

Newsletter

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Welcome to the quarterly newsletter from EC²: Energy Citizenship and Energy Communities for a Clean Energy Transition.

Funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Grants, EC²'s aim is to discover what it takes for energy citizenship and energy communities to thrive.



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Introduction

Welcome to this spring edition of the EC² newsletter! Since our last update, there have been many new developments, from the publication of our **first policy brief to new research** and the launch of the **Community Energy Academy**. This is the exciting stage of our project where we begin to translate the findings from many months of research into materials and activities that engage policymakers, practitioners and the wider public. More is still to come: our co-creation workshops have provided us with fascinating and creative insights into how citizens and practitioners see their role in the energy transition and what their needs are to overcome barriers, and the next step - among others - will be the design of a tool that will support individuals to become energy citizens.

We hope you enjoy **catching up with our events, research and new materials**. And if you find yourself inspired, why not sign up to the **Community Energy Academy** to dive deeper into the people-centred energy transition? We look forward to seeing you at our first live event - read on to find out more.





Community Energy Academy

Empowering Energy Citizens



Benedetta Buccolini, ICLEI Europe

- ? How can we co-create sustainable energy solutions with local communities and citizens?
- ? What is energy citizenship and how does it change the way we think about energy?
- ? How can we mainstream energy communities to speed up energy transition?

Join the **Community Energy Academy** and learn more about **empowering energy citizens!**

Community Energy Academy will equip you with the up-to-date knowledge about **energy citizenship** and **energy communities** (including developments in regulations and policies). It presents a holistic understanding of citizen engagement in energy systems, and practical action planning tools and networks to implement inclusive and people-centred energy initiatives - starting from your community. You will learn about the different types of community energy initiatives and how they can be implemented in different contexts.

The course content is designed for public administrators, leaders and members of energy communities, researchers, and other sustainability experts. Participation is free of charge and flexible, including both monthly live training sessions and self-paced learning materials.

Sign up [here](#) and join the first live event on April 19th.

Introduction to Community Energy Academy - join the first live training session!

19 April 2023, 10-12 CET (in Zoom)

In this **2-hour training session**, we will delve into energy citizenship and its benefits for local energy transformation. The interactive session will focus on community-led initiatives and give the spotlight to energy community leaders who will share their experience of working with energy citizens and innovative approaches to promote energy citizenship in practice. Confirmed speakers include Djoera Eerland (Buurkracht-initiative, Netherlands), Lucilla Borio (Torri Superiore ecovillage, Italy), and a guest speaker from the ENCLUDE-project. A detailed agenda and additional self-learning material will be shared with registered participants prior to the training. The session will be facilitated by ICLEI Europe and The Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI).

Please write to the training organisers (justtransition-europe@iclei.org) in order to register and receive the meeting link.



“Energy Citizenship: A missing piece to the energy transition puzzle?”

The first EC² policy brief has been published! As part of a wider publication series, this brief takes a step back to first unpack the concept of Energy Citizenship. It delves into the source and content of Energy Citizenship, and situates this within the wider European energy policy context. The brief is an essential read for those wanting a quick overview of the thinking behind the energy citizenship concept. What rights and duties are entailed therein? How do these link to the EU's wider policy goals? And what are the structural barriers hampering the achievement of this wider policy vision? **Read the brief [here](#).**



Daniel Botha, ICLEI Europe



Tools for energy citizenship: what's out there – and what's next



Markus Mogg, University of Graz

In the process of founding an energy community, finding suitable information can be quite a challenge for citizens willing to play an active part in the energy transition. Although the issue is pressing due to the climate crisis, interested people find themselves initially confronted with a lot of questions ranging from technical issues, financial and legal aspects to finding a suitable framework that allows you to share sustainably produced energy with your friends, family or community – or even a community that you could join. Fortunately, for many of these questions that arise before starting or joining an energy community, there are many tools available on the internet that can aid in this undertaking.

For the EC² project, the combined law and social psychology teams at the university of Graz conducted research on what tools are widely available in Europe and where to find them. This is part of our project's approach to providing prospective energy citizens with a co-created tool that supports their role in a just energy transition.

The researchers compiled a list of over 50 tools that aim to address a wide range of topics, from supporting energy communities, raising awareness on energy usage to providing legal information. This list is available for download on the EC² project website [here](#). Within the list a distinction was made between information, evaluation, cooperation/interaction and technical tools.



» **Information tools** aim to bundle information and to have all necessary information collected in one place. They can be websites, webinars, manuals, or other guides, aimed at interested people and providing them with information on the topic. The information can be very general and relate to topics such as energy saving or energy efficiency or to running an energy community. Overall, information tools should help interested parties to obtain the required information quickly and, above all, cheaply or, in the best case, free of charge.

» **Interaction tools** are aimed at people who are ready to connect with other people interested in renewable energy, and some also let people monitor their own energy consumption and compare to the consumption of others. Generally, they are supporting people who have already come together and want to promote the creation of community. They are intended, for example, to help simplify organizational questions in the communities by connecting members, and can be even used to recruit new members.

» **Evaluation tools** include self-assessment or gamification items that are related to energy consumption and energy saving. They are tools that analyze people's inputs and give them tips on how they can improve their behavior and/or subsequently reduce their energy consumption.

» **Technical tools** include tools that calculate savings in electricity generation from photovoltaics, wind power or other energy sources, or tools that calculate the positive effects that participating in an energy community. Some provide model contracts for the establishing an energy community, which founders of new communities can use for an easier start.

Highlights from the list of available tools include:



1. Official website providing information on energy communities in Austria (in German)

This site covers a wide range of topics such as the **different forms of energy communities**, who is involved, and the benefits of participation. Legal basics are also explained. There is information on how to set up an energy community, a step-by-step guide on how to establish it and best practice examples, as well as a list of all service providers in the country active in this field and a comprehensive FAQ. In addition, a benefit and calculation tool is offered, with which interested people can calculate the financial benefits of setting up an energy community. All information is available in a concise and easily comprehensible language and also in short videos.

 www.energiegemeinschaften.gv.at

2. Energy cockpit

The **energy cockpit** is an **app** designed to help you keep an eye on your energy consumption at all times and use it to identify potential savings. This is done, for example, by comparing consumption with other households or by switching off inefficient appliances. Consumers can also easily compare their consumption with their data from previous periods. The most important data is presented clearly and intuitively for individual consumers.

 www.ecrew-project.eu/the-app/

3. Power Act

You take part in a short survey in which details about your home (living space, type of house, year of construction), the type of heating, any air conditioning and used electrical appliances are requested. You will then **receive personalized suggestions for individual changes** in behavior and information on funding programs to increase energy efficiency.

 www.powerpoor.epu.ntua.gr

What's next?



Not only is the list of tools **available for download** on the **EC² project website**, it will also - together with the empirical research previously gathered in the project - provide a basis for the Uni Graz's EC² team to work on a co-created tool that aims to strengthen energy citizenship and energy communities.

Data collection field studies well on its way!



Fleur Goedkoop, University of Groningen

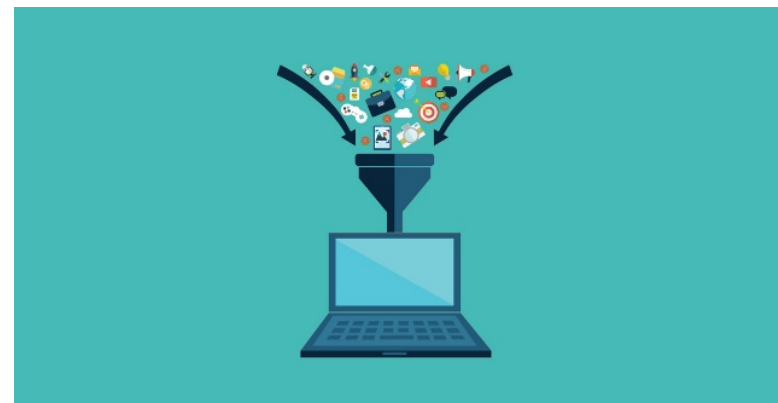
The main aim of WP4 is providing empirical evidence for the barriers and facilitators of **energy communities and energy citizenship**. We conduct longitudinal field studies to identify the relation between perceived social, legal, and economic energy community setup features, involvement in energy communities, and energy citizenship of members and non-members.



Over the past year, we have designed and translated surveys into six languages and conducted the first round of data collection among members and non-members in more than 17 European countries. We have collected data among the general population in two Panels, one in the Netherlands and one in Spain; energy communities from Buurkracht in the Netherlands; ecovillages from the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in Europe, Torri Superiore and Arterra Bizimodu (ABM) specifically; via ICLEI targeting municipalities in Europe; housing cooperative Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa Wrocław-Południe (SMWP) from Poland, and a wide range of energy communities in Europe via various platforms. From the 3424 people who finished our survey, 531 were already members of an energy community, 428 were not members but were aware of an energy community in their local region. Interestingly, the majority of respondents were not yet aware of an energy community.

We want to thank all partners who helped with translating and distributing the survey and all energy communities and participants for their time and effort to fill out the survey!

We are currently planning the analyses on the data and are excited to inform you about the first results soon.



In the next step, we are collecting data for a second time among all participants who agreed to take part again. This enables us to get a better understanding of changes across time.

Call for action!

We are still looking for energy communities in Europe to participate in our survey! Please distribute [this link](#) to the members of your energy community or get in contact with us via f.goedkoop@rug.nl.



Fair Energy For All



Yu-Yi Huynh, ICLEI Europe

Energy transitions have gained momentum in the face of the climate, energy, and economic crises that are challenging Europe. As a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its disruptive effects on the energy market, the EU's REPowerEU plan is calling to accelerate the transition to clean energy and to increase its energy target to 40% renewable energy sources by 2030. The energy crisis is an example of a situation where people and households are bearing the consequences, such as soaring prices and energy shortages, without having opportunities to engage in decisions on the energy system.

Achieving a sustainable and just energy transition would require giving the public more say over their energy options.

Find out more from EC²'s and Lightness project's collaborative article about how institutions must act side by side with citizens to facilitate the energy transition:



[Read it here](#)





Credit: Climate and Energy Fund
Photographer: Martin Hörmandinger

Getting inspired at the Conference on Energy Communities

On March 9th, 2023 the **Conference on Energy Communities** hosted by the Austrian Klima- und Energiefonds took place in Vienna. A whole day was dedicated to the political vision, research and practical implementation of energy communities in Austria, with some views on the standing of energy communities on an international level. From EC², ZSI and University of Graz participated to get inspired by the passionate speakers and various examples of how to initiate and foster energy communities.

In Austria, energy communities were massively promoted through a change of law in 2021 (Erneuerbaren-Ausbau-Gesetz, law for extending renewables). Since then, almost 300 energy communities have been founded in different (mostly rural) areas and under different legal constructs. The political will to support a more flexible system of energy production and consumption, however, implied a fundamental shift in Austria's energy providing structures, including a huge shift towards digitalization (among others).

At the conference, politicians, regulators, energy providers, municipalities (the main initiators of energy communities), and SMEs presented their insights about successes and challenges in fostering energy communities. They presented limitations of energy communities and practicalities to be considered in their initiation, but also discussed their role in Austria's energy transition more broadly.

Researchers presented their results on **energy communities** and explicitly emphasised future pathways of energy communities (such as including heating and mobility concepts besides electricity). In particular, many speakers and participants of the conference emphasised the importance of trustworthy communication hubs for providing thorough information on various issues of energy communities. This requirement was also supported by the findings of the EC² co-creation workshops. In Austria, this information hub is the [Coordination Office for Energy Communities](#).

We were particularly inspired by the work of like-minded EU project SHAREs. They aim to support the formation of energy communities in Europe on a practical level. Check out their [website](#) to find out more about their activities!

Outlook:

Stay tuned! May will be a very busy month for the ZSI EC² team!

✓ We will conduct the **EC² cross-fertilization workshop** and bring together visions of energy citizenship and energy communities of different countries. By so doing, we will accomplish a milestone of the project to lay out the paths towards a useful and practice-relevant tool to foster energy citizenship!

✓ We will have the chance to **discuss and learn** from various community-led approaches for energy transition in our session at the [STS conference](#) in Graz, Austria!

Event updates



Yu-Yi Huynh, ICLEI Europe



EC² at Right to Energy Forum

EC² joined the Right to Energy Forum as a panellist in a discussion titled “Community energy after REPowerEU”. Together with community leaders, we looked into the potentials and barriers for tackling energy poverty through energy democracy and energy communities.



Watch the recording [here](#)



Event updates



Green Region Forum Wrocław: Sustainable development of the energy and transport sectors in Poland.

In March, Wrocław University of Economics and the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Wrocław co-organized an interdisciplinary scientific conference as part of the **Green Region Forum**. The theme of the conference was the sustainable development of the energy and transport sectors in Poland in the context of contemporary regional and global challenges in economic, social and political terms. Over 200 experts, local government officials and business representatives met in Wrocław to discuss the green transformation of the energy and transport sectors together!

From Wrocław University of Economics, Professor Bożena Ryszawska, Professor Piotr Szymanski and Magdalena Rozwadowska presented the results of their EC² research: ***Factors supporting and limiting the creation of energy communities in selected EU countries.***

The aim of the research was to identify key barriers and facilitators for energy communities in selected EU countries. The aim is to gain a systematic understanding of the economic/market conditions that shape energy communities and the emergence of energy citizenship, upon which further project deliverables will be based.

During the conference, team members conducted workshops for local governments on the theme of ***Energy communities as a key element of energy transformation.*** Participants and facilitators sought to answer pressing questions about energy communities:



What challenges do energy communities face when creating and implementing them?

What tools exist to support energy communities?

How to actively involve the local community in activities for energy communities?

All these are issues that the EC² project is engaging with through research, education and policy and we look forward to supporting energy communities with the answers.





Expert session on creating energy communities in Poland – the EC² experience

On March 1-2, 2023, the Macroregional Forum for Exchange of Experience *“Local government partnerships in the face of energy transformation challenges”* was held in Poznań for partnerships of local government units from Lubuskie, Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie. The main topic was energy transformation, including renewable energy sources, energy saving and increasing energy efficiency in accordance with the principle of sustainable development.

Scientists from the EC² partners Wrocław University of Economics conducted an **expert session on creating energy communities**. There are few energy communities in Poland, but the subject attracts great interest from municipalities. During the session, local government officials got acquainted with the results of research conducted as part of the EC² project. Researchers provided information on the state of development and functioning of energy communities in Europe. Participants showed great interest in examples of solutions that exist across Europe such as in Spain, Austria, Germany and Italy, and lively discussions were held on how to support the development of community energy at the local level in Poland. Barriers that inhibit its development were also part of the conversations.

During the Forum, almost one hundred local government officials discussed:

- » the possibilities of financing actions for climate neutrality
- » creating energy communities
- » the most up-to-date legal changes in the area of energy transformation
- » the most interesting, innovative technological solutions.

The results of the session with local government officials confirmed our research outcomes regarding the legal and economic barriers to energy citizenship that we identified during the EC² project work (read the deliverable on barriers and facilitators [here](#)). Overall, it was a fruitful session and the popularity of the workshop is a good prognosis for the development of community energy in Poland.





Stay connected



Whether you're **researching energy citizenship**, a member of an **energy community**, working on **energy policy**, or simply curious about what the **green energy transition** can look like - we invite you to stay connected with us on social media:



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[Website](#) (available in English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Polish)



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