



Dreamstime / Yuri Arcurs

The COME RES Stakeholder Desks – paving the way for renewable energy communities

One of the objectives of COME RES was to engage with major renewable energy community (REC) stakeholders and market actors. In all participating countries, these have been actively involved in regular dialogue within stakeholder country desks to jointly identify context-specific solutions to overcome existing barriers for the growth of community energy and setting up enabling frameworks.

THE COUNTRY DESKS

Throughout the project lifetime, the country desks ensured wide engagement of market actors and other stakeholders and created new or reinforced existing networks. Dialogues with major stakeholders in **thematic workshops, policy labs** and **dedicated stakeholder consultations** helped to address critical barriers and drivers for RECs in each target region, to identify and select good/best practices and to derive policy recommendations. The engagement of local stakeholders in the so-called target regions represented

a valuable resource. They acknowledged the benefits of community energy growth for their regions by learning from the experiences of other COME RES countries and by discussing the opportunities to implement best-practices initiated elsewhere.

This factsheet provides a snapshot of the main discussions and conclusions reached within the eight national desks. For a full and more detailed overview, please consult [**D3.3 Final Consolidated Summary Report of Desk Activities in the Target Regions.**](#)

Authors:

ICLEI Europe: Arthur Hinsch, Lucy Russell

Based on D3.3. "Final Consolidated Summary Report of Desk Activities in the Target Regions" by Maria Rosaria Di Nucci (FUB), Vincenzo Gatta (FUB), Isabel Azevedo (INEGI). With contributions by all project partners.

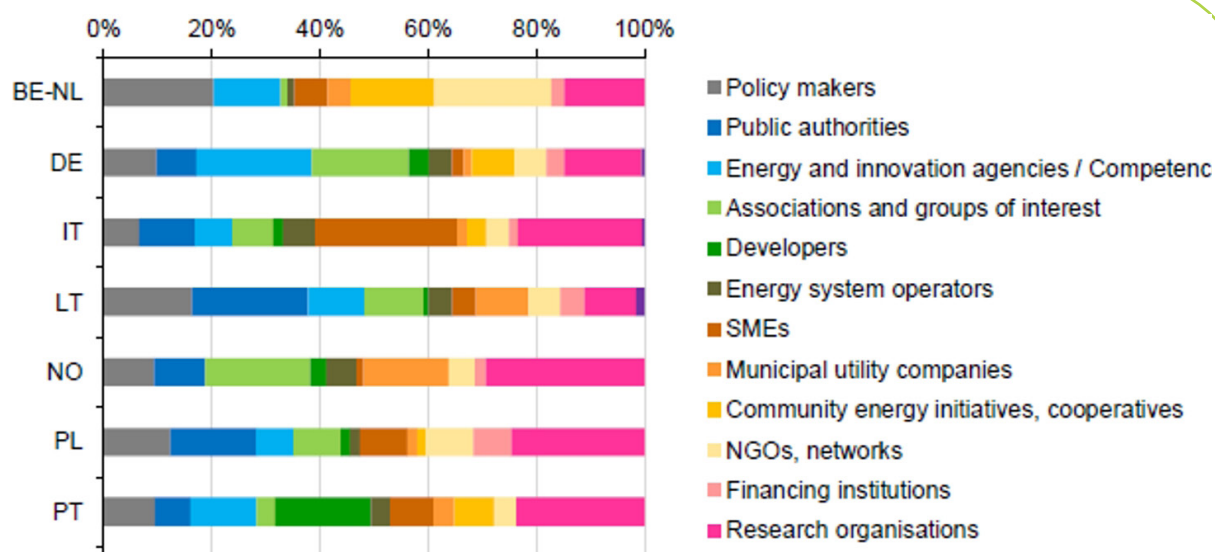


Figure 1 – Breakdown of the Participants (average) in the events organized by the country desks per stakeholder group.

THE BELGIAN (FLANDERS) – NETHERLANDS DESK

A defining characteristic of the COME RES project has been the trans-national exchange of good practice and experiences. This was also mirrored in the establishment of a **cross-border country desk** between The Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders). Flanders and North Brabant proved to be complementary in the sense that Flanders has progressed further in the legal implementation of key stipulations of the RED II, whereas North Brabant (or the Netherlands in general) scores better on implementing an enabling framework for energy communities. Hence, **mutual learning between the stakeholders** from both regions could occur.

One of the most significant lessons learned is the extent to which there is a lack of information and knowledge among actors at the local level about the regulatory and enabling framework for RECs. Although the country desk has made progress in **providing stakeholders with access to information and lines of communication**, policy makers should become even more aware of this challenge, while further developing and implementing the enabling framework.

Beyond this, the desk meetings have identified several barriers and drivers for the establishment and further development of RECs in the target regions, proposing critical components of an enabling framework, **e.g., access to information and financing, equal/fair access to the energy market, tailor-made support mechanisms and capacity building of local authorities.**

At times it was difficult to reach a deeper discussion of recent policy developments in both Belgium and the Netherlands, as there are different governance structures and debates in both these countries. For example, in the Netherlands **the distribution grid faces capacity problems** when dealing with the demand to integrate more local renewable electricity production, whereas this is not the case in Flanders. In addition, while the Dutch national policy to move away from natural gas as a source for heating in the built environment opens up a **great opportunity for energy communities to form around local heat distribution grids**; in Flanders there is no comparable policy framework. The country desk offered stakeholders from both countries a **unique experience to learn how things might be radically different ‘across the border’**, while at the same time showing how both countries have to react to the same European legislation.



THE GERMAN DESK

The German country desk included important stakeholders such as community energy associations and initiatives, renewable energy organisations, public authorities and policy makers from the model and target regions Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia, as well as stakeholders from other German regions and organisations operating nationwide, highlighting the interest in the project from all over Germany.

The presentations of national and international good practices such as **the pooling of land for wind energy projects** in Grenzland-Pool (Schleswig-Holstein) or the **community virtual power plant** in Loenen (Netherlands) introduced new business models to the stakeholders and gave inspiration for the future development of RECs. Furthermore, policy makers from Thuringia, Schleswig-Holstein and from the national level informed the participants of current legal developments, including the transposition of RED II or the **citizen energy fund** (*Bürgerenergiefonds*) that is being developed in Thuringia following the example of Schleswig-Holstein.

The majority of desk participants considers that Germany is still lagging behind in terms of transposing the provisions of RED II and that there are still implementation gaps, although certain improvements have been achieved after the change of the federal government. **Collective self-consumption, energy sharing and landlord-to-tenant electricity projects (*Mieterstromprojekte*) still require a proper enabling framework.**

The debates in the framework of the German country desk also showed that, in addition to financial support, there is a need for accompanying measures, including the **further dissemination of good practices, support in the development of networks as well as assistance in the professionalisation of energy cooperatives.** Intermediaries providing advisory services as well as institutional and technical support for citizens, local communities and municipalities seem to be necessary. In several federal states, regional energy agencies are already assuming or may assume such functions. It is clear that energy communities would benefit if these intermediaries were equipped with more staff and resources.

The German-Dutch transfer team.



THE ITALIAN DESK

The Italian desk reached a large and well-balanced group of stakeholders ranging from the energy industry and services, public authorities, community energy initiatives, NGOs, environmental and renewable energy associations as well as research and development organisations. Also, several experts for legal frameworks, organisational and business models or technical and IT developers were involved in the country desk events.

The main focus of the activities was to **consider and disseminate existing best practices on RECs in Italy and from abroad**. A lot of attention was dedicated to discussing how the support for RECs, provided by the national government, can be harnessed on the local level and what kind of technologies, tools and governance solutions are available for this purpose.

Specifically, **the experiences with REC promotion in the Piedmont and Apulia regions, the GECCO project in Bologna, but also the example of the Flemish Ecopower** received a lot of attention and served as inspiration for the participating stakeholders. While developments in the enabling framework have been acknowledged, some stakeholders pointed to the **difficulty which comes with spending the available finances (e.g. the Recovery and Resilience Fund) in a swift and large-scale manner**.

THE LATVIAN DESK

Latvia's country desk has proven itself as the **informal meeting place** for stakeholders interested in REC development in Latvia. The country desk activities stimulated an exchange of ideas on how energy communities should look like in Latvia, which primary stakeholders should be involved, and how their creation and development can be successfully supported. Stakeholders from all levels – national, regional, local – were represented in the country desk events. Especially through **active involvement of the officials of the Ministry of Economy, participants of the desk events had the opportunity to regularly discuss draft legal documents and prepare proposals for their improvement**. Thus, desk activities provided valuable input for national legislative developments.

One of the most important topics discussed was how to ensure economic viability of RECs. A **financial support scheme should be created** as an instrument to encourage the establishment and management of energy communities. The financial support should be elaborated and launched together with **an information campaign** and provide the necessary technical expertise.

The desk events have been **successful in impacting policy in Latvia with results of the COME RES project being directly referred to in the annotations of the amendments to the Energy Law**. The role of municipalities in RECs was regularly discussed during the desk events and drew a lot of inspiration from the Italian best practice **"Energy City Hall REC-1" in Magliano Alpi** which raised particular interest among the local authorities joining the events.

The Italian-Latvia transfer team.



THE NORWEGIAN DESK

The Norwegian desk consisted of a wide variety of institutions and sectors and spans over a varying geographical area in Norway, including Svalbard. As the discussions of the different activities have pointed out, **Norway is a country that spans over different geographies, needs and preconditions regarding RECs: Energy transition in Arctic areas; energy security and supply in island communities, growth of local businesses** in areas where expanding or upgrading transmission is costly as well as **local energy production in cities** where there is a **rapid increase of electric vehicles** that pose new challenges for supply and flexibility of the electricity system. Since Norway is not an EU member (but part of the EEA) the process of implementing RED II is not following a predefined time schedule, and thus does not entail a high policy focus on RECs. Nevertheless, discussions in the desk events were very lively, especially given the reiterated importance of decentralised energy solutions in the wake of high energy prices.

Decentralised energy models are on the government agenda, and new regulations that will promote more opportunities for housing companies/condominiums to engage in energy production as prosumers are on the horizon. However, the proposed changes are moderate and discussions during the desk activities **considered how such models can be profitable and integrated into the energy system, without transferring grid costs to other consumers.** The profound impact of the energy crisis on Norwegian households and local communities has additionally **fixed the focus primarily towards subsidy schemes and not on promoting RECs.**

To ensure adequate development of the REC concept (mostly powered by solar PV) there is a need for further dialogue between different actors and decision-makers in order to ensure supporting regulations and framework conditions that open up opportunities for grassroots actors (and thus community benefits) as well as ensure an optimal system for energy security and fair distribution of costs.

THE POLISH DESK

In Poland, the country desk concentrates on community PV and community integrated solutions in the Warmian-Masurian target region. The desk involved a core group of 25 stakeholders, including policy makers, national and regional (renewable) energy organisations, energy clusters, academia, civil society, banks, regional funds for environmental protection and water management, the PV industry, public utilities as well as local authorities and members of the parliament.

The discussions showed that an **enabling policy, regulatory and legal framework, clear ways of accounting for REC members, and the development of cooperation with DSOs** are key to developing energy communities. In addition, the establishment of long-term support instruments such as **pre-investment grants and tax credits** would encourage various entities to engage in RECs. **The most crucial element for the development of RECs in Poland is the co-operation of the DSOs with RECs.** At present, DSOs are still reluctant to cooperate with entities that aim to develop RES installations.

As long as the Polish legislator does not properly take into account the role of all types of RECs in the creation of new energy legislation, and as long as it does not **create transparent and fair procedures and ways of settlement between energy communities and the electricity grid operators**, the development of energy communities will remain marginal.

THE PORTUGUESE DESK

The activities held by the Portuguese desk were successful in gathering different stakeholder groups involved in the implementation of RECs in Portugal, and fostering the discussion on how to develop an appropriate enabling framework, in line with the requirements from RED II. The events also facilitated the dialogue between policy makers and different market actors (from local authorities to energy cooperatives), enabling the discussion on the alternative actions that may be taken under the process of transposition of the RED II.

The discussions showed that **despite the advances regarding the definition of RECs and the establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework, Portugal is still behind in setting up an enabling framework that promotes and facilitates the development of RECs.**

Nonetheless, **some of the barriers identified in the first half of the project have been mitigated or reduced, including the lack of clarity of key definitions, such as “proximity”.** There were also some **advancements regarding the creation of guidance for potential promoters of RECs, and dedicated support at the local level. A first dedicated programme to financially support the development of RECs and collective self-consumption** was also launched.



THE SPANISH DESK

In Spain, the project focused its activities on four regions: Valencia and Catalonia were considered model regions, given their long historical tradition of energy cooperatives linked to their industrial development model. The Spanish archipelagos, the Balearic and Canary Islands, were considered the main target regions of the project, where renewable energy communities should be fostered, given their specific vulnerabilities, needs and potential, as islands. Over 40 institutions have engaged throughout the development of the project in the Spanish stakeholder desk. These included policy makers and context setters at the regional, local, and even national level, such as IDAE – the National Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving, as well as flagship associations, community energy initiatives, energy clusters, energy sales and distribution companies, academia, and civil society organisations.

The activities organized provided opportunities for stakeholders to put forward the progress pertaining to the development of an enabling framework for RECs. This includes the **development of the first support mechanism for RECs as well as the allocation of 100 million EUR to RECs under the header of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan**, but also the inclusion of energy community support actions within the framework of the **draft bill on Climate Change in the Canary Islands**. The policy lab for the Balearic Islands showed that there is a **clear need for additional information and human resources** in order to get more people behind the idea. In addition to fostering a more cooperative attitude, **the key-selling point of RECs needs to be better understood by citizens**. There is also an apparent complexity of such projects. A lot of attention has been paid to discussing how the benefits can, first and foremost, be channeled to vulnerable households and the role which the public administration can play in order to facilitate this.

OUTLOOK

The engagement of local stakeholders in the so-called target regions represented a **valuable resource**, especially when identifying and discussing major hurdles and the possibilities to jointly identify solutions in order to overcome existing barriers. They acknowledged the benefits of growing community energy in their regions by **learning from the experience of other COME RES countries** and by discussing the potentials of implementing best-practices initiated elsewhere. The desk activities also served as an **important tool for the dissemination and increased visibility of project accomplishments and findings with a multiplier effect**.

In particular, the selection and transfer of good/best practice cases (covered by [factsheet #3](#)) illustrated how **important cooperation between citizen energy actors and municipalities** can be and how valuable networking and clustering among (international) citizen energy actors is. A very good example is the experience of the Latvian country desk that involved the transfer team of the Italian best practice case and the creation of a WhatsApp-group to enable a continuing dialogue for Latvian stakeholders. **Stakeholders in the majority of the countries emphasised that COME RES provided valuable input for policy development**. Specifically in Portugal, a strong alignment was achieved between the needs identified by the project and the ongoing and foreseen actions from the National Energy Agency, a key stakeholder in the Portuguese desk.

In some countries, in particular Latvia, the process of transposition of the REDII into national law was accompanied from the very beginning by the country desk, and the project's impact was directly acknowledged by the national legislator. Spain is also an excellent example for this with a direct correlation between the COME RES desk activities, policy development and future REC development in the target region of the Canary Islands. Several MoUs were signed at the project's final conference to demonstrate long-term cross-border collaboration.

Thus, at the end of the project, there are **positive signals** that the infrastructure set up with the establishment of the country desks will find ways for further cooperation and that the core **stakeholders will seize all the opportunities to ensure the continuation of these networks**.





The sole responsibility for this publication's content lies with the authors and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 953040.

Contact

✉ info@come-res.eu
 🐦 [@comeres_eu](https://twitter.com/comeres_eu)
 in COME RES project
 🌐 www.come-res.eu

Project Coordination

Research Centre for Sustainability
 Freie Universität Berlin
 Dr. Maria Rosaria Di Nucci



Partners

