. Exemplarity of municipality's projects and infrastructure, training of employees of the local authority;
- These employees can be allocated to support, with specific skills, the project initiated by citizens;
- Local and regional authorities can be crucial in providing guarantees for financial institutions when citizen initiatives have difficulty accessing credit;
- More cross-departmental collaboration within local authorities.

The content of this info-pack has been re-elaborated starting from the Deliverable 2.3.

For more information, references and case-studies examples about this topic please read the whole document:

<https://socialres.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SocialRES-D2.3.pdf>



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