



# IGNITING COMMUNITY ENERGY ACTION

## FINAL REPORT

...AND THIS IS  
JUST THE BEGINNING!



This project has received funding from the European Union's  
LIFE programme under grant agreement No 101077085

**lifeloop**  
local ownership of power

# WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS

This brochure was written in the final month of the LIFE LOOP project. Over the past three years, 3 pilots and 7 satellite locations have been weaving a local net of community energy allies, connecting civil servants to citizens. Focusing on places in the Adriatic and Balkans, the project team has learnt a lot about trust building, communicating and training around community energy and finding creative ways to overcome legal and technical obstacles to enable Local Ownership Of Power.

We hope this report and the stories of our partners will be useful for civil servants, energy community members, and more broadly, civil society actors who are seeking ways to develop more participative political cultures and make energy democracy blossom in their own area. It may also be helpful for future project leaders who want to use EU funding with a social purpose, to reach our climate goals, strengthen their communities, create impactful initiatives and boost resilient local power.

ENJOY THE READ  
AND SPREAD  
THE COMMUNITY  
ENERGY FEVER  
WHEREVER YOU ARE!

**Funding Programme**  
LIFE21-CET-ENERCOM

**Duration**  
Oct 2022-Sept 2025

**Total Eligible Budget**  
1,758,512 €

**EU Contribution**  
1,670,586 €

**Coordinator**  
Energy Cities

OVERVIEW

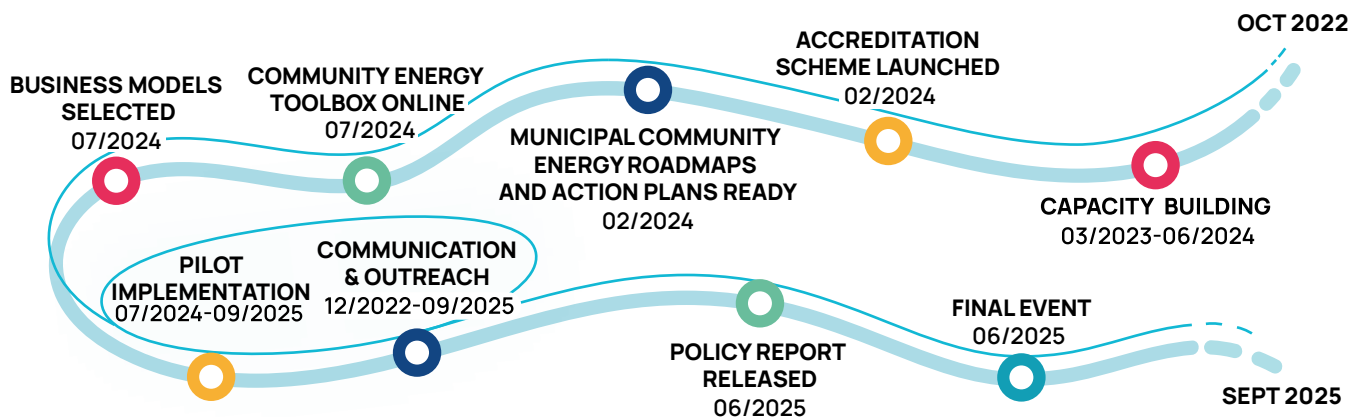


© RESCoop.eu / Consortium meeting in Crete

# LIFE LOOP IN A NUTSHELL

When city administrations and citizens work together, the energy transition becomes an impactful democratic process. We thought it's time to bring the many benefits of community energy to more and more cities! These include slashing greenhouse gas emissions, cleaning our air, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and boosting resilience. Community energy also helps reduce energy bills and address energy poverty, keeps money in the local economy and builds stronger communities. **Overall it's a different way for citizens and municipalities to perceive energy: not just as a commodity, but as a shared social good and a tool for community empowerment.** We are reclaiming our energy system. That's why we started LIFE LOOP. We have boosted municipal capacities, fostering citizen engagement and connecting energy communities with asset owners to fast-track implementation of renewables!

All three pilot locations prioritised solar energy as a key renewable resource. Crete stood out for a more diversified approach, incorporating also wind energy, biomass, and energy retrofit projects, enabled by LIFE LOOP.



## OUR MISSION WAS TO:

- Train and encourage local authorities to fully embrace their role as community energy facilitators,
- Foster consistent collaboration between citizens and local authorities as part of democratic local governance,
- Drive investments in renewable energy (RES) and energy efficiency (EE) through community-based projects.

# ACHIEVEMENTS

© RESCoop.eu / Solar PV in Crete

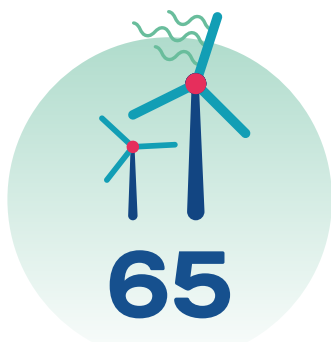
**OUR  
CONTRIBUTION  
TO A MORE  
RENEWABLE  
AND DEMOCRATIC  
EUROPE**



**RES PRODUCED**



**ENERGY SAVINGS**



**NEW SITES WITH  
RENEWABLES**



**INVESTMENT  
IN SUSTAINABLE  
ENERGY**



**CITIZENS  
ENGAGED**



**MUNICIPAL  
STAFF TRAINED**

# RESULTS PER COUNTRY

Highlights of  
our partners' work  
across Europe



## What defines an energy community?

- Members can be natural persons, local authorities or SMEs,
- Participation is voluntary and open,
- The community decisions are in the hands of its members,
- Its main purpose is to create environmental, economic and social benefits for members.

In short: Energy communities are local renewable energy solutions built by the people for the people.





© Bistrina Municipality / Awareness-raising

# LIFE LOOP IN NUMBERS

1<sup>st</sup>

**OFFICIAL ENERGY  
COMMUNITIES**  
set up in Croatia  
and Cyprus!

12

**NEW OR EMERGING  
ENERGY COMMUNITIES**  
setting the example

4

**ONE-STOP-SHOPS**  
for renewable energy  
advice set up

1<sup>st</sup>

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY  
ENERGY ACCREDITATION  
SCHEME**  
for municipalities

64

**EVIDENCE-BASED  
POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS**  
for 11 EU countries

16

**POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS**  
for improved  
EU legislation

13

**MUNICIPALITIES  
JOINING**  
the existing energy  
community in Crete

3

**COLLABORATIVE  
ROADMAPS**  
adopted

459,125

**IMPRESSIONS ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA**

7

**VIDEOS AND  
1 PODCAST EPISODE  
PRODUCED**

83

**EVENTS ATTENDED**  
to talk about the  
LIFE LOOP approach

270

**MENTIONS**  
in the EU, national  
and local press

OCTOBER 2022-2025



# LIFE LOOP TEAM

Behind LIFE LOOP lies an incredibly skilled and committed multi-national team of around 30 people. We come from 8 countries and combine knowledge from different strands: energy

cooperatives and cities, with expertise in the topic both on EU and local levels. It's this diversity that helps us foster powerful city-citizen connections and turn collective ideas into lasting impacts.

## Building bridges for community energy.

LIFE LOOP was coordinated by Energy Cities with support from the project's management group composed of REScoop.eu, ZEZ and Electra Energy cooperative. Together with other technical partners Minoan Community Energy, Cooperativa de Energie, Enostra and CSI, they coached and guided pilots and satellites with their expertise.

Nurtured with methodologies like the roadmapping and hands-on tools like business model canvas and gender equality plans, the pilots and satellites managed to build strategic alliances between citizens and local administrations.

*"Energy communities and municipalities must want to collaborate. If they put in a bit of effort, each of them, they can create a beautiful project."*

**Camelia Sava** - Cooperativa de Energie






# COMMUNITY ENERGY IN THE BALKANS AND THE ADRIATIC

Community energy initiatives in the Balkans and Adriatic region are gaining momentum. This is due to a combination of EU policy frameworks that support citizen-led energy initiatives and increased awareness for local resilience in view of geopolitical and climate risks. Municipalities are beginning to realise their potential to reach climate and energy targets. And citizens see the benefits of reclaiming the energy system to better control their energy costs and security, following the energy crisis brought on by geopolitical instability.

Citizen participation varies significantly across the LIFE LOOP countries, with Crete being the area with the highest level of citizen involvement and a sense of local ownership. Unfortunately, there are still factors that discourage some municipalities from collaborating with citizens in community energy projects and vice versa.

## 3 PILOTS at different maturity levels for community energy

-  **Zagreb, Croatia:** The city started off with the idea of enabling community energy projects on municipal roofs and issuing green community bonds. Ultimately, it installed solar PV on public roofs and launched a one-stop-shop for citizen, with support from ZEZ Green Energy Cooperative.
-  **Minoan Energy, Crete:** The biggest energy community in Greece has considerably increased community-renewables on the island through LIFE LOOP by mobilising municipalities and raising awareness through wider outreach to the general public.
-  **Bistrita, Romania:** The municipality focused on the activation of internal staff as well as training of homeowner associations, multi-apartment tenants and individual homeowners on the benefits of community-led retrofit and shared solar PV on public, residential and privately-owned buildings.



## 7 SATELLITES

The three pilots shared their experience with **Gabrovo in Bulgaria, Ussaramanna and Villanovaforru in Italy, Nicosia, Strovolos and Aradippou in Cyprus as well as Tulcea in Romania.**

These “satellites” followed the pilot activities and were supported in developing their own community energy roadmap, skills and projects. We also spread the community energy momentum further via associated partners in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and North Macedonia.



# FROM BARRIERS TO BREAKTHROUGHS



Everything started with a crucial **barriers and opportunities analysis** that helped us better grasp the realities regarding collaboration between citizens and local municipalities in different parts of Europe. To address some of these challenges we worked with LIFE LOOP cities, islands, public and private partners, providing capacity-building, roadmap designs, tools, communication and ultimately the implementation of RES and EE projects in the pilot areas.

Although the project objectives were clear, over the past three years a constant re-adjustment of processes to trigger collective action was needed. We found that community-driven projects face significant obstacles in all countries, including inconsistent regulatory frameworks, limited access to financing and training, and political inertia.

Over the project lifetime, LIFE LOOP partners used their “soft power” to positively influence political culture in those places where energy decisions remain under the local administrative control with little community involvement: through a range of approaches including bilateral meetings between technical and local partners, capacity-building workshops for civil servants, showcasing successes from elsewhere, guidance on funding options, study visits, meetings with experts, peer to peer exchange, tools and templates...

*“The biggest gain from LIFE LOOP is the social criteria for public procurement. We developed and we tested it and now any municipality in Croatia can use it.”*

**Zoran Kordić**  
ZEZ Green Energy Cooperative

After a year of intense knowledge and skills-building around community energy for the local partners, pilots and satellites defined their business models: from shared PV in blocks of flats to large-scale ground-mounted PV with community participation. Pilots took risks in developing projects even though legislation was not ready. But their courage paid off.



# CHALLENGES AND WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THEM

## Building community energy can be a roller coaster

### ● Local resistance

Opposition to local energy projects happens in different parts of Europe. In Romania, for example, cultural and historical experience have fostered a deep mistrust of collective action, making citizens less inclined to engage in cooperative approaches like community energy. Many Romanians remain skeptical of projects that require trust in institutions or collective governance, reducing motivation to participate in community-led energy efforts. Whilst significant progress was made in Bistrita and Tulcea through LIFE LOOP, this mistrust limited the amount of citizen engagement and investment.

### ● Legal barriers

All partners report issues in the implementation of new European rights into national legislation, as well as complications arising from local rules and regulations. These range from problematic definitions of community energy, to barriers to energy sharing, to corporate capture of the concept especially in Crete. Partners had to resort to creativity and patience to circumvent these complicated barriers. Our two policy reports, on local, and national and European legislation, outlines many of the legislative issues and potential solutions country by country.

### ● Tough economic markets

Significantly subsidised energy prices, and additional costs such as high grid balancing fees in Romania, mean that developing a sustainable financial model for community energy is challenging. In addition, due to low average household income in many Balkan and Adriatic countries, citizens often have less available disposable income to invest in such projects.

LIFE LOOP helped lift misperceptions of what an energy community is. Pilots report an increase in trust both in civil society and in municipal players.



## SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

- ZEJ Sunce, a new energy community was successfully launched thanks to LIFE LOOP in 2023 and inaugurated **Croatia's first citizen-owned solar installation** of 200kW in Križevci.
- Nicosia energy community has been registered and is **Cyprus' first energy community**, enabled by LIFE LOOP.
- Gabrovo in Bulgaria established an energy community for a 150 kW rooftop PV installation, combining crowdfunding and shared energy usage. 10% of redistributed energy is dedicated to social needs.  
**The municipality now serves as a replicable model** for integrating solar energy, civic engagement, and social equity in the energy transition.
- LIFE LOOP significantly increased public awareness of the potential that lies behind community energy. Partners from the Center for Social Innovation (CSI) in Cyprus **reached out to over 50,000 people through city-wide online and offline communication**, including innovative formats such as “**energy cafés**”.
- The Greek partners, Minoan Energy Community and Electra Energy **significantly scaled up their activities involving municipalities** (13 in Crete, 25 in Greece) in awareness-raising, workshops, training and project development. Electra expanded its capacity-building offer to cities and energy communities across the Balkans.

*"It's inspiring to see how much power we have when we act collectively. These discussions showed me that energy solutions are not just for big corporations—they are for us."*

**Citizen participant of one Energy Café in Cyprus**  
(February 2025)

# THEY DID IT!

## 53 CITIES GOT ACCREDITED THROUGH THE LIFE LOOP COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEME

The LIFE LOOP accreditation is Europe's first scheme that acknowledges municipalities demonstrating foresightedness in community energy, while providing training and tools to civil servants. The free programme has been designed to require as little time as possible for participating local authority representatives, with participants able to choose the components that best suit their local needs and opportunities: self-assessment tracker, Espresso on-line training, asset match-making tool. In this way, it is paving the way for future energy democracy initiatives whilst celebrating and raising the profile of these important collaborations.



This scheme is open to all municipalities, beyond the LIFE LOOP lifetime, running until at least 2028. Signing a charter is followed by 3 steps:

[Find out more](#)





# ADVOCATING FOR BETTER POLICIES

© LIFE LOOP / Advocacy policy workshop at EUSEW 2025

Community energy enthusiasts still face restrictive legislation in many countries. In the LIFE LOOP pilots, Romania and Croatia stand out in terms of restrictive regulatory barriers which slow the community energy development process. The success of collective renewables and energy efficiency actions depends on strong **enabling financing, business models, legal frameworks and local planning**.

**As well as bringing community energy to life, LIFE LOOP acted as an advocate for city-citizen energy projects. How did we do that?**

## Silent advocacy

...by making the energy transition more democratic through each of the pilot initiatives and therefore creating blueprints for policymakers.

ZEZ Sunce and the municipality of Krizevci in Croatia successfully implemented the **first public procurement community energy using social criteria**. The bonus evaluation points for applicants involving local citizens favoured community energy projects as they value the significant social benefits that these projects bring. This can serve as a model for local procurement policies elsewhere in the country. Several cities have already shown interest.

## Amplifying local voices at the national and EU level

...to attract policymakers' attention to the realities and needs of collective energy projects.

Minoan Energy Community and Electra Energy organised several policy advocacy activities. Minoan did so in collaboration with local municipalities and the Region of Crete, to anticipate government funding for the development of community energy projects and to bring change to the unfair allocation of electric grid capacity. Electra Energy pressured the national government for community energy use of the Recovery & Resilience Fund (Apollon Programme).

A formal request has been submitted by the Municipality of Zagreb to the Ministry calling for changes to the legal framework governing energy communities, specifically advocating for their exemption from licensing requirements for energy production and distribution.

# TOP 2 EU POLICY DEMANDS

From a long list of policy recommendations developed through LIFE LOOP, here are our top two demands for EU policymakers to support the growth of community energy.

- **Transpose and implement existing EU legislation on energy communities:** Work with national regulators and ministries to ensure full compliance with EU definitions of Renewable Energy Communities and Citizen Energy Communities, protecting energy communities from corporate capture, particularly when it comes to providing incentives and finance.
- **Revise the Public Procurement Directives** to bring them in line with the EU's climate and energy objectives, including the need for collaboration between local authorities and energy communities in rolling out renewable production and energy efficiency projects, ensuring social benefits are included in public procurement criteria.

Find the full list of policy recommendations, including guidance on funding, in our **LIFE LOOP policy brief**.





# LIFE LOOP IN GREECE

Greece was one of our LIFE LOOP testbeds with a particular focus on the island of Crete.

We've been lucky to have technical support from the Minoan Energy Community based in Crete and the Electra Energy cooperative which operate on the mainland.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN GREECE



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# GREECE

# MINOAN

# ENERGY

© Minoan Energy Community / Minoan Solar PV park

## Achievements:

- 13 Municipalities joined the energy community.
- Energy performance upgrade studies for 2 school buildings, for the Cultural Center of Hersonisos and the Indoor Sports Hall of Leros.
- 4 PV plant studies (Municipality of Andravida- Kyllini, Municipality of Amaliada, Municipality of Anogia and Leros).
- Creation of a One-Stop Shop.
- 3 municipalities in Crete signed charters in the Accreditation Scheme.
- 27 info days organised in various areas of Crete.

## Challenges

- Difficult legal framework for energy communities (e.g. licensing priorities, funding motives).
- Corporate capture: 70% of electrical space in Crete should be reserved for energy communities.
- Virtual net-metering for municipalities and vulnerable households needs to be restored.

## Legacy

- Increased citizen awareness and engagement in community energy.
- Achieved energy efficiency through community energy projects and addressing energy poverty.
- Educated the population and strengthening environmental awareness.
- Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emission.
- Reinvested profits locally.



© Minoan Energy Community / Minoan Solar PV park





© Electra Energy / Presentation in Municipality of Trikala

## GREECE

# ELECTRA ENERGY COOPERATIVE

### Achievements:

- Collaboration with over 25 municipalities in Greece.
- 20 Charters for the Accreditation scheme signed (Greece, N. Macedonia, Kosovo).
- Supported 6 new or emerging energy communities in Greece launched by municipalities and local communities (Ioannina, Trikala, Chalandri, Fylis, Astypalaia, Grevena).
- Production of resources, e.g. the LIFE LOOP Toolkit, the Asset match-making Tool.
- Launched the Greek Espresso Training (1st educational programme for municipalities on energy communities in Greece).
- Awareness-raising, workshops and trainings "Electra goes Balkan" initiative: community energy education and exchanges with Associated Partners- including meetings in Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo.

### Challenges

- Limited or no access to national funding for energy communities.
- Lack of support schemes and enabling framework.
- Limited or no availability of grid capacity.
- Lack of framework for other community energy business models in Greece, beyond self-consumption (photovoltaic projects).



© Electra Energy / Meeting with Municipality in North Macedonia

### Legacy

- 6 new energy communities in Greece.
- Better understanding among municipalities of benefits and ways to support energy communities.
- Development of a network of accredited municipalities with over 50 municipal staff members accredited in community energy.
- Electra positioned as the supporter of municipalities in Greece on community energy.



# LIFE LOOP IN CROATIA

Croatia was one of our LIFE LOOP testbeds with a particular focus on Zagreb.

Zagreb benefitted from technical support from the energy cooperative ZEZ and REGEA, the regional energy and climate agency.

GET IN TOUCH  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN CROATIA



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# CROATIA

# MUNICIPALITY

# OF ZAGREB

## Achievements:

- Opened a one-stop-shop for energy communities in the heart of the city (Zagreb Energy Centre).
- 1.8 MW of solar installed with 1 MW in construction and 10 MW planned in the next 2 years on public roofs.
- Organised a solar tour through the City of Zagreb, reaching 180 citizens.

## Challenges

- Restrictive legislation on energy communities.
- Weak financial model due to subsidised energy.
- Feed-in-tariff significantly oversubscribed and not reserved for energy communities.
- The ever-changing landscape of Croatian bureaucracy.

## Legacy

- Long-term impact on the energy mix of the City of Zagreb.
- The established OSS will grow, continue to inform, educate and support citizens on their energy transition while reducing energy poverty.
- The know-how on energy communities of the city staff built through the project and the accreditation scheme will help in advocating for the necessary changes in national regulation and local procurement.

© Zagreb Municipality / Solar power plants on main city building roof

© Zagreb Municipality / Opening of one-stop shop





# CROATIA ZEZ GREEN ENERGY COOPERATIVE

TECHNICAL  
PARTNER

©Vedran Vlahovic / ZEZ Sunce members  
and their solar plant

## Achievements:

- Developed Croatia's first community-owned solar installation (200 kW) on Križevci's market building.
- Successfully established ZEZ Sunce energy community with 127 members.
- Raised €140,000 through community investment in just 10 days.
- Mobilized over 15,000 citizens through educational activities and showed that ordinary citizens can own and benefit from solar energy.

The citizen energy initiative ZEZ Sunce has been recognised with **two prestigious awards**: the SozialMarie 2025 Award for Social Innovation and the 2024 Green Building and Sustainable Built Environment Annual Award for "Project of the Year."

## Challenges

- Energy sharing remains unfeasible, limiting direct benefits to citizens.
- Reluctance from many public entities to lease rooftops for community energy projects, despite successful model in Križevci.
- Near-zero or negative electricity prices in 2024 that threatened financial viability, requiring a shift to a feed-in tariff scheme.

## Legacy

- Generating annual income for the municipal utility company while providing 3% returns to members, keeping project's benefits within the local community.
- Created a model that other municipalities can replicate, with several cities already interested.
- Successfully implemented first public procurement with social criteria which enables community energy projects to participate in municipal tenders.



© ZEZ / ZEZ Sunce solar roof





# LIFE LOOP IN ROMANIA

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Romania was one of our LIFE LOOP testbeds with Bistrita as a pilot and Tulcea as the satellite municipality.

They've received technical support from Cooperativa de Energie, an energy cooperative operating across Romania.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN ROMANIA



Camelia Sava  
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©Bistrita Municipality / Dissemination event

# ROMANIA

# MUNICIPALITY

# OF BISTRITA

## Achievements:

- More than 3000 citizens were informed about the benefits of community energy.
- Local workshops gathering citizens, companies and public institutions.
- Creation of a hybrid One-Stop Shop.
- 9 accreditation Scheme charters signed in Romania.
- Improved administrative capacity-building for clean energy.
- Community Energy Roadmap developed.

## Challenges

- Lack of legislation for community energy.
- Lack of citizen interest due to the current situation.
- Little information available on energy communities.
- Social historic background.

## Legacy

- Bistrita displays its assets on the matchmaking tool to explore future opportunities for community energy.
- Wide-scale public awareness-raising in energy transition matters.
- Replication initiated with 5 other local municipalities.
- Increased awareness amongst citizens.



© Bistrita Municipality / Awareness-raising



# ROMANIA MUNICIPALITY OF TULCEA

## Achievements:

- Information and dissemination on energy community benefits reaching over 5,000 people.
- Organisation of local workshops.
- Awareness-raising campaigns at local and national levels.
- Pilot project initiated.
- More than 30 initiatives in energy efficiency upgrades, sustainable transport solutions, and renewable energy, all triggered by LIFE LOOP principles.

## Challenges

- Inadequate legislative support (lack of secondary legislation, absence of clear policies on energy sharing).
- Lack of financial incentives (at both local and national levels) to encourage citizen participation.
- Insufficient understanding of energy communities together with a reluctance to embrace change.

## Legacy

- Increased public awareness.
- Strong partnerships with local, national and international stakeholders.
- New project on energy communities submitted to build upon LIFE LOOP achievements.
- Developing a replicable model at a local kindergarten.



**TECHNICAL  
PARTNER**

© Cooperativa de Energie / Mayor of Lopatari and his team after a capacity building workshop

# ROMANIA COOPERATIVA DE ENERGIE

## Achievements:

- Capacity-building and support for Romanian pilot and satellite projects
- Support in the design of business models adapted to the national legislative context
- Enhancing training of public servants
- Support offered to the municipalities along their journey in the LIFE LOOP accreditation scheme, including a Romanian Espresso course
- Installed Tulcea's first community solar project
- Explored model for community-led LED lighting project

## Challenges

- Lack of legislative frameworks regarding energy communities and energy sharing.
- Lack of business models.
- Exorbitant grid balancing fees eliminating viability of community energy supply business.

## Legacy

- Better skilled municipalities and citizens.
- Involvement of citizens in community energy investments and partnerships with municipalities.
- Increased public awareness around the energy community topic.



© Cooperativa de Energie / Workshop in the Municipality of Ploiesti





# LIFE LOOP IN ITALY

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In Italy, the LIFE LOOP focus was on two small 'satellite' municipalities in Sardinia.

We've been happy to count on the technical support from E'nostra Coop, an energy cooperative operating across Italy.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN ITALY



Sara Gollesi  
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# ITALY

## MUNICIPALITIES OF USSARAMANNA AND VILLANOVAFORRU, SARDINIA

### Achievements:

- 10 public meetings organised, open to all citizens.
- 98 members involved in the renewable energy community (93 households + SMEs: 53 in Ussaramanna and 45 in Villanovaforru).
- 135 kWp of PV plants installed (24 kWp to be connected soon): 71 kWp in Ussaramanna + 64 kWp in Villanovaforru.
- Smart meters were purchased and installed in Villanovaforru.
- Cumulated governmental incentives for self-consumption received between 2023-25: €30,000.
- Savings made: 10-15% on annual bill per member.
- €10,000 coming from energy sales by the 2 energy communities were redistributed to social impact projects.

### Challenges

- The complexity of a larger renewable energy community (REC) between three municipalities.
- Cooperation with private local operators.
- Finding and getting new plants on roof of companies and households.
- Increasing autonomy of RECs from public investments.

### Legacy

- Higher awareness on energy communities and the energy transition among citizens and municipalities in Sardinia.
- Stronger citizen involvement and active participation.
- New connections with local administrations inspired to replicate the project and establish energy communities elsewhere.
- New members in the REC.
- Education and training activities for local young people to become manager and activator of the new REC
- New energy community, involving the two municipalities and a neighbouring village, to be set up by the end of 2025.







# ITALY ENOSTRA COOP

TECHNICAL  
PARTNER

© Villanovaforru Municipality /  
Panorama view Villanovaforru

## Achievements:

- Capacity building events for local administrations.
- Launch of the Espresso training in Italian, running for 2 years.
- 2 laboratories on community energy organised with school students.
- Awareness-raising at local and national events.
- Technical, legal and financial feasibility assessment for the evolution and merger of the 2 RECs (new plants, additional members, new legal entity).
- Smart meters installation, platform configuration, energy flows analysis.
- Development and implementation of fair incentive redistribution criteria.

## Challenges

- Conflicts between local population and large energy companies.
- Unclear and unstable regional energy policy.
- Lack of WiFi connection needed for smart meters, and digital skills.

## Legacy

- Increased awareness of RECs and energy topics among citizens.
- New local administrations inspired to replicate the project and establish energy communities.
- Additional funding secured to ensure the continuation and growth of community energy projects.
- New communication and training materials tailored for specific targets.







# LIFE LOOP IN CYPRUS

In Cyprus, wide-ranging awareness-raising activities were organised and energy community initiatives launched, involving many different municipalities and stakeholders.

We've been happy to benefit from technical support from Center For Social Innovation Cyprus (CSI), an international research and development centre.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN CYPRUS



Center for Social  
Innovation

Natasa Ioannou  
Centre For Social Innovation

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# CYPRUS CYPRUS SOCIAL INNOVATION

TECHNICAL  
PARTNER

© Aradippou Municipality /  
Aradippou solar PV park inauguration

## Achievements:

- Supported Nicosia municipality to set up Cyprus' first energy community, enabled by LIFE LOOP.
- 3 MW PV installation in Aradippou which will earmark a percentage of production for people in energy poverty.
- Established 3 citizen groups around energy community initiatives.
- Energy Cafés engaging over 200 citizens.
- Supported the Municipality of Strovolos in setting up One Stop Shop and exploring opportunities for community energy.
- Collaborated with 5 municipalities, 3 of which completed the accreditation.
- Reached over 50,000 citizens through online presence and media presence.

## Challenges

- Regulatory and legal uncertainties, including the lack of a supportive national framework for energy communities.
- Limited public awareness and understanding.
- Capacity and resource constraints of local authorities.
- Very limited grid capacity.

## Legacy

- Planted the seeds for long-term citizen-led energy communities by providing knowledge, tools, and networks to pursue energy initiatives beyond the project's lifetime.
- Created a replicable model for community energy engagement through the Energy Cafés.
- Shifted the public conversation towards energy democracy, through community work and advocacy.





# LIFE LOOP IN BULGARIA

In Bulgaria, the LIFE LOOP mission of building city-citizen partnerships was implemented in the 'satellite' Municipality of Gabrovo. Throughout the journey, the city received support from the LIFE LOOP management team and EnEffect.

**GET IN TOUCH**  
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE LOOP IN BULGARIA



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**Gabrovo**

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# BULGARIA MUNICIPALITY OF GABROVO

## Achievements:

- Expanded the municipal one-stop shop model to support multifamily residential buildings — over 40 assisted, 16 applications submitted, 10 buildings with renovation potential.
- Established an Energy Community for a 150 kW rooftop PV installation, combining crowdfunding and shared energy usage. 10% of redistributed energy is dedicated to social needs.
- Raised €100,000 in just 22 days from 59 Gabrovo-based participants — including citizens, local installers, and energy users.

## Challenges

- The requirement for co-financing and lack of accessible financial instruments remain key barriers for household engagement after years of 100% grant schemes.
- Legal and technical frameworks for energy sharing among community members are still underdeveloped and inconsistent.

## Legacy

- Gabrovo demonstrated that energy communities can thrive in smaller cities through local trust, shared values, and collective financial action.
- Gabrovo now serves as a replicable model for integrating solar energy, civic engagement, and social equity in the energy transition.



© LIFE LOOP / Gabrovo receiving accreditation certificate

# WANT TO LAUNCH OR SUPPORT COMMUNITY ENERGY IN YOUR CITY?

© REScoop.eu / Solar PV park in Crete

LIFE LOOP has created a community energy toolbox to help local governments and communities take action, from setting up inclusive energy communities to designing one-stop-shops for citizen advice. These resources echo real-life experience from LIFE LOOP partners.

## Guides & templates

- Whether you're just starting out or looking to improve your approach, we've compiled a [selection of step-by-step guides](#) that walk you through key topics: roadmaps, business, capacity-building, match-making, energy poverty and gender.
- Need something more operational? Dive into [our ready-to-use templates](#), from models for energy community statutes to financial CAPEX/OPEX calculations. They are designed to make your journey into community energy smoother, faster, and more effective.

Feel the community energy  
with our video playlist:







# THE LIFE LOOP PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

## Kickstarting the community energy revolution

Throughout the LIFE LOOP journey, we had valuable exchanges with like-minded 'ENERCOM sister' projects, both in online and in-person meetings. Sharing our knowledge, doubts and passion helped each of us advance while making sure we'd bring different pieces to build the community energy puzzle.

This collaboration culminated in June 2025 with a full day event in Brussels, combining a policy panel at EUSEW and an interactive sister project gathering. Shortly before, LIFE LOOP coordinated a [joint policy report Brief](#) working with the policy experts of Comanage, ConnectHeat and Tandems covering 11 EU countries.

## Picking expert brains

LIFE LOOP was never working in a bubble. To tap into Austria's strong community energy movement, we partnered with Urban Innovation Vienna, whose pioneering experience helped our pilots and satellites to better define their own business models and design [one-stop-shops](#) for energy advice.



© Sam Glazier / Sister projects teams



# THE JOURNEY DOESN'T END HERE — IT LOOPS FORWARD



The European LIFE-CET programme has played an essential role in giving birth to community energy initiatives and helping existing ones to grow in the 8 partner countries. The funding has helped build new connections between municipalities and civil society. It also resulted in a network of new experts in the field thanks to various capacity-building activities. However, we are only at the beginning of the journey:

## OUTLOOK

**SHINE with us:** LIFE LOOP's legacy will be ensured through a new LIFE ENERCOM project called SHINE (2025 - 2028). This will bring together the experience and tools, such as our accreditation programme for municipalities, from previous projects to equip **local and regional authorities** with the skills and tools they need to maximise opportunities and support for community energy. These resources will be further enhanced and shared on the European Energy Community Platform. SHINE will also support cities in Spain, Italy, Poland and Belgium in developing one-stop shops at local and national level to enable energy communities to shine across Europe.

Explore the European One-Stop Shop for Energy Communities:

<https://energycommunityplatform.eu>

## Want to join the journey now?

Contact for municipalities: [www.energy-cities](http://www.energy-cities)

Contact for energy communities: [www.rescoop.eu](http://www.rescoop.eu)

# FROM IDEA TO IMPACT

## 10 TIPS FOR MUNICIPALITIES



Throughout the project, pilot cities and partners have learned valuable lessons about launching and supporting community energy initiatives. While every local context is different, these insights offer practical starting points for municipalities aiming to replicate or adapt the LIFE LOOP approach.



**Tip 1:** Don't wait for perfect legislation or the perfect project – it can always be better. Start now, get creative, and improve as you go!



**Tip 2:** Start with community engagement, not technology!



**Tip 3:** Offer municipal rooftops as starting points for community energy projects.



**Tip 4:** Run targeted awareness campaigns and organise local info sessions on community energy.



**Tip 5:** Transparency, honesty, and realism are your best allies when building trust and community engagement.



**Tip 6:** Allocate significant evaluation points (50%) to organisations that engage local citizens, maximise local benefits and enable ECs to develop projects.



**Tip 7:** Believe in the power of citizenship. Map the resources and contacts of people in your initial group: we have more resources than we think!



**Tip 8:** Ensure strong political support for credibility as it is crucial for citizen participation.



**Tip 9:** Take baby steps, and don't get discouraged!



**Tip 10:** Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate!

## European networks



RESCOOP.EU

## Energy cooperatives



## Local authorities & agencies



THE PATH IS CLEAR.

THE TIME IS NOW.

LAUNCH YOUR OWN  
COMMUNITY PROJECT.



The information and views set out in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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