



D6.2 – Report on capacity building programme for satellites and associated partners 2

Energy Cities

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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PROJECT INFORMATION

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1.Introduction

There is a clear need to raise awareness and build capacity for the development of energy communities through collaboration between citizen energy initiatives and local municipalities in Europe. This is the central aim of WP6: to maximise the number of municipalities and communities working together to facilitate energy community projects, using LIFE LOOP's tools and resources and raising awareness of the benefits of energy communities across the Adriatic and Balkans. LIFE LOOP's capacity-building programme includes a wide range of activities and resources to foster the development of these projects and enhance the participation of local municipalities and citizens. More specifically LIFE LOOP technical partners are working with the satellite municipalities of Gabrovo in Bulgaria, Ussaramanna and Villanovaforru in Italy, Cyprus (on national level) and Tulcea in Romania, to adapt and replicate the lessons learnt from the pilots.

This report builds on the previous D6.1 and is closely linked to T6.2, which focuses on the long-term sustainability of community energy projects, and T6.3, which centres on replication activities in satellite areas. This includes integrating lessons, experiences, and best practices from pilot projects into capacity-building activities for municipalities. Additionally, T6.4 involves replication activities with associated partners, including a tailored capacity-building programme for the seven partners across five countries, adapted to the local needs and contexts. The primary goal of the capacity-building programme is to support the satellite and associated municipalities in realising their community energy vision, enabling them to meet the targets they committed to for LIFE LOOP. All those activities aim to ultimately support the launch of new citizen-led energy initiatives, increase participation and awareness among citizens, enhance energy savings and renewable energy generation, boost investment in community energy, among other impacts.

The training and workshop modules should be considered as one important pillar of the overall LIFE LOOP capacity-building methodology. The different elements of the capacity building are presented below and are further analysed in the following chapters:

Training and Workshops: A needs assessment was conducted with each satellite and associated partner. Training sessions and workshops on various topics related to community energy, such as renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency, financing models, community engagement, and project management were developed to meet these needs. These sessions are delivered online and in specific cases in-person and are tailored to the specific needs of the participants.

Coaching and Mentoring: Through the ongoing conversations and LIFE LOOP activities performed by project partners, coaching and mentoring services are offered to satellites to develop and implement their community energy projects.

Networking and Matchmaking: LIFE LOOP facilitates networking and matchmaking opportunities to connect community energy initiatives with potential partners, such as local municipalities, investors, and other community groups. D5.3 is dedicated to thoroughly present these related activities.

Knowledge Sharing and Resources: The program provides access to resources and information on community energy projects, such as case studies, best practices, and toolkits. These resources are available in the LIFE LOOP website.

2. Materials and Tools

2.1 Needs assessment

Between January and September 2023 bilateral meetings were organised with all satellites and associated partners to explore their specific needs, knowledge gaps and opportunities. The resultant Espresso training and capacity building activities were developed to meet these needs, along with monthly bilateral meetings to provide technical support and information.

2.2 Espresso training

The online training program developed as part of LIFE LOOP is a self-paced e-learning course for municipal employees and leaders on community energy. The course is designed to meet the knowledge gaps, needs and interests of satellites, associated partners and other European municipalities. The course features 5 modules that cover essential topics related to the creation and management of energy communities. Participants can explore themes such as energy policy, community engagement, renewable technologies, and financial models, all designed to equip them with practical knowledge and skills. Each module includes interactive learning materials, such as videos, quizzes, and case studies, fostering a deep understanding of the concepts and their real-world applications.

In addition to the structured content, the course promotes a collaborative learning environment through the Forum, encouraging participants to share insights and experiences. In addition, two ‘live’ sessions were organised on Power Purchase Agreements and Governance, to enable participants to interact and discuss together. The aim of the Espresso Training is that participants not only grasp theoretical aspects but also gain practical tools for implementing sustainable energy solutions in their local contexts. By integrating these features, the program empowers municipalities to take an active role in the energy transition, ultimately contributing to the development of resilient and sustainable energy communities. The platform is user-friendly and includes many interactive features, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below. For example, participants can track their progress along the modules, go back to review content and easily browse the different content.



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The Espresso training includes 5 modules: Module 1: Introduction, Module 2: Financing basics, Module 3: Public procurement, Module 4: Communications and facilitating dialogues, Module 5: Access to public sites. Currently, 104 participants are enrolled in the English version of the Espresso training. Table 1 shows in more detail which LIFE LOOP partners have been enrolled.

Apart from offering the course in English, in an effort to tackle any potential language barrier, LIFE LOOP team has also launched National Espresso courses in Romanian, Serbian/Croatian, Bulgarian, Spanish and Greek. Each version is ‘live’ for a particular amount of time, enough to give participants the time to dive into the content in their own pace and for assessors to make the related assignments.

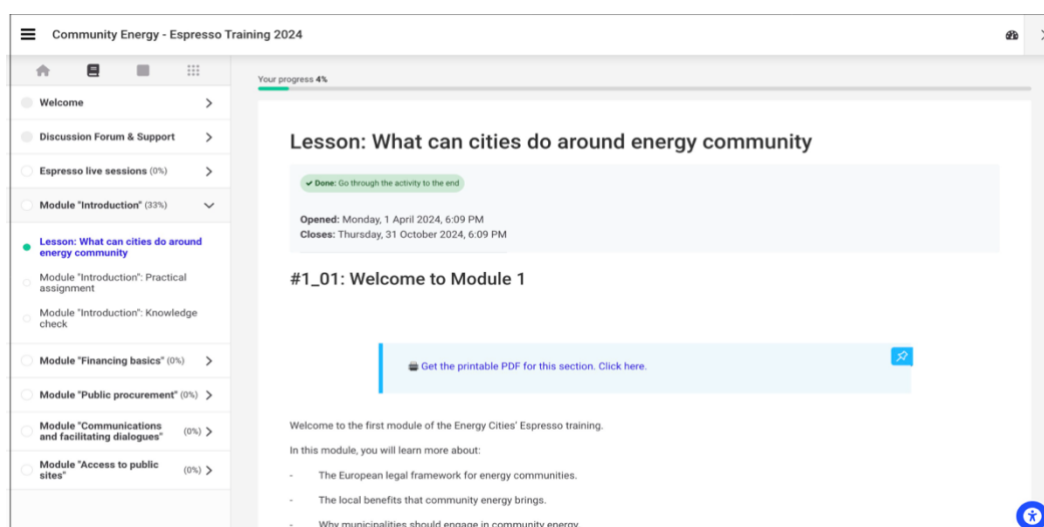


Figure 1 Espresso training: screenshot from Module 'Introduction'

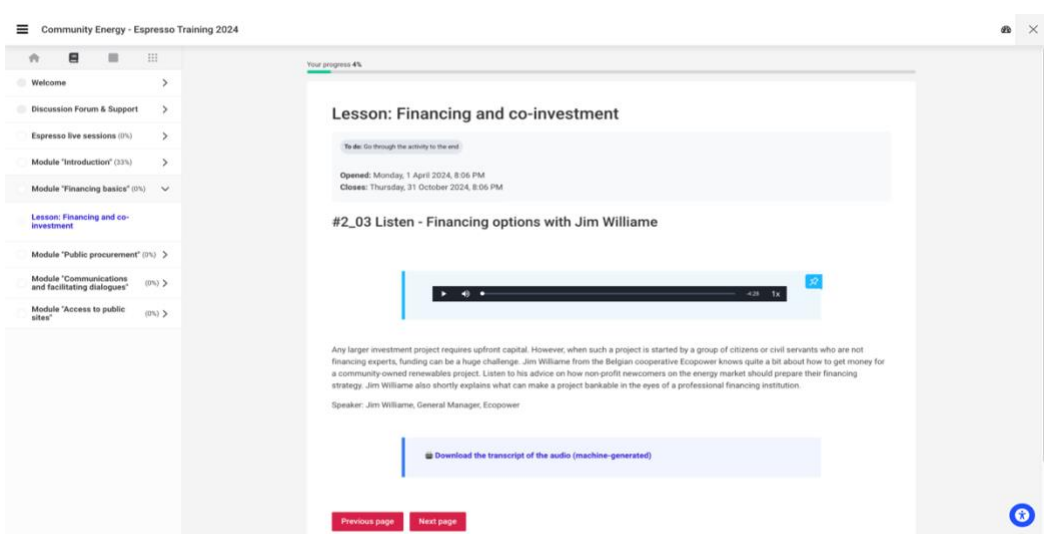


Figure 2 Espresso training: screenshot from a Lesson with a Listening exercise



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Table 1 List of LIFE LOOP partners enrolled in the English version of Espresso training

Municipality	Type of partner
Mostar	Associated partner
Gabrovo	Satellite
Strovolos	Satellite partner
Aradippou	Satellite partner
Hersonisos (Crete)	Pilot partner
Limassol	Satellite partner
Zagreb	Pilot
Porec	Associated partner
Ussaramanna	Satellite
Villanovaforru	Satellite
Bistrița	Pilot
Tulcea	Satellite
Kragujevac	Associated partner

Evaluation of the Espresso training course

For those who enrolled to the Espresso Training in English, a **feedback survey was delivered in October 2024**, for those who participated in the course.

Table 1 shows the satellite and associated partners participating in the English version, with the remainder participating in Espresso courses in their native language. The Espresso survey found that their satisfaction was 4.5 out of 5, showing that the course helped boost their understanding of how municipalities can drive community energy projects. Engagement was strong, with 66.7% finishing all modules and the rest completing two or three modules (two are required for the accreditation programme). When asked if they would prefer the training in their native language (as this Espresso training concerns the English version), responses were nearly split, with 53.3% indicating they were comfortable with English, while 46.7% expressed a preference for native language options.

In response to the final open-ended question about final thoughts or recommendations, participants offered positive feedback about the Espresso training course. Many enjoyed the interactive format and variety of activities, which kept them engaged and enhanced their understanding of community energy topics. One participant remarked, "I really enjoyed the material, especially the variety of activities and ways information was presented. It all kept me interested." Another highlighted the innovative approach of the course, saying, "It was an innovative approach for digesting better the idea of community energy



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and all the aspects around this topic.” Todor Popov from the Municipality of Gabrovo in Bulgaria said “The training helped me change my perspective and gave me new ideas for community projects in our municipality.”

Some constructive feedback included suggestions to simplify the platform and a call for local case studies to help municipalities learn from each other’s experiences. As the Espresso Training is currently available in other national languages, the feedback will be used to improve the training materials accordingly and further promote it in national networks.

2.3 Webinars

Several webinars were organised to build capacity and increase knowledge exchange among pilots, satellites and associated partners. These included:

Community Led Retrofit Webinar – 27/03/2024

A webinar was held focussing on [community-led retrofit and LED lighting](#). Southeast London Community Energy shared their model and tool with pilots, satellites and associated partners.

One Stop Shop (OSS) Webinar – 04/06/2024

A webinar was held in June to enable satellites and associated partners to explore options for One Stop Shops, along with the pilot partners. Urban Innovation Vienna presented their holistic OSS for community energy, and associated partners such as Porec–Parenzo shared their experiences, whilst others asked questions to help inform their approach.

2.4 LIFE LOOP Library

To strengthen the capacity building programme, LIFE LOOP’s library of different templates to support citizens and municipalities in establishing energy communities was shared with satellites and associated partners. This resource page features 10 templates, each designed to address specific aspects of the process, including project planning, stakeholder engagement, communication strategies, and monitoring frameworks. For example, templates for project proposals and action plans help guide users through the initial stages of establishing energy communities, while stakeholder engagement tools facilitate effective collaboration with local actors. Additionally, communication templates offer strategies for outreach and awareness campaigns at the local level.

To enhance accessibility and usability, these templates are available in multiple languages, catering to a broad range of users across the Balkan region. This multilingual approach ensures that municipalities and



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citizens can easily adopt and adapt the tools to fit their local contexts. Each template is accompanied by practical guidelines that provide insights into best practices and implementation strategies, further empowering users to effectively navigate the complexities of building energy communities. These resources have been used to enhance the capacity building activities in each area.

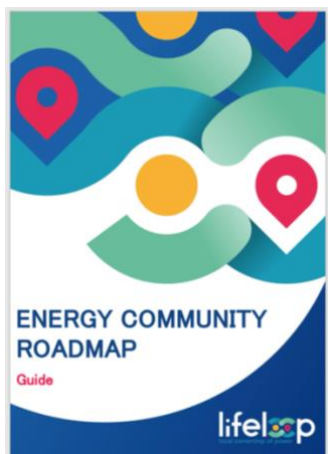


Figure 3: Example of material in English



Figure 4: Example of material in Croatian



Figure 5: A glimpse of the 'Energy community Roadmap'

2.5 LIFE LOOP matchmaking tool

A short training on LIFE LOOP's community energy matchmaking tool¹ was provided to satellites and associated partners, which is integrated into the Accreditation scheme, aims to serve as a catalyst for fostering collaboration and synergies among municipalities, energy communities, and citizen-led

¹ <https://match.energycommunityplatform.eu/>



initiatives. The platform act as a ‘Tinder’ for community energy – enabling asset owners to list their buildings and land and communities to identify potential opportunities for new projects and support. Under the scope of the capacity building activities, it helps the municipalities to overcome some practical barriers when connecting with or assisting new energy communities and projects. D5.3 is dedicated to thoroughly present the related activities.

3. Other activities

The technical partners have been holding regular catch-up meetings with partners to track their progress and assist them. Monthly bilateral meetings with satellites and quarterly bilaterals with the associated partners are being held online, in addition to monthly consortium meetings where satellites and associates get to hear from each other and share ideas.

The associated partners in Kosovo, N. Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are all at the beginning of the community energy journey. However, they are keen to participate and explore opportunities in their regions and provided letters of support for the programme. All the above-mentioned tools and materials have been presented to the associated partners to help them to raise awareness in their municipal and regional level and support the development of new community energy projects, where local legislation allows. Whilst associated partners are not receiving funding, they attend capacity building events, quarterly bilaterals and access the learning materials and the Espresso training course. They are also invited to use the match-making tool and develop a community energy roadmap for their area.

In addition to the activities highlighted above, several capacity building opportunities, webinars and workshops were shared with all partners. One of these, the SCCALE 20-30-50 final event on 7th October 2024, was attended by Porec-Parenzo and Gabrovo and enabled them to share their experiences, learn from others and use the community energy guidebooks developed by the project.

Roadmaps for the satellites

LIFE LOOP technical partners have been also assisting the satellites to design their roadmaps. To ensure a homogenous and consistent work, a Roadmap template was designed, which then got filled in by the satellite partners (see also Figure 5).



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The roadmaps begin with an analysis of the local context, focusing on the area's strengths, challenges, and renewable energy potential. Seen as a strategy for the deployment of energy communities, it includes specific objectives and goals, broken down into concrete steps with a clear timeline and measurable targets. It also includes key stakeholders mapping and strategies for financing and resource allocation, identifying potential funding sources from local, national, and private investments. Additionally, a monitoring and evaluation framework is established to track progress, enabling the overall strategy to be adjusted as circumstances change.

4. Conclusion

A range of capacity building activities and resources have been shared with satellites and associated partners, along with the LIFE LOOP accreditation programme. These activities, tools and resources have helped to significantly boost awareness, commitment and action to support community energy in these areas. In the final project year, the work will continue to support these partners in further developing and implementing their community energy plans and projects, fostering deep community engagement and ensuring that the clean energy transition put citizens at its heart.



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