



**Advancing Renewable
Energy Communities**

Deliverable 5.1

Methodological framework for good/best practices selection

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Version 2



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SUMMARY

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ABOUT COME RES

COME RES - Community Energy for the uptake of renewables in the electricity sector. Connecting long-term visions with short-term actions aims at facilitating the market uptake of renewable energy sources (RES) in the electricity sector. Specifically, the project focuses on advancing renewable energy communities (RECs) as per the EU's recast Renewable Energy Directive (REDII). COME RES takes a multi- and transdisciplinary approach to support the development of RECs in nine European countries; Belgium, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.

ISSUES ADDRESSED AND MAJOR STEPS

COME RES covers diverse socio-technical systems including community PV, wind (onshore), storage and integrated community solutions, investigated in nine European countries. The project has a specific focus on a number of target regions in these countries. These target regions are characterised as being places where community energy has the potential to be further developed and model regions and where community energy is in a more advanced stage of development. COME RES analyses political, administrative, legal, socioeconomic, spatial and environmental characteristics, and the reasons for the slow deployment of RECs in selected target regions. Moreover, COME RES synchronises project activities with the transposition and implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) and other legislation of the Clean Energy Package. It places a particular focus on the provisions for RECs, the progress of which is discussed in policy labs. Policy lessons with validity across Europe will be drawn and recommendations proposed.

ABSTRACT

Work package 5 (WP5) of the COME RES project identifies good practices of renewable energy communities (RECs), as defined by the Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001/EU) (RED II), and provides a best practices inventory. The inventory is part of a synthesis report of the best practice cases regarding novel and promising REC initiatives or REC approaches in the COME RES partner countries. Work package 5 includes in-depth assessments of innovative, adoptable and transferable cases. It examines the extent to which the good/best practices provide environmental, economic and/or social community benefits (as defined in cf. RED II, Art. 2). Based on the good/best practices, a sustainability scorecard for renewable energy communities is developed. The scorecard provides principles and criteria for sustainable community energy, which serve both as a self-assessment tool for RECs and a potential guidance tool for policy development to further promote and improve RECs. Methods applied include primary and secondary literature and document analysis, desk research and semi-structured, qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders as well as discussion within the country desks in WP3.

This Deliverable 5.1 includes the methodological framework for good/best practice selection and provides the groundwork for the characterisation, analysis and assessment of the good/best practice cases. Efforts are directed to build a coherent framework for structuring the case-studies. The case studies will be analysed according to a template carefully elaborated for this purpose.

Deliverable 5.1 is structured as follows: the first section describes the background and purpose of this methodological framework. The second section provides introductory remarks on the identification, analysis and elaboration of good practices. This includes a description of what is meant with good practice. The third section focuses on a guidance for good/best practice selection and analysis and contains selection criteria. And the final section describes the way in which the selected best practice cases should be assessed and elaborated in more detail.

This Deliverable suggests to define best practice as *“a proven or innovative REC, preferably implemented in a COME RES model region, target region or any other region of the COME RES partner countries, or third countries”*. The procedure outlined in this methodological framework is designed to screen good practice RECs and select the "best ones".

Subsequent to the completion and approval of this Deliverable, on the basis of the common methodology elaborated by FFU-FUB in this document, the COME RES partners will identify (within Task 5.2) experiences that can serve as good/best practice REC case studies (approx. 2-3 for each COME RES participating country). The most relevant cases will then be selected for in-depth investigation. The final selection will also consider suggestions of the stakeholder desks (Work package 3) and new potential cases to be included in the “best practice” portfolio (Deliverable 5.2).

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1 Introduction

To achieve a low-carbon economy, system-wide transformations are key. In some regions of the COME RES partner countries, a transition to local and renewable energy systems (RES) has already been taking place at the local level. The energy transition poses not only a technological and ecological challenge, but also a political and social one. However, the lack of local acceptance plays a role as a potentially inhibiting factor in the implementation of the energy transition. The social dimension has thus become just as important for a successful sustainable energy transition as the technological aspects. In COME RES countries and elsewhere, citizen energy, in particular energy communities, are becoming important instruments for both decentralisation and democratisation of the energy systems. It follows that community energy, citizen energy and renewable energy communities have become increasingly important in recent years. These initiatives are more diverse today than ever before and will probably continue to act as incubators for significant activities dealing with virtually all aspects of energy. RECs organise collective energy action and are characterised by open and democratic participation and governance structures as well as the fact that they generate significant added value for the local community.

Based on the findings of the model regions, the analytical focus of COME RES is to examine the legal, socio-economic, spatial and environmental realities as well as the reasons for the slow uptake of community energy including RECs in selected target regions. Learning from other experiences and a comprehensive analysis of good/best practices that can be transferred to other local, regional and national contexts can provide useful indications on how to face implementation barriers and enhance a market uptake of RES in the target regions.

1.1 Purpose and structure of this document

Successful examples from other contexts or similar enabling conditions are both important foundations on which to build an effective strategy. There are a number of studies¹ that show how potential and real barriers to the market uptake of energy communities, including RECs, could be overcome and what framework conditions can enhance the uptake of RECs in regions with low REC development. These provide a potential portfolio of good/best practice cases that might be potentially adapted and replicated under specific conditions or through modification of certain variables.

This Deliverable aims to provide a common methodological framework for the selection of such good practices. Furthermore, it represents the foundation for characterisation, analysis and assessment of the selected good/best practice cases. Efforts are directed to build a coherent framework for good practices identification, data gathering, analysis and portraying. This is followed by the development of a selection criteria to identify best practices and providing a structure for reporting and elaborating on the best case-studies.

Deliverable 5.1 is structured as follows. After the description of the background and purpose of this methodological framework (Section 1), introductory remarks on the identification, analysis and elaboration of good practices will be provided in Section 2. This includes a description of what it is meant with good practice.

¹ C.f. Baker, L. (2021). Procurement, finance and the energy transition: Between global processes and territorial realities. In: Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1177/2514848621991211>.

Bauwens, T., Gotchev, B., & Holstenkamp, L. (2016). What drives the development of community energy in Europe? The case of wind power cooperatives. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 13, 136-147.

Brummer, V. (2018). Community energy – benefits and barriers: A comparative literature review of Community Energy in the UK, Germany and the USA, the benefits it provides for society and the barriers it faces. In: *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 94, 187-196.

Coy, D., Malekpour, Sh., Saeri, A. K. & Dargaville, R (2021). Rethinking community empowerment in the energy transformation: A critical review of the definitions, drivers and outcomes. In: *Energy Research & Social Science* 72: 101871.

Section 3 provides guidance for good/best practice selection and analysis and contains selection criteria. The procedure outlined in this methodological framework, based on dedicated selection criteria and subsequent completion of the good practice template, serves to review RECs or initiatives that fully or largely comply with the criteria of a REC as defined by the RED II with good practices and select the "best" ones.

Section 4 and 5 provides a preview of what will be dealt with in Task 5.2, i.e. the detailed analysis of best practices. On the basis of the common methodology elaborated by FFU-FUB in this Deliverable 5.1, the COME RES partners will identify (within Task 5.2) experiences of RECs or initiatives that fully or largely comply with the criteria of a REC as defined by the RED II that can serve as good/best practice cases, (approx. 2-3 for each participating country). The most promising cases (evaluated on the basis of a set of criteria) will then be selected for in-depth investigation (within Task 5.3). The final selection leading to the catalogue of best practices will consider suggestions of the country desks and stakeholder dialogues (WP3). Deliverable 5.2 will provide a "best practice" portfolio.

1.2 Background and aim of the methodological framework

This guidance document, prepared by FUB-FFU is embedded in work package 5 (Best practice cases and sustainability scorecard for renewable energy communities). WP 5 develops transferable best practice cases, which can serve as a yardstick for the COME RES target regions. This deliverable provides the foundation for characterisation, analysis and assessment of the cases based on a coherent framework for data gathering and analysis and specifies a common structure for the case-studies. The methodological framework aims to guide the selection of the good/best practice cases and their analysis.

This methodological framework integrates the following practical aids:

- Checklist as a first guidance for identification and setting of categories of good/best practices.
- Guidance for the characterisation of good/best practice selection and analysis.
- Template for the compilation and analysis of the selected good practices.

The selection and analysis of best practice cases in COME RES is going to be based on a stepwise approach (Figure 1).

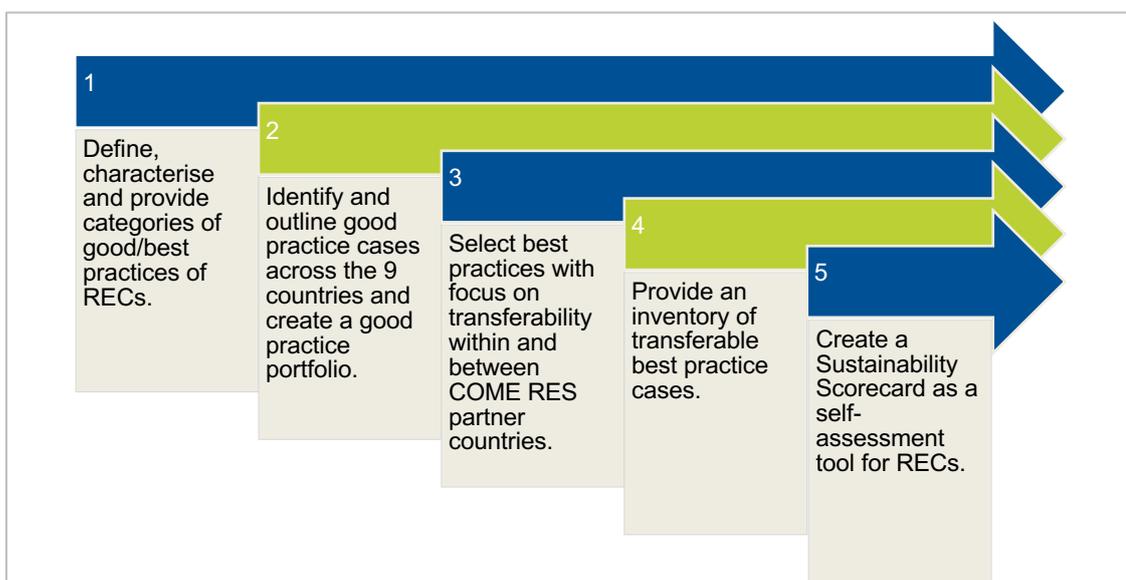


Figure 1: Stepwise approach

2 Identification and analysis of good practices

The first step, all COME RES partners are required to identify and outline good practices (and potential best practices). The Grant Agreement specified a minimum number of good practices to be identified (at least 20). In line with this, we suggest to develop roughly 20 good practice portraits. Specifically, each country desk will contribute with at least two cases. Countries with advanced implementation of RECs (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Italy and Netherlands) will be encourage to elaborate on 3 cases. Based on this collection of roughly 20 cases, and by applying a set of dedicated selection criteria, the project consortium will select 10 good practices, which will then be analysed in-depth.

2.1 What do we mean by good/best practice?

In the context of the COME RES project, "good practice" refers to examples of *"successfully implemented RECs (as defined by RED II) or initiatives that fully or largely comply with the criteria of a REC as defined by the RED II that are transferable within the country or other COME RES partner countries"*. Good practice therefore encompasses the implementation of an initiative applying recommended practices. Documentation of procedural manuals, guidelines and codes of practice are often required when implementing good practices. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations a good practice is *"not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it."*²

Best practices are considered to be superior to good practices because they require innovative, testable, and replicable approaches which contribute to the improved performance of a project or policy, usually recognised as best by peer organisations. This approach focuses on developing improvements and promoting continuous learning – good practices are considered more static and procedure-based.³

Best practices are means to provide guidance. Through trial and error, best practices provide the framework to help guiding policies and measures to be implemented. The Merriam Webster defines best practice as *"a procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption"*.⁴ According to the business dictionary best practice is a *"a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark"*.⁵ Best practice cases can be proposed for widespread adoption.

2.2 Identification of good practices

The good practices might come from a variety of regions, including: COME RES target regions, COME RES model regions, other regions in COME RES partner countries, or any other country in Europe. They might comprise proven, promising novel RECs as well as planned practices.

It is important to emphasise that the identification of good/best practices in the COME RES project should focus on initiatives that can provide environmental and economic benefits and increase social benefits.

² Cf. - www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/goodpractices/gphome/en/

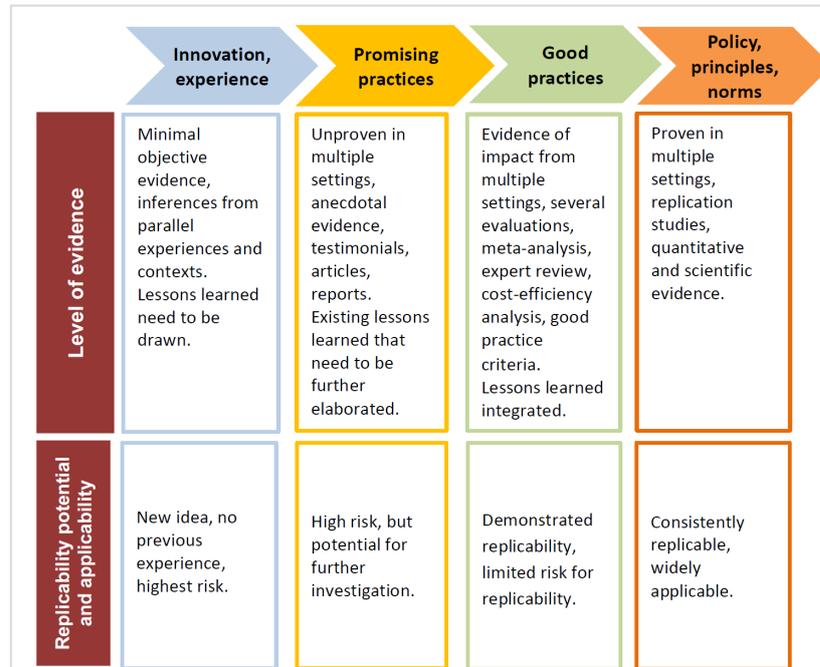
³ Cf. Rumohr-Voskuil, G. (2010). Best Practice: Past, Present, and Personal. In: Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 25(2), Article 6.

⁴ Cf. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/best%20practice>

⁵ Cf. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/best-practice.html>

2.3 Good practice criteria

The following general criteria developed by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations can be used to screen whether a practice is a genuine “good practice” or is rather a promising practice.



Source: FAO, *Good Practice template*, 2016

Figure 2: General criteria to determine a good practice template

Once it is clear that the measure or activity under scrutiny is more than a promising practice, a further check (following the prompts in the box below) can be performed.

Box 1: Check list to determine good practices

- **Technically and administrative feasible:**

Is the case under scrutiny demonstrated to be technically feasible and easy to learn and to implement (administrative feasibility)?

- **Effective and successful:**

Has the case under scrutiny demonstrated its relevance as an effective way in achieving its specific objective?

- **Environmentally, economically and socially sustainable:**

Has the case under scrutiny met current needs, without compromising the ability to address the needs of future generations?

- **Replicable and adaptable:**

Has the case under scrutiny demonstrated its potential for replication and to be adapted to other contexts?

Source: adapted from FAO (2014, *op. cit.*)

Further guidance can be found in the Grant Agreement, which specifies that within the WP5, the extent to which the good/best practice cases provide environmental, economic and social benefits will be assessed.

3 Guidance for good/best practice selection and analysis

We suggest to define a best practice case as an “*innovative and transferable REC or initiative that fully or largely complies with the criteria of a REC as defined by the RED II, preferably implemented in a COME RES model region, target region or any other region of the COME RES partner countries, or third countries*”.

In order to streamline the process leading to the selection of 10 best practices we suggest the following operational steps (Figure 3).

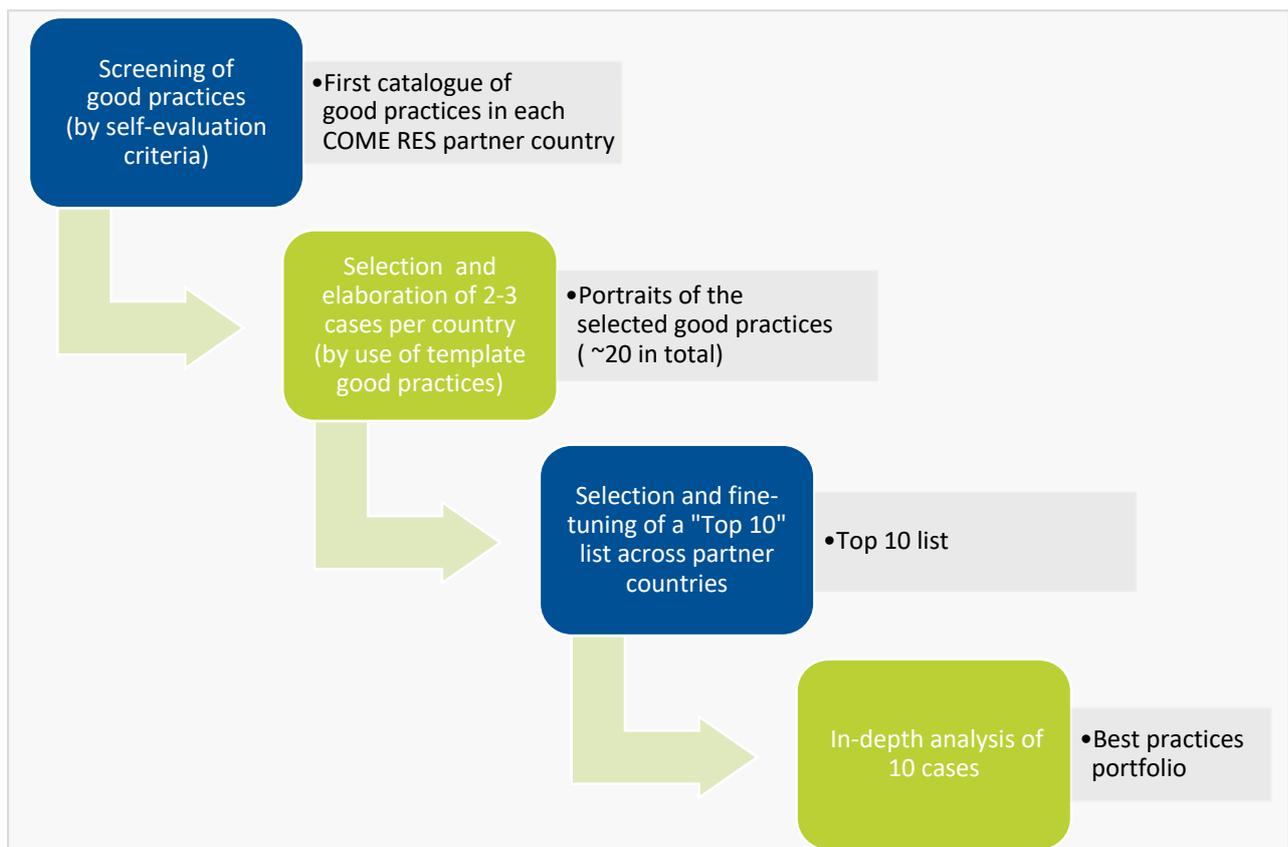


Figure 3: Temporal steps – from good practices to best practices

3.1 Selection criteria and self-evaluation

Table 1 (below) sets out and elaborates on the criteria that shall be applied to screen potential good practice cases. This matrix forms the basis for the evaluation of good practices. Specifically, it does so on a rating scale from low to medium to high according to the following selection criteria: innovativeness, provision of environmental, economic and social benefits, inclusiveness, adaptation and transferability as well as relevance/model character for other COME RES partner countries. Guiding questions are formulated to help COME RES partners to assess the degree of importance of the selection criteria. Ultimately, this matrix has to be completed for each good practice case and has to be included in the respective good practice portrait.

In sum, the self-evaluation matrix (cf. Table 1) serves as the starting point for the selection of good practices, which form the basis for the selection of the 10 best practices and the in-depth analysis in WP5.2.

Table 1: Selection criteria and self-evaluation

Selection Criterion	Guiding Question	Self Evaluation*	Comments
Innovativeness	<i>To what extent is the REC itself innovative also in terms of social innovation**? Please indicate whether this is a novelty at a national level and/or at a European level as well.</i>	low medium high	
Compliance with the provisions of Article 2(16) and Article 22 of RED II	<i>To what extent does the REC meet the requirements of the Articles 2(16) and 22 of RED II? (e. g. is it autonomous, does it have an open and voluntary membership, proximity, etc.)</i>	low medium high	
Provision of additional environmental benefits	<i>To what extent does the REC provide environmental benefits? (e. g. specific packages providing for high ecological valorisation, enhanced ecological rehabilitation of the area?)</i>	low medium high	
... economic benefits	<i>To what extent does the REC provide economic benefits? (e. g. local added value creation, employment effects, local tax revenues, rebates on energy bill)?</i>	low medium high	
... social community/ societal benefits	<i>To what extent does the REC provide social community benefits? (e. g. particularly lower-income groups being included, benefit sharing, social communal activities)</i>	low medium high	
Inclusiveness	<i>To what extent does the REC contribute to and foster the participation of different actors, including also vulnerable groups in community energy initiatives?</i>	low medium high	
Model character/ relevance	<i>To what extent is the REC relevant/a model for regions with low REC development, including COME RES target regions or any other regions/countries? To what extent has the case selected demonstrated that the approaches used are an effective*** way to overcome the barriers inhibiting the uptake of renewable community energy projects?</i>	low medium high	
Adaptation and transferability	<i>To what extent can the case be adapted and transferred to other regions of the same country or regions in other countries, particularly regions with low REC development?</i>	low medium high	

* The REC fulfills the criteria “fully – in average – poorly”.

** By social innovation we refer to “novel combinations of ideas and distinct forms of collaboration that transcend established institutional contexts with the effect of empowering and (re)engaging [stakeholders including] vulnerable groups either in the process of the innovation or as a result of it”.⁶

*** Here, “effective” means that the selected case demonstrated that there were no serious barriers to implementation (and thus to replication).

⁶ Cf. Terstriep, J., Kleverbeck, M., Deserti, A. & Rizzo, F (2015). Comparative Report on Social Innovation across Europe. Deliverable D3.2 of the project “Boosting the impact of SI in Europe through economic underpinnings” (SIMPACT), European Commission - 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research & Innovation.

3.2 Template for elaboration and analysis of good/best practice portraits

The elaboration of good/best practice portraits should follow the template contained in Table 2. The portraits should be brief and focused. The portraits should not exceed 2-2.5 pages for each good practice case.

Table 2: Template for good practice portraits

Name of REC	<i>Please, indicate the name of the REC.</i>
Country	<i>Please, specify the country in which the REC is located.</i>
Type of region	<i>Please, specify the type of region related to COME RES (target region, model region, other region in COME RES country, third country).</i>
Compliance with the provisions of Article 2(16) and Article 22 of RED II	<i>Please, indicate if the REC meets the requirements of the Articles 2(16) and 22 of RED II (e. g. is it autonomous, does it have an open and voluntary membership, etc.).</i>
Foundation	<i>Please, briefly describe when the REC was initiated and finally launched.</i>
Driving forces	<i>Please, detail which types of stakeholders/decision makers were key in supporting/realising it.</i>
Organisational structure/ownership model	<i>Please, specify the organisational structure/ownership model (cooperative, association, foundation, partnership, limited partnership, development trust, private company), membership profile, gender balance.</i>
Attributions of roles and functions in decision making	<i>Please, indicate the key actors, governance structures and voting rights, etc.in the decision-making structure and how actively citizens are involved in the decision-making.</i>
Geographical scope	<i>Please, indicate the geographical coverage and size of the REC and whether participation in the energy community extends beyond the immediate neighbourhood (range of activity from the local, regional, state to the national level and the number of participants from a few to thousands, proximity).</i>
Activities in the energy system	<i>Please, briefly describe the main activities of the REC in the electricity system (generation, supply, distribution, consumption and energy sharing, aggregation, energy services, etc.).</i>
Energy technologies	<i>Please, briefly describe the energy technology (i.e. wind, solar, small hydro, bioenergy or electric vehicles).</i>
Key actors and stakeholders involved	<i>Please, briefly describe the key actors responsible for initiating and implementing the REC.</i>
Scope of participants	<i>Please, specify the range of actors involved, such as e. g. members of the community including households, citizens, municipalities, SMEs as a legal entity, other stakeholders</i>
Key motivations	<i>Please, briefly describe the key motivations for the establishment of the REC (e. g. cutting energy costs, strengthening community, protecting the rights of future generations, co-housing communities, etc.)</i>
Public leadership	<i>Please, briefly explain to what extent relevant public actors took up a leading role and innovative forms of leadership.</i>
Inclusiveness	<i>Please, briefly explain in which ways (and the extent to which) the REC fosters the participation of different actors, including also vulnerable groups.</i>

Institutional support and financial support	<i>Please, outline whether the REC could count on an established infrastructure of assistance and institutional support, and if so, in what way. Please, outline whether the REC counts on public funds and/or support schemes and indicate where the funding or support is coming from (i.e. EU, national, regional, local).</i>
Community support and acceptance	<i>Please, indicate which aspects of the REC lead or have led to positive attitudes, public support and social acceptance.</i>
Provision of additional environmental benefits	<i>Please, detail the types and to what extent the REC provides environmental benefits (e.g. specific packages that provide high ecological valorisation, enhanced ecological rehabilitation of the area).</i>
... economic benefits	<i>Please, describe the economic benefits of the REC (e.g. value added, employment effects, local tax revenues, rebates on energy bills).</i>
... social community/ societal benefits	<i>Please, indicate in what manner the REC provides a social benefit to the community (e.g. the REC brings together people from different socio-economic backgrounds and in particular lower income groups, benefit sharing, social community activities).</i>
Drivers and success factors	<i>Please, briefly describe key drivers of the REC.</i>
Innovativeness	<i>Please, indicate whether the REC itself implements innovative measures/practices also with regard to social innovation.</i>
Adaptation and Transferability	<i>Please, indicate to what extent the REC as a whole or elements of it can be adapted and transferred. Try to assess the transfer potential and under which conditions the good practice might be transferable to other regions of the same country or regions in other countries, particularly regions where renewable energy communities are scarce.</i>
Model character for other regions	<i>Please, briefly describe to what extent the good practice can serve as a model for other regions with low REC development. Please, detail to what extent the case selected has demonstrated that the approaches used are an effective way to overcome the barriers inhibiting the uptake of renewable community energy projects.</i>

3.3 From the good practice portraits catalogue to the selection of 10 best practices

The finalised good practice portraits will be evaluated according to a set of criteria, particularly taking into account the transferability of the selected models, with the primary aim of selecting the best practice cases. The overall evaluation is partly based on a self-evaluation exercise to be performed by the partners for each good practice portrait. The self-evaluation matrix (cf. above Table 1) provides a basis for selecting the 10 best practices within WP5.2. The selected best practice cases will then be analysed and elaborated in more detail (cf. Section 4). This next step will nevertheless use a starting point the information provided in the good practice portraits.

4 In-depth analysis of best practice cases

This section describes the way in which the selected best practice cases should be assessed and elaborated in more detail. Possible methods for the in-depth analysis include the analysis of primary and secondary literature, desk research, and semi-structured qualitative interviews, consulting stakeholders and market actors as well as additional qualitative data. The analysis will entail stakeholder mappings, innovative business and cooperation models, local value creation, quantitative and qualitative employment effects and gender/diversity issues.

The in-depth analysis should generally follow the structure and layout of the good practice portraits, but needs to be further elaborated (we suggest 5-10 pages for each best practice case study). Compared to the good practice portraits, several additional aspects may need to be considered, e.g. a longer explanation of why this REC is a model for other regions in the country or even for third countries, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an explanation of why and in what way the RECs or initiatives that have a best practice character have been successful. Thus, it is also important to address the question of what processes and frameworks led to a successful outcome and ultimately to best practices and whether there was a participatory process. The identification of the success factors is crucial for the success of the transfer of the renewable energy community initiative. In addition, a section on lessons learnt should be included, together with a section with reflections on how the proposed practices can be replicated and extended to different or a larger scale (regional, national).

The best practice cases will be compiled in a best practice portfolio. They will also be further assessed and presented in a synthesis report (Deliverable 5.3), which will cluster the best practice cases according to different categories, provide a comparative analysis of success factors (and failures) and draw lessons that can have general validity. The report will preserve the anonymity of the participants by anonymising quotes and descriptions. The synthesis report will serve as a basis for the development of the Sustainability Scorecard (Deliverable 5.4)

5 Next operative steps

This methodological framework will be employed in the process of developing Deliverable 5.2. Within Task 5.2, all partners involved in the country desks in work package 3 will contribute first to identify and then to elaborate a number of good practice cases (Month 12-16). These case studies serve as potential best practice cases for stepping up the foundation of future RECs or at least to improve the general framework for their uptake.

Gathering and explaining 20-25 cases in total is the starting point for selecting a smaller group of 10 cases for the in-depth analysis. The collection of such a large number of cases is considered necessary and valuable to get insight into a wide variety and diversity of experiences - enabling the consortium to select a rich and representative mix of cases for the purpose of in-depth investigation and analysis. In total, we expect 2 to 3 cases per country. Promising cases and outcomes identified in work package 4, Tasks 4.1 and 4.2 (novel financing instruments for RECs) will also be considered. This step will be followed by a brief assessment of these good practices, which will be used for defining a set of 10 best practice cases (Month 16 - 21). Best practice cases should not only provide environmental, economic and social benefits to shareholders and/or the local economy, as required by RED II, but need to have a particularly high replication potential.

Transferability will serve as a central criterion for the selection of the best practices. This will be analysed in more depth in Task 5.3 and flow into the Deliverable 5.3 (Synthesis Report) based on an in-depth assessment of 10 transferable best practices.

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