Report on Local Community Energy Info Centres and One-Stop Shop (OSS) Development

LIFE LOOP – Deliverable D2.6

REScoop.eu

lifeloop
local ownership of power

DISCLAIMER

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Project name: LIFE LOOP - Energy Communities – Local Ownership of Power
- Grant agreement number: 101077085
- Project duration: 2022-2025
- Project coordinator: Energy Cities

Contents

1. Introduction..... 2
2. Typology of OSSs..... 3
3. Learning from the frontrunners: Vienna's OSS..... 4
4. Overview of each pilot's progress..... 7
Report on Bistrița's progress..... 7
Report on Crete's progress..... 11
Report on Zagreb's progress..... 16
5. Recommendations for the OSS Models in Zagreb, Bistrița, and Crete..... 21
Useful resources for community energy OSS..... 26
Annex 1: Interview guide..... 27
Annex 2: Questionnaire..... 29

1. Introduction

This report provides an assessment of the development of One-Stop Shops (OSS) for community energy in selected pilot cities participating in the LIFE LOOP project. The findings presented are based on structured interviews conducted with representatives from Zagreb, Crete (Minoan energy community), and Bistrita, and follow-up exchanges to map their progress in developing their OSSs. Questions were structured according to key themes outlined in an interview guide and questionnaire (included in Annex).

OSS initiatives are instrumental in advancing the EU's decarbonisation objectives, facilitating citizen engagement, and providing advisory services on energy efficiency and community-based energy projects. The progress made, challenges encountered, and best practices identified in this report, especially from the frontrunning city of Vienna, can serve as a reference for scaling similar initiatives across Europe. To learn more about their approach, we have had several exchanges with the city, including two in-person study visits and several on-line meetings focused on their recommendations for establishing and sustaining One-Stop Shops (OSS) for energy communities. The discussions shed light on different financial models, stakeholder engagement strategies, and the practical challenges faced by existing OSS initiatives. Successful OSS initiatives are built on strong partnerships, targeted advisory services, digital innovation, financial sustainability, and proactive community engagement. Useful resources for municipalities aiming to set up OSS are available at the end of the report.

2. Typology of OSSs

The interviews reveal three models of community energy OSS. Find an overview/summary of their characteristics below:

	Zagreb Model (Municipal-Led)	Bistrița Model (Hybrid)	Minoan Model (Cooperative-Led)
Management	Municipality-led with institutional backing	Joint effort between municipality with external support (companies, cooperatives, volunteers,...)	Primarily cooperative-run with municipal collaboration
Main services	Technical, legal, and energy poverty support	Legal, financial, and awareness campaigns	Technical, legal and advocacy, and public engagement
Funding	Initial municipal funding, seeking sustainability	Project funding with limited financial resources	Volunteer-driven, seeking external funding
Regulatory environment	Policy gaps limit energy community support	Some legal support but not fully structured	Regulatory framework unclear, making operations challenging
Target audience	Citizens, vulnerable populations, businesses	Citizens, energy cooperatives	Citizens, cooperative members, policymakers, wider community
Strengths (+) / weaknesses (-)	+ Dedicated municipal space in strategic location + Neutrality (public) - Initial workshops completed; detailed community engagement plan in progress.	+ Municipal space in strategic location + Support from external partners - Lack of volunteers (capacity)	+ Strong network + Volunteer support / community-led - Office less visible - Lack of capacity

3. Learning from the frontrunners: Vienna's OSS

Continued stakeholder engagement and collaboration

A successful OSS thrives on structured collaboration with municipalities, cooperatives, energy agencies, and private sector actors. One way to formalize this collaboration is through an **advisory council** – a body that brings together representatives from key stakeholders to provide strategic guidance, share expertise, and ensure that the OSS develops services that truly meet local needs. The council does not take operational decisions but acts as a sounding board, aligning strategies, flagging challenges, and feeding back on priorities.

Establishing such an advisory council can help align strategies and ensure responsive service development. Similarly, rather than duplicating efforts, OSS models should synergise as much as possible with existing advisory bodies, municipal energy departments, and cooperatives to create synergies.

In the case of Vienna, two synergies are of particular importance. First, due to UIV's representative role in the Austrian OSS for Energy Communities (ÖKSE) for the state of Vienna, it leads to strong synergies in the form of knowledge exchange. Through this, feedback of the advisory council can directly be used to allocate resources of the ÖKSE to provide missing materials or optimize the legal and technical framework for Energy Communities in the long-term. This collaboration has created many critical documents such as online Step-by-Step Guides, templates for contracts, calculation tools, or deep dive factsheets for relevant topics such as taxes or involvement of cooperation. .Second, the in-depth collaboration with Hauskunft, the advisory body focused on the topic of renovation, in the form of events, joint meetings with relevant departments of the city (permitting, building codes, etc) and knowledge exchange, common training activities, etc..

Enhancing user-centric approaches

Vienna's OSS model follows a very structured approach with a clear customer journey: inquiry → feasibility analysis → advisory → decision support → follow-up. The Vienna example shows that tailoring services for specific user groups can really enhance adoption rates. Organizing workshops that focus on audience-specific needs, such as "persona-building" exercises, can help cities refine their engagement strategies and better address community expectations. A user-centric approach also helps to move from a reactive consultation to proactive outreach, which is important for large-scale impact.

Securing financial sustainability

Long-term financial stability is essential for OSS operations. The OSS model in Vienna has the chance to benefit from direct municipal funding, ensuring continuity. Still, for an efficient use of scarce resources, Vienna's OSS always pursued a dual approach of providing demand services to home owners and businesses on the one hand and pro-actively target larger businesses and larger property owners and property managers on the other hand. Financial stability of the OSS also arises from combining advisory services with more strategic work, piloting new ideas and UIVs involvement in multiple projects in the realm of Energy communities such as multi-year contracts with the ÖKSE.

Another potential financing model involves a tiered service approach, where basic services—such as general information and feasibility assessments—are offered for free, while more in-depth legal, financial, and technical consultations are fee-based. In the case of Vienna, the OSS concentrates on services free of charge and for additional, more in-depth consultation the OSS, are made accessible through a network of experts and a neutral list of service providers.

Boosting public engagement

Public engagement is key to building trust and encouraging participation in energy communities. Organizing site visits/peer-to-peer learning events (showing successful installations) can allow citizens to see the tangible impact of OSS services, making renewable energy initiatives more relatable.

To raise visibility of such initiatives, the portrayal of best practices on the website of the OSS as well as in the form of videos play a crucial role.

Optimizing operations and monitoring impact

Continuous monitoring is essential for improvement. Tracking service demand, user feedback, and engagement metrics—such as the volume of calls, emails, and consultations—can help refine service offerings and better align them with community needs. Furthermore, a nation-wide OSS like the ÖKSE, a network of other advisory services operating in the same legal framework, allows for circulation of knowledge and thus improves the quality of advisory services. Additionally, investing in staff training will ensure that OSS advisors are equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills, allowing them to provide high-quality guidance to users.

Leveraging digital tools to reduce staff/volunteer workload

Digital tools are becoming increasingly important and can play a crucial role in improving OSS accessibility and efficiency. User-friendly online portals, featuring interactive resources such as solar potential calculators, funding eligibility checkers, and step-by-step guidance, are big investments but do save time in the long term. OSS can take advantage of these tools (like AI). However, these models must remain mindful of the digital divide.

4. Overview of each pilot's progress

Report on Bistrița's progress

The municipality of Bistrița is still in the **planning and early implementation stages** of the OSS. At the start of LIFE LOOP, the project team initially faced mostly a financial barrier, with a very low initial budget to kickstart the OSS work. However, recognizing the need for additional resources, they requested reallocation of funding. The LIFE LOOP secretariat approved a new budget, which has significantly supported the development of the OSS.

Since then, the project team has engaged in extensive internal discussions and needs analyses, as well as consultations with potential partners. Among these partners is a local energy community associated with Cooperative Adia in Bucharest.

Since mid-August 2025, Bistrița's OSS is now formally established, with both a website (launched in 31.07.2025) www.maiverde.ro and a physical office located in the City Hall. A challenge has been the development of the OSS website. The delay was mainly due to technical and procurement-related procedures. Since August 2025, the website is fully operational, and has been disseminated on the municipal facebook page, as well as in local press. In the first month after opening, 10 people have already used the embedded support form on the webpage.

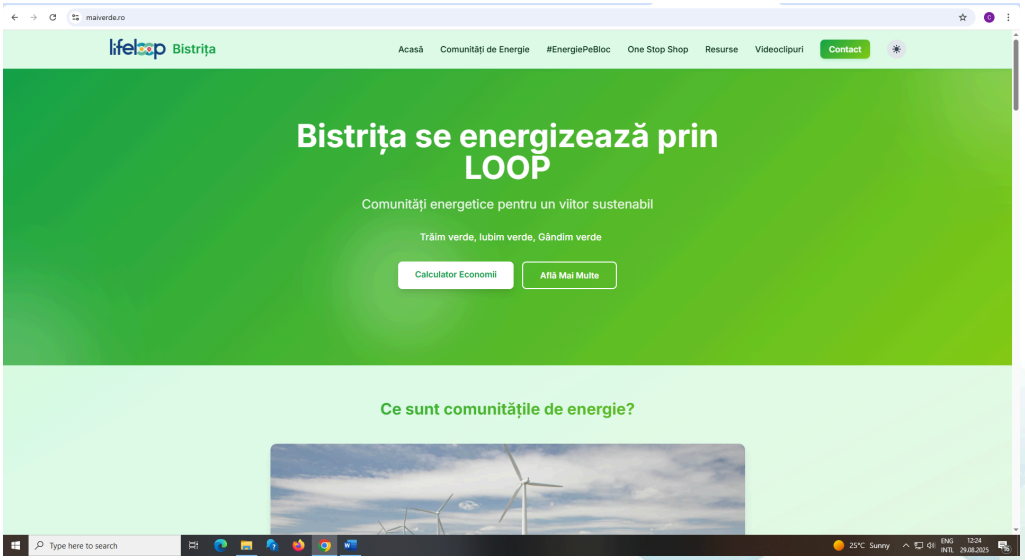

Figure 1. Bistrita OSS webpage

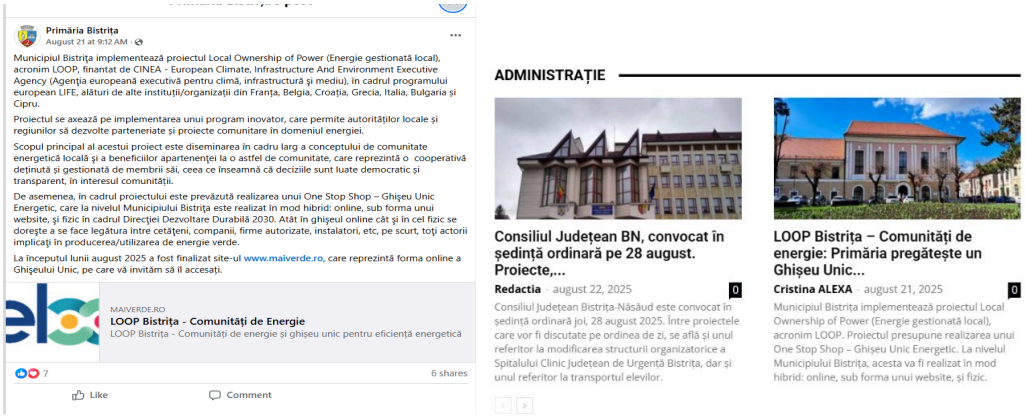

Figure 2. Bistrita OSS promotion (Facebook post and newspaper article)

The opening of the physical space also faced some delays. The office was originally planned in the municipal building known as the ″Green School″ and was planned to open in spring 2025. This building is already used for environmental education (where children can attend education courses on environment, waste collection, water protection, renewable energy,...) and awareness campaigns, making it a fitting location for the OSS. But due to administrative decisions, the space was reassigned to another institution. The City Hall location, although less symbolic, provides constant availability as staff are present during working hours. The office is organised as a small showroom displaying renewable energy products and brochures from local providers. In the first two months after opening, the OSS has already provided support to 63 visitors.

Figure 3. Bistrita OSS office

Operational set up and partnerships

The OSS is staffed by municipal officers, who took part in LIFE LOOP's Espresso training, and is supported by volunteers from the local cooperative. Partnerships with companies in the renewable energy and efficiency sectors are being strengthened, as providers are invited to display their promotional materials in the OSS or link to the online platform. The municipality sees the OSS as a bridge between citizens and the local market. To manage and operate the OSS, a municipal staff member takes the lead and is present **1 or 2 hours a day**. The OSS primarily targets **citizens**, particularly those living in apartment blocks, though businesses and real estate stakeholders are also welcome to benefit from its services. The project team is committed to integrating the OSS into city events and environmental awareness campaigns by setting up **pop-up information desks** at various community gatherings.

The OSS has been promoted at meetings with owners' associations and during municipal events such as Earth Hour, Earth Day, and World Environment Day. The launch of the website was announced via a press release and further visibility efforts are ongoing.

Services provided

The OSS delivers three main types of services to support the development of energy communities and renewable energy projects:

- **Legal and financial assistance:** Guidance on regulatory frameworks and financial support mechanisms for energy community projects and Information on funding opportunities at national and local levels.
- **Technical assistance:** Advice on energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations, as well as support in the development of community energy projects.
- **Public awareness and outreach:** It organises events, workshops, and campaigns to inform citizens about energy communities and their benefits.

The community energy road map developed by the pilot is available at the OSS and can be accessed by visitors. While mediation, governance support, and follow-up services are not part of the initial scope, they may be added in the future depending on local demand.

Challenges and barriers

Several challenges have emerged during the early stages of implementation. One major hurdle has been securing **adequate funding**, as the process of obtaining budget adjustments took longer than expected. Another key challenge relates to Bistrita's unique OSS typology which is municipal-led, but relies on **volunteer support**. There is a general, cultural reluctance in Romania to contribute time without financial compensation. Furthermore, the project team has identified a lack of internal **technical expertise**, as they are primarily experienced in management and communication rather than energy-specific topics.The project team also continues to seek additional partnerships to enhance service delivery and ensure the sustainability of the OSS. The technical service is already quite understaffed; relying on just one person is not feasible in the long term. Having **a dedicated department** would be useful in the future.

Next steps

The initial phase of the OSS will function as **a pilot** to test its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The OSS will now focus on **consolidating its presence**, and introducing systematic monitoring of interactions with citizens. Staff aim to integrate the OSS into city events, using pop-up desks to reach wider audiences. Continuous **engagement with stakeholders** (different companies who could contribute with different types of expertise) remains a priority. The OSS initiative will also be integrated into existing municipal programs that focus on social services, retrofitting, energy poverty alleviation and renewable energy projects. To ensure long-term sustainability, the municipality is actively seeking additional financial resources to maintain and expand the OSS beyond the project's timeframe.

Conclusion

Despite initial financial and logistical challenges, substantial progress has been made in setting up the necessary structures. The coming months will be critical in assessing the OSS's impact and the demand for its services.

Report on Crete's progress

Current status and implementation stage

Since its opening in October 2024, the OSS operated by the Minoan Energy Community (MEC) in Arkalochori has gradually evolved into a permanent feature of the cooperative's work.. The physical location is housed within the offices of the Minoan Energy Community, which allows citizens to visit and receive direct guidance. Additionally, the OSS has an online presence, with a dedicated section on the Minoan Energy Community's website providing accessible information.

The promotion of the OSS takes place through a variety of channels, including MEC's participation in exhibitions and discussion forums, the use of community social media, the production of promotional materials such as banners and brochures, and the strong personal ties between elected representatives and MEC members.

Since the start of 2025, **three events** have been organised — one of them in partnership with the Region of Crete, local Chambers, and the Municipalities of Crete — focusing on the fair allocation of Crete's energy space for the benefit of citizens. In addition, a radio interview was broadcast on a local station, and five OSS-related posts were shared on the community's social media channels.

Currently the OSS is functional, but it remains in a pilot phase, as the team continues to refine its services. While recognised as a structural service of MEC, the OSS continues to depend on voluntary contributions and project-based support, making its long-term sustainability a challenge.

Since the launch of the OSS, the visitors to the Minoa website have reached **212**, while the visitors who have visited the physical location of the OSS are **230**. Information is also provided via telephone as well as through social media.

Based on the above data regarding current visitor numbers, as well as the number of households (approximately 6,500), MEC estimates that if current rate is maintained, around **25%–26% of residents** could benefit of the OSS services over the next five years.

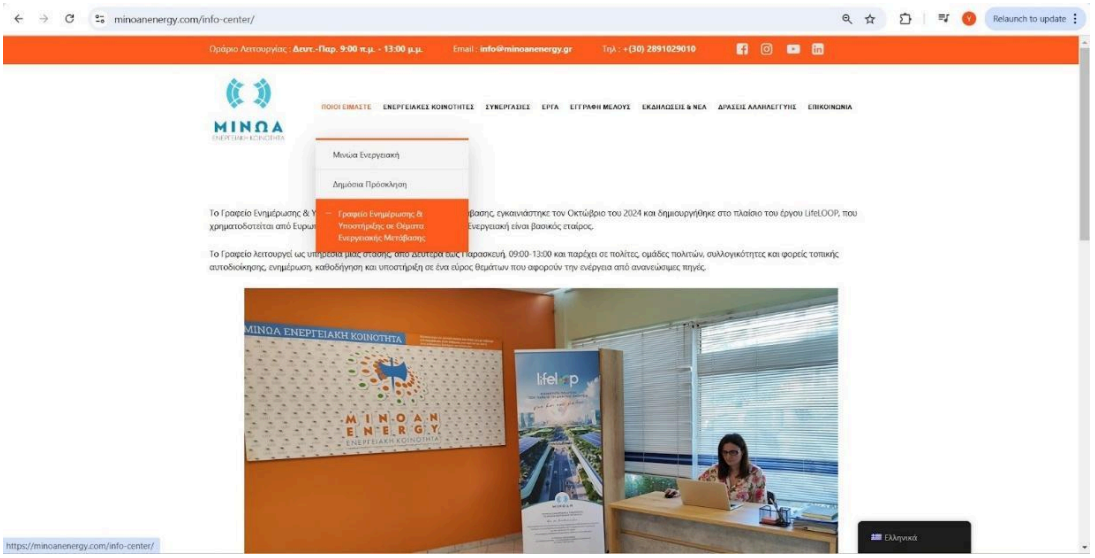

Figure 4. MEC OSS webpage

Operational setup and partnerships

The one–stop–shop operates as a **hybrid model**, integrating both a physical office and an online platform. Citizens can visit the office for in–person consultations or reach out via the website and phone. A small team, consisting of volunteers and part–time employees from the Minoan Energy Community, manages the OSS. The creation and initial operation of the centre is quite successful and the demand is there. Since its launch, it has contributed to the registration of 300 individuals as MEC members and enabled the connection of 350 households to community energy projects. Additionally, meetings with elected local and regional officials are often held at the OSS.

To be sustainable and with current demand, the team states it would require a salary for one person who can manage 2–3 hours of daily in–person contact and additional phone support. This person would need to be available 8 hours per day.

Partnerships play a crucial role in the OSS's functionality. The Minoan Energy Community collaborates closely with municipalities, small businesses, and individual citizens. Additionally, efforts are being made to strengthen partnerships with agricultural cooperatives and scientific institutions to expand the OSS's expertise and outreach.

Services provided

The OSS focuses on delivering:

- **Legal and financial guidance**
- **Technical assistance**
- **Public awareness** on energy communities and renewable energy projects. The community energy road map developed by the pilot is available at the OSS and can be accessed by visitors. Acting as a hub, the OSS provides citizens, cooperatives, and municipalities with information on:
    - Energy efficiency measures
    - Development of community energy projects
    - Funding opportunities
    - The legislative framework for energy communities

A key function of the OSS in Crete is to foster cooperation between municipalities and citizens in implementing community energy projects.

However, challenges remain in formalising the OSS' s services due to regulatory and financial constraints. The team is therefore working towards establishing a clearer structure to ensure the long-term sustainability of the service.

Challenges and barriers

The implementation of the OSS faces several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure its long-term success. One of the primary obstacles is **regulatory uncertainty**. The current legislative framework does not fully support energy community initiatives and lacks clarity on how municipalities can effectively collaborate with them. This creates administrative hurdles that **slow down project implementation** and limit the OSS's ability to expand its services.

Financial constraints also pose a significant challenge. At present, the OSS is largely run by volunteers, which limits its operational capacity. There is a clear need for **additional funding to support a full-time coordinator** and ensure the continuity of the services offered. Without sustained financial

backing, it will be difficult to expand outreach and provide consistent support to citizens and local stakeholders.

Another challenge is the delay in implementing planned energy community projects, which doesn't help to promote community energy. While several initiatives have been designed, a lack of funding and **administrative difficulties** have prevented them from being realized. The team is actively seeking solutions to overcome these obstacles, but progress has been slow.

Finally, while the Minoan Energy Community has a strong network of engaged members, broader outreach to the wider community remains a challenge. **Expanding public awareness** and engagement requires additional resources and dedicated promotional efforts to ensure that all citizens can access the benefits of the OSS. Best practices and good examples drawn from LIFE LOOP and other similar projects would be particularly helpful towards this regard.

A key lesson learned is that interested parties prefer to register with MEC in order to participate in an energy project, rather than creating their own communities. This is because no matter how much help they receive, the new projects are still difficult to develop. It requires a lot of time and significant expertise in both technical and legal matters which often discourages people.

Next steps

The OSS is expected to continue evolving in the coming months, with efforts focused on securing long-term financial support and refining its operational structure. Several initiatives are planned across different time horizons:

Short term actions

- Relocating to a new office with improved infrastructure and more space, making services more accessible and user-friendly.

Within the next six months

- Enhancing the OSS website and social media channels to increase visibility.
- Introducing new digital services to better support both citizens and MEC employees.

- Tracking OSS usage and user behavior to generate insights on service performance and citizen engagement.

Over the next 12 months

The OSS aims to strengthen its capacity and expand its impact. A key milestone will be the hiring of a full-time employee to support the team and ensure long-term operations.

In parallel, several complementary initiatives are underway:

- Expanding partnerships with municipalities, energy cooperatives, and private sector stakeholders to enhance knowledge-sharing and mobilise resources.
- Addressing energy poverty in collaboration with local authorities — a long-planned project targeting vulnerable groups such as earthquake victims, large families, and low-income households. In partnership with the Municipality of Athens, expected to join the community (as a member) very soon, the plan is to support twenty vulnerable households.
- Strengthening public engagement through events, workshops, and online educational campaigns.
- Finalising a net metering community energy project to benefit citizens, municipalities, agricultural cooperatives, and small businesses. Beyond delivering tangible benefits, the project will serve as an advocacy tool to push for legislative reforms in support of energy communities. Complementary actions, such as a public petition driven by MEC — which gathered over 200 signatures in its first five days — are amplifying these demands.

Conclusion

Minoan's OSS has made significant progress in establishing itself as a resource hub for energy communities and is already very much anchored in the local community. Current figures show that demand is very present. However, financial and regulatory barriers continue to pose challenges. The project team remains committed to its vision, but will need additional support for the initiative to be sustainable.

Report on Zagreb's progress

Current status and implementation stage

The Zagreb Energy Centre (ZEC), which hosts the OSS, officially opened on 7 May 2025. Fully financed by the City of Zagreb, the centre is strategically located in the city centre. Citizens can access the OSS through daily walk-ins and workshops. The **physical OSS** is strategically located in the city center in a space owned by the municipality. Previously occupied by a children's store, the municipality invested in the needed renovations to make the building accessible and suited for its new purpose.

Figure 5. Zagreb's OSS

In addition to the physical OSS, Zagreb developed a website (https://zec.zagreb.hr/) that offers digital access to key services, information, and tools such as a **solar potential calculator**, which helps citizens assess the feasibility of installing solar panels on their rooftops (https://eic.zagreb.hr/pages/suncani-potencijal.

Operational setup and partnerships

The OSS is staffed by **one full-time coordinator** and several **part-time staff**. The city plans to expand the team to up to five employees, including communication support. Recruitment remains a challenge due to a shortage of experts in the field and also due to long recruitment processes. The experts indeed require a combination of technical knowledge and interpersonal skills/social sensitivity, as they need to be in contact with citizens. The City of Zagreb aims to secure in the future additional personnel to cover various aspects of energy consultancy, regulatory support, and public engagement. Initially, some roles are being filled on a **voluntary basis** while permanent staff positions are formalized. The OSS is supported by **key partnerships**. The North-West Croatia Regional Energy and Climate Agency (REGEA) provides technical assistance, while the organization DOOR (Society for Sustainable Development Design) offers expertise in energy poverty and community engagement. ZEZ have also held workshops at the OSS engaging with citizens and other key stakeholders. These collaborations ensure that the OSS benefits from **a broad range of knowledge and resources** to support its mission.

Services provided

The OSS provides various services, primarily focused on:

- **Technical assistance** for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects.
- **Legal and regulatory guidance**, particularly in navigating the complex framework for establishing energy communities.
- **Public awareness** campaigns and informational workshops on sustainable energy.
- **Support for vulnerable populations**, including advisory services on reducing energy costs and improving energy efficiency in households. To expand its service portfolio to address energy poverty, the City also wants to provide financial assistance programs. DOOR will be a key partner here.

The initiative also aims to go one step further than the services provided in Crete and Bistrita, integrating broader green transition goals, including **more specialized topics** related to hydrogen energy and alternative fuels. The community energy road map developed by the pilot is also available at the OSS and can be accessed by visitors.

Figure 6. Zagreb's OSS

Outreach activities

Between May and July 2025, the OSS organised:

- Six workshops for energy-impoverished citizens;
- Several workshops on accessing solar PV funding;
    - 2 workshops providing technical assistance in accessing the national funds for solar power plants in May.
    - 1 workshop providing technical assistance for the development of solar power plants in June which included 10 separate and individual consultations on power plant construction.
    - Alongside workshops, ZEC also offered free one-on-one advisory sessions on solar design in July 2025, giving tailored technical advice..
- Events on climate adaptation and Estonian best practices; In June 2025, Zagreb welcomed an Estonian delegation to exchange knowledge on energy renovation and climate adaptation. Estonia presented digital tools and models, while ZEC shared Zagreb's solar and

citizen-support initiatives. The event opened opportunities for collaboration and pilot projects adapted to local needs.

- A film screening on energy poverty;
- A group procurement event for solar PV;
- A study visit to Vienna's OSS.

By September 2025, around **150 citizens** have engaged directly with the OSS, mostly older residents seeking to reduce expenses. NGOs and workshops have helped expand outreach. Monitoring will be strengthened through attendance lists, contact records, and future data from municipal funding calls. Additionally, **1057 web site visits** have been registered since site launch (27th of July).
Regarding market potential, the OSS is expecting to reach around **500 people / year** through direct activities (workshop, consultations, presentations, etc. on both community energy and other topics).

Challenges and barriers

One of the primary challenges in implementing the OSS is the **lack of regulatory clarity**. The current legal framework in Croatia does not fully support energy community initiatives, creating barriers to effective implementation. The City of Zagreb is actively working on policy recommendations to address these gaps and has drafted proposals for legal reforms.
Another major challenge is the **limited availability of skilled professionals in the sector**. The city faces difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel to manage the OSS, which could affect the scope and quality of services provided. Additionally, while funding has been secured for the initial setup, long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain, requiring further efforts to secure stable funding sources.
Public engagement is another area of concern. Similar to the situation in Bistrita, the demand is unclear and target audiences need to be further defined, including specific engagement processes. Many citizens are unfamiliar with the concept of energy communities, and there is a need for targeted outreach and educational campaigns, which could showcase best practice examples such as ZEZ Sunce's community solar installation in Križevci enabled by LIFE LOOP. Vulnerable populations, including low-income households and the elderly, require tailored approaches to ensure they can benefit from the OSS's services too. The city wants to have a place where to talk about topics like energy poverty. It already put in place a series of measures to help these publics, e.g. financing some

part of the energy renovations, and replacing appliances with more efficient ones. Now these programmes need to be made more public.

Next steps

Priorities include upgrading the functionality of the **OSS website**, expanding **staff capacity**, and running upcoming **public calls** for energy certificates, solar PV, and heating system replacements. The city also plans to integrate the OSS into future and existing projects and activities..For example, the OSS is already included in existing SECAP and Climate change adaptation strategies.

A major focus will be on securing additional funding to sustain operations beyond the initial phase. Potential funding sources include European grants and national energy transition programs. The city also plans to closely **monitor the impact** of the OSS during/after its pilot phase to refine services and optimize operations.

To enhance public awareness, the city will launch **a communication campaign**, including workshops, community meetings, and promotional materials. This effort aims to ensure that citizens are aware of the OSS' s existence and understand how they can benefit from its services.

Conclusion

The establishment of the OSS in Zagreb marks a significant step toward promoting energy communities and supporting the city' s transition to renewable energy. While challenges remain, particularly in **regulatory frameworks and staffing**, the project has strong institutional backing and key partnerships in place to drive its success. The coming months will be crucial in refining the operational model and engaging citizens mostly.

5. Recommendations for the OSS Models in Zagreb, Bistrița, and Crete

This section focuses on applying concrete tips and reflections from UIV to the three pilot cities of LIFE LOOP.

Continued stakeholder engagement and collaboration

OSS success depends on a broad and committed ecosystem of partners.

- **Bistrița** should continue to prioritise mobilising support from the city, as well as existing energy communities or cooperatives in Romania and formalise partnerships with local companies, NGOs, and schools. A clear engagement strategy should outline how each stakeholder group will be approached and what role they can play. The creation of a Collaboration Charter defining quality criteria, roles, and responsibilities for private companies promoted through the OSS is strongly recommended. A due diligence / procurement contract or similar to be developed.
- **Zagreb** already benefits from established technical partners (REGEA) and social partners (DOOR), but could expand its network to include universities and vocational training centres, which can provide technical expertise and help address the skills shortage.
- **Minoan** should deepen institutional collaboration, especially with the grid operator and agricultural cooperatives, to unlock larger-scale energy projects and strengthen political support.
- **All pilots** should map existing local and regional initiatives to avoid duplication and identify opportunities for joint campaigns and resource sharing.

Enhancing user-centric approaches

User experience is a decisive factor in OSS uptake.

- All pilots should define priority "customer segments" (e.g., block of flats managers, single-family homeowners, SMEs, schools, vulnerable households) and develop **customer journeys** for each.

These journeys should anticipate the questions, decision points, and barriers that users face at each stage — from first contact to project completion — and align OSS services accordingly. A good way to start is organising a persona workshop to better identify who the different customers are.

- **Bistrița** could, for example, create a specific pathway for homeowners' associations, including template documents and technical checklists.
- **Minoan** could use digital tools to better capture and track citizen inquiries, enabling follow-up and tailoring of advice. In order to continue the work on energy poverty, a persona workshop could be organised on this segment specifically.
- **Zagreb**, who already organised several thematic workshops, could start trying out audience-specific workshops (e.g. "solar starter sessions", "session for young homeowners") to attract groups that currently engage less.

Securing financial sustainability and strategic fitness

Long-term viability requires predictable funding, efficient resource allocation, and the ability to adapt to changing policy, funding, and market conditions.

For all pilots:

- Integrate OSS activities into future EU- and nationally funded projects so they are embedded in work plans and budgets from the outset.
- Conduct annual strategic reviews to reassess user needs, policy changes, and priorities, ensuring services remain relevant.
- Plan scenarios for potential funding cuts, policy shifts, or legal changes, with predefined contingency measures to avoid service disruption.
- Collect and act on feedback from users and partners to refine services and demonstrate impact to funders.
- Adopt flexible staffing models — such as part-time, project-based, or shared arrangements with municipal departments or cooperatives — to scale capacity with demand and funding.
- Use aggregated OSS data and case studies to influence regulatory improvements, strengthen policy relevance, and support funding applications.

- Approach municipalities and relevant agencies early to negotiate co-funding agreements for post-LIFE LOOP operations, backed by evidence of OSS performance.

For Bistrița

- Explore shared staffing arrangements with local cooperatives to maintain expertise at lower cost.
- Build joint funding proposals with regional or national partners to access larger grant opportunities.
- Use media presence as a platform to strengthen the case for local co-funding.

For Zagreb

- Pilot revenue-generating services such as in-depth energy audits for larger commercial or public clients, with proceeds reinvested into free advisory for households.
- Leverage strong institutional partnerships to jointly apply for EU or national funding streams dedicated to energy transition and social innovation.
- Position the OSS as a policy advisory hub for the city, using its monitoring data to influence local regulations and secure municipal budget allocations.

Minoan

- Strengthen advocacy with regional institutions and the grid operator to secure structural funding for community energy facilitation.
- Package impact stories from successful member projects into funding proposals targeting philanthropic and cooperative development funds.

Boosting public engagement

Community trust and awareness are built through visible, relatable, and ongoing engagement.

- It is recommended for **all pilots** to develop a public engagement plan combining:

    - Local ambassadors (trained volunteers or community leaders/local organisations) who can promote OSS services in their own networks.
    - Visible success stories (with photos, testimonials, and concrete savings figures) showcased online and in the OSS physical space or in local newspapers/magazines.
    - Use of OSS premises for community events, citizen assemblies, or thematic workshops (even unrelated to energy, but to give the space more visibility)
- **Bistrița** could integrate OSS pop-up stands into every major municipal event, while also partnering with local radio and schools for ongoing campaigns.
- Minoan could leverage its high membership base to run peer-to-peer site visits, followed by visits to the OSS, to give the OSS more visibility.
- **Zagreb** could launch a "first 100 users" campaign to create early momentum and gather testimonials for wider promotion.In Zagreb, and all places, the OSS would benefit from a more community 'look and feel' where citizens would be invited to use the space.

Optimizing operations and monitoring impact

Efficient internal organisation and performance tracking are essential to adapt and grow.

- **All pilots** should establish a simple monitoring framework from the start, including indicators on user numbers, service types, satisfaction, and project follow-up, including a more advanced customer relationship management software.
- **Bistrița** and **Minoan** could adapt Zagreb's basic monitoring approach while adding digital tracking tools for easier reporting.

Leveraging digital tools to reduce staff/volunteer workload

Digital solutions can increase reach, reduce repetitive work, and improve service quality.

- **All pilots** should integrate interactive tools into their websites (e.g., solar potential calculators, funding eligibility checkers, "how to start your energy community" guides).
- AI-powered FAQs can be explored to handle recurring questions, freeing staff time for complex cases, even though accuracy needs to be checked.
- Bistrița could develop a simple online booking tool for consultations to manage staff workload and avoid bottlenecks.

Managing demand and capacity

OSSs need to balance promotion with available resources to maintain trust.

- In the beginning especially, outreach will need to be in line with staff and volunteer availability.
- **All pilots** should consider using intake and triage tools to prioritise cases by urgency, eligibility, and impact.
- Offer a "light-touch" pathway for general questions (e.g., online resources, FAQs, webinars) to reserve one-to-one time for complex cases.
- Plan for seasonal peaks (e.g., heating queries in autumn) with tailored campaigns (and staffing plans)
- **Bistrița and Minoan** who have less capacity could focus on set drop-in hours for basic advice and appointments for complex cases, while **Zagreb** could adopt tiered service levels with assistants handling simpler queries.

Conclusion

The OSS models in Zagreb, Bistrița, and Crete each present unique opportunities and challenges. By incorporating best practices from established initiatives, they can enhance their long-term impact and sustainability. This report offers a structured assessment of the progress, challenges, and opportunities associated with OSS development under the LIFE LOOP project. While funding uncertainties and regulatory barriers persist, stakeholder enthusiasm underscores the potential of OSS initiatives to become integral components of community energy strategies across Europe. Continued support, strategic investment, and adaptability will be key to ensuring their long-term success and lasting impact.

Useful resources for community energy OSS

1. Energy communities Repository:

- **Setting up community energy OSS**:

  https://energy-communities-repository.ec.europa.eu/setting-community-energy-one-stop-shops_en

- **Webinar**:

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtUL7RS-_9I

2. ECOEMPOWER guidelines for the creation and operation of OSS for energy communities::

https://ecoempower.eu/data/ECOEMPOWER_D5.3_Online_guidelines.pdf

3. INNOVATE guide: A step by step guide for OSS (for renovation):

https://energy-cities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/INNOVATE_guide_web.pdf

4. Inside the OSS models: Findings from 57 OSS across the EU on the EU peers platform:

https://www.eu-peers.eu/knowledge-assets/inside-the-one-stop-shop-models-findings-from-57-oss-across-the-eu

5. Fedarene's comprehensive guide to One-Stop Shops:

https://fedarene.org/publication/sustainable-futures-a-comprehensive-guide-to-one-stop-shops/

Annex 1: Interview guide

Assessment of one-stop-shop (OSS) development for community energy

Responsible editor: Chloé VERLINDEN

Section 1: General information

1. City/Region name:
2. Name and contact information of respondent:
3. Role in OSS Development (e.g., project manager, city planner, etc.):

Section 2: Current status of OSS setup

4. Stages

A. What stage is your city/region currently at in setting up an OSS for energy communities? (multiple choice allowed)

- Initial planning
- Conducting needs analysis
- Identifying potential services and partners
- Securing funding
- Pilot phase/early operations
- Fully operational
- Other

B. Is the OSS in a physical location? If yes, please describe

5. Has your city/region defined the core services for the OSS?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If yes, please list the main services planned/offered (e.g.,
        - regulatory or legal guidance,
        - financial support/advice
        - technical assistance
        - Organizational support (governance)
        - Facilitation / mediation (in case of conflicts)

. Follow-up services (eg: assessment)

6. Have you identified the target audience(s) for your OSS?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If yes, please specify (e.g., citizens, small businesses, housing associations, real estate,...).
7. Are you considering inclusion of more vulnerable populations?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If yes, please specify how

Section 3: Needs and barriers

8. What are the main challenges your city/region faces in setting up the OSS? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of regulatory clarity
- Limited funding
- Limited expertise or staff
- Difficulty engaging the target audience
- Insufficient partnerships
- Lack of good examples
- Lack of experience
- Other (please specify)

Section 4: Engagement and partnerships

9. Do other energy OSS / Helpdesks / Info centers already exist in your region?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please list + explain

10. Is your city/region engaged with any other local/regional partners or initiatives for the OSS setup?

- Yes

- No
- If yes, please list the partners (e.g., local government, financial institutions, energy agencies or platforms, cooperatives...).

Section 5: Future plans and expectations

11. What are the short-term goals for the OSS in the next 6 months? (e.g., when will you launch core services officially, hire or train staff, find new resources, raise awareness about the OSS through workshops or campaigns,...)

12. How do you envision the OSS supporting your city/region's energy community goals in the long term?
13. Any additional comments or support needs?
14. Please share any documents or images which might be relevant to the reporting on OSS

Annex 2: Questionnaire

One-stop-shop (OSS) development updates

July 2025

Section 1: General information

City/Region name:

Name and contact information of respondent:

Role in OSS Development (e.g., project manager, city planner, etc.):

Date of update:

Section 2: Current status of OSS setup

Which concrete progress has been made since the launch of your OSS?

a. How has the establishment of the OSS been financed (e.g. physical infrastructure and staffing)?

b. What type of services are currently offered? (e.g., regulatory or legal guidance,

financial support/advice

technical assistance

Organizational support (governance)

Facilitation / mediation (in case of conflicts)

Follow-up services (eg: assessment)

Other?

c. What and how many outreach and promotional activities have been carried out so far?

d. How have citizens and/or stakeholders engaged with your OSS? Please specify (e.g., citizens, small businesses, housing associations, real estate,...). Include number and type of users, feedback received, and services delivered.

e. How do you monitor the impact of your OSS? Add a copy or link to your monitoring file if relevant.

What main barriers or challenges have you encountered since running the OSS, and how have you addressed them?

Lack of regulatory clarity

Limited funding

Limited expertise or staff

Difficulty engaging the target audience

Insufficient partnerships

Lack of good examples

Lack of experience

Other? Please explain.

Can you share 1-3 good practices or lessons learned that could inspire other cities setting up similar OSS?

What are your next planned steps for strengthening or expanding your OSS in the coming months?

(e.g. outreach, expansion of services, monitoring, new partnerships, staffing or training,...)

Please share any documents or images which might be relevant to the reporting on OSS