

Deliverable 6.6 Final Conference



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Date

Tuesday January 22nd, 2019

Location

Museum of Natural Sciences
Vautier Street 29
1000 Brussels
Belgium

09h30 – Welcome and Introduction

Welcome - Dörte Fouquet

We have to remember the numbers of our new directive on renewable energy.

All in all we did a very good job.

Huge benefits for the energy transition as a whole.

Study by the University of Delft shows that citizens can claim a big share of the future's energy transition. It also shows that we were underestimating renewables.

Energy markets in Europe are not a level playing field for renewables yet. There is an over-capacity from nuclear, gas and coal power stations and capacity markets. There is pressure of internalization of externalities, ETS, but not working. Some countries are thinking of having another mechanism on top but not in place yet (NL, FR?).

We need instruments to trigger involvement of citizens in energy transition.

Targets in new legislation are non binding on national levels, but we have the NECPs, that should give an initial overview of ambitions from each national state. It will be our work to spread out the news of what the member states have to engage with and transpose in national law.

Review time's coming, evaluation of the Commission should be stringent.

Thank you for the work done by REScoop.

REScoop.eu – Dirk Vansintjan

Maybe we should change the name of our federation, given the new directive definition talking about citizen energy communities rather than REScoops.

We think there are more than 1 million EU citizens involved in REScoops right now. The potential is 264 million by 20150. There's great diversity in REScoops profiles, some are very young, others are very old. Some are very small projects others are much larger. Wide range of activities: supply, production, EV sharing, EE, etc.

REScoop.eu is a young federation, only created in 2013. We have a charter that binds us through common principles in addition to the ICA principles.

We represent 1.500 members (EU REScoops). We are a growing network of REScoops. We have been participating in several Eu projects like the REScoop MECISE project which allows us to develop new tools and support our members.

REScoop MECISE – Karel Derveaux

Ecopower is a green energy supplier based in Flanders, Belgium. The cooperative represents over 50.000 people. Ecopower has been supplying electricity for a more than 15 years now. They have seen that their members reduce their consumption.

REScoop MECISE project focussed on 3 activities:

- Develop projects and link RES to EE
- Facilitate citizens and local authorities to invest in RES and EE
- Dedicated financing solutions

Link between REScoops and local municipalities is very logic. Both have involvement on the local level. Cities that have signed the covenant of mayors, set clear climate goals to trigger the transition but they often do not have experience and skills but REScoops have the skills. So they have complementary capacities.

Karel expresses his thank to the entire REScoop MECISE team.

10h00 - REScoop Municipality Approach

Amel & Büllingen - Friedhelm Wirtz

Mr. Wirtz is the Mayor of Büllingen, a municipality in the German speaking region of Belgium.

Commune rurale à l'extrémité est de la Belgique proche de la frontière allemande. 2e plus grande commune de la Belgique en superficie et assez haut.

Pourquoi un projet éolien sur le territoire de la commune ? Fin 1990 1er parc éolien sur la commune et ne voulaient pas de 2e mais plus tard, suite à la catastrophe de Fukushima, la commune a décidé de mettre en œuvre un planning pour développer son 2e parc éolien.

Ils voulaient également une piste pour avoir des revenus récurrents, ce qui a appuyé également l'idée de développer un nouveau parc.

Ils voulaient que le parc soit développé sur des terrains communaux, contrairement aux parcs éoliens allemands voisins qui sont développés sur des terrains privés. En terme de planning et de retombées économiques cela avait plus de sens pour la commune.

Commune voisine Amel, était dans la même situation avec un parc éolien déjà installé sur leur territoire, des terrains disponibles communaux. Donc les responsables politiques des 2 communes se sont concertés pour réfléchir à la création d'un parc commun.

Les élus ont validé l'idée à l'unanimité. Les négociations ont alors commencé mais les communes n'avaient pas suffisamment d'énergie pour injecter leur énergie dans la région. En contactant les autorités compétentes ils ont appris qu'il fallait qu'un autre projet se retire pour récupérer des capacités d'injection sur le réseau, ce qui s'est produit.

Ils ont mis en place un cahier des charges qui valorisait quelques critères comme la transparence, que les installations soient sur des terrains municipaux, que les communes puissent participer au projet financièrement, que les organisateurs du projet soient des coopératives, indépendantes des gros développeurs privés.

Le projet a été remporté par Ecopower et Courant d'Air. Ces partenaires ont impliqué directement les communes dans les prises de décision de planification. Pour sensibiliser les citoyens locaux, plusieurs efforts de communication ont été menés par les coopératives. Aujourd'hui la plupart des habitants sont favorables au projet mais comme souvent il y a tout de même quelques réticences locales et les citoyens ont la possibilité d'exprimer leurs doutes et réserves.

Le maire est fier et soutient personnellement le projet. Grande reconnaissance de la part du Maire auprès des coopératives.

Amel & Büllingen – Achim Langer

What did the public tender for wind energy in Amel and Büllingen require?

- transparency
- financially competitive
- maximum participation of citizens and municipalities

Joint offer by Courant d'Air and Ecopower won the bid: 60 % for municipalities, 40 % for citizens through cooperatives.

The project consists of 6 wind turbines. Park production would be 43-56 Gwh/year. Investment is EUR 24M.

Particularity of the development of the project was the compensation set up for biodiversity.

Information to citizen was done through specific communication tools, like a journal/brochure with all details about the project. Citizens were also invited to come to Courant d'Air's office to discuss the project.

Courant d'Air is currently waiting for the end of the appeal period to start planning for the construction work.

The wind park should allow to develop other local projects: a car-sharing community with 2 e-cars powered by the wind park. The installation of PV panels and wood chips for heating.

Eeklo - Ben Caussyn

Tradition of renewable energy goes way back in Eeklo. The city wants to be energy neutral by 2040. They promote development of RES and EE actions by citizens. They recently invited their citizens to discuss the local climate plan.

1999 - Ecopower developed its first wind turbine. Most important for the city was the additional benefit that would promote a democratic energy transition within the community. The public tender itself was based on specific criteria. They already incorporated social and environmental criteria and required the participation of local citizens. Other tenders and wind parks were built in the city since then. Now the city has set a threshold of 50% direct participation of citizens in all future wind projects within the community. They try to support other cities to follow that example.

In 2012 they started a feasibility study for a district heating network in Eeklo – they refer to as “Samsø in Eeklo”. But then they were faced with question of who would roll-out the district heating network, because they didn't have the capacity or skills to do this as a city. So they launched a long tendering procedure and again they listed the financial participation of citizens as a prerequisite, including the use of renewables and the evolution to 100 % RE district heating in the future. The tender was won by Ecopower and Veolia.

Eeklo - Jan De Pauw

We will use waste heat of the local incineration plant to inject in the district heating network. It's a circular process. We use waste from citizens, burn it in the incineration plant, produce renewables and heat which is then injected in the network of pipes that will heat the homes of local people.

The added value to the local community: people share in the profits, get access to clean energy from local sources, we will replace public street lights, install solar pv on social buildings, monitor the energy consumption through energie ID, etc.

Legal aspects of joint development and ownership - Annelies Verlinden

DLA Piper has been active on RES sector in the past. They were happy to work for this ambitious project. They investigated possible legal structures for cooperation between municipalities and REScoops in Belgium.

They developed a legal framework – called the 3CO matrix – which acts as a tool. It stands for: control, contribution, consideration.

Questions from the audience

Do you have a FIT to national energy grid in Belgium?

Is it legal for companies to sell energy outside historical monopoly ?

Jan: In Flanders there is no FIT. We have Green Certificates which is a way to subsidise RES projects. These certificates are sold on the market to get a financial compensation. In Flanders we have a liberalised energy market, meaning that other companies can sell energy than the historical monopoly.

Achim: In our region we have the same system as Flanders. There are differences linked to type of technology for instance. In Wallonia 1 certificate represents 1 MWh produced. For wind energy that the current price is about 65 euro per MWh.

Energy cities: Was there opposition from local citizens against the district heating project ?

Energy cooperative : how difficult is it to build a district heating network? How to you link EE investment and RES ?

Jan : it is a challenge because 80% of households in our City still use natural gas to heat their homes.

Are DSOs supporting your initiative ?

Jan: That is a very interesting question. In Eeklo we wanted to create a consortium with Ecopower, Veolia and the DSO but since the idea was that citizens were to become owner of the grid, the DSO refused. They wanted to be owner of the grid themselves. It's a pity because it would have been the first time that a cooperative, a private company and a public company would have worked together for such a big project.

11h30 – REScoop financing solutions

Generation kWh - Nuri Palmada

Som Energia is an energy coop from Spain. They managed to gather 54.000 members in eight years. It is a non profit company, supplier of green energy. They want maximise their own production and sell that to their members. When they started they benefited from the FIT system.

Before changing governments in Spain in 2018, renewable energies were going through a rough time. The acting government had decided to stop all support for renewable energy generation – a dubious decision at a time when the impacts of climate change all over Europe are calling for more, not less clean energies.

Som Energia - a REScoop from Spain - decided to take matters in its own hands. They raised EUR 3,5 million to invest in solar energy projects. How? Through 'Generation kWh'. Members of the cooperative were invited to provide a long-term zero-interest loan of EUR 100 minimum each. Som Energia guarantees that the investment will be paid back in 25 years. In the meantime, the investors pay electricity at cost price for the duration of the loan. A win-win for everyone! After the first successful investments through this model in 2016, Som Energia used the approach to finance over EUR 3,5 million sustainable energy projects in Spain.

REScoop MECISE SCE – Daan Creupelandt, Maëlle Guillou, Karel Derveaux

The European federation of renewable energy cooperatives (REScoop.eu) recently announced the foundation of REScoop MECISE, a European Mutual for Energy Communities Investing in a Sustainable Europe at their international conference in Brussels.

Renewable energy projects are capital intensive investments, especially at the beginning. At the same time, citizens often only come on board once a project is up and running and they can see it with their own eyes. If you want to involve citizens in renewable energy projects, cooperatives need to be able to put in the upfront investment. REScoop MECISE will provide the bridge funding needed for cooperatives to achieve this goal.

REScoop MECISE will facilitate renewable energy cooperatives in financing their projects with less risk for individual cooperatives. By pooling funds from cooperatives, local authorities and even private investors from across Europe, the mutual can provide temporary equity to help energy communities finance their projects, thus giving them time to raise equity locally. Moreover, the Mutual can act as a mediator to buy commercial projects from traditional investors and open them for local communities and citizens to invest. Once the project is up and running, aggregated funds from local citizens will replace the Mutual. REScoop MECISE will retain its revolving character and ensure the project directly benefits the local communities.

REScoop MECISE will support the aggregation of small community energy projects and assist them in accessing financing tools typically reserved for larger projects. Upscaling projects to over EUR 25 million would make them eligible to soft loans from the European Investment Bank or other institutional investors. Big projects produce more economies of scale, and increase negotiating and purchasing power.

Finally, REScoop MECISE will foster collaborations and solidarity between energy cooperatives and local authorities, particularly by helping the latter overcome the challenges they face. By aggregating renewable energy, energy efficiency and urban transport projects at the local level, municipalities and REScoops could for instance reach the EUR 30 million threshold that is required to apply to the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) and get grants for those projects.

The energy transition will require a considerable investment that will be paid for by citizens: as consumers, tax payers or even as clients of banks. To ensure fairness, citizens should enjoy equal opportunities and take ownership of the required investments to make this transition. Putting citizens at the heart of the energy transition will be essential to keep the transition just and affordable for everyone. Through REScoop MECISE, we hope to contribute substantially to the transition to energy democracy. Open membership means equity can vary, and with high capital requirements, and more than 100 members mean prospectus requirements.

The REScoop MECISE project teamed up with Ernst and Young and Energie Partagée to develop the Mutual. It will now be implemented in 3 stages: set up, test and full scale implementation.

We identified critical success factors – we able to operate across several countries.

The Mutual had to be established within a reasonable timeframe and cost. It builds on solidarity principles with fair returns and meeting ICA principles. Our governance structure has a general assembly, a board and an investment committee.

14h – Renewables triggering investments in sustainable energy

Linking RES to EE – Karel Derveaux

We tried to link renewables to energy efficiency in an attempt to make them economically viable. This was studied in the project but we didn't manage to make it work during the lifetime of the MECISE project. However good feedback from the district heating project in Eeklo.

Conflicting interest in these type of projects:

- Heat consumers want to meet their heating needs at the lowest possible cost
 - Heat producers want to sell their heat at the highest price with minimum commitments
 - Grid operators have invested in the network want to sell as much as possible and at the highest price
- so very diverging motivations with each stakeholder?

In MECISE we came up with solutions. Today there are bilateral contracts between the actors mentioned above. The cooperative approach is a solution because it allows to put all those actors with diverging interest within in a legal structure and work on a common goal. All actors share costs and benefits, and thus conflicts of interest are reduced. This is what is done through the district heating project in Eeklo.

How is it possible with this context that EE investment make sense? When you agree with all actors to invest in EE measures this will allow you to serve more customers with the same infrastructure. This can serve for 50 years, when each consumer reduce their consumption then you can include new customers and provide them with district heating. Hence, EE measures allows to make the whole system more efficient.

Exemplary cases from the UK – Mark Luntley

Mark explained how REScoop MECISE has made an enormous difference for E4A projects in the UK. For Energy4All it all started with the Baywind project. Baywind decided to help set up other cooperative projects in the UK. Through Baywind they started with a second project: Westmill Wind. Today there are 24 projects based on the same model across the UK.

Mark showed the example in the city of Edinburgh. Edinburgh Solar is a pv project in Scotland. Today the project is the largest UK community urban solar scheme.

The Schools Coop started in 2015 and has now done 4 share offers to develop new project across the UK based on the same model. The cooperatives are based around the stakeholders that are active with the school (teachers, parents,etc.) but they also involve the children who learn a lot of things about energy and energy transition thanks to these projects. The schools use a lot of the electricity on site. These cooperatives are Community Benefit Cooperatives who have to invest part of the benefits of the project into the community. For these projects, it helps the schools organize actions and it also allows to start up new similar projects. The idea was to do something very innovative and it couldn't be done without the support of MECISE and it is now being replicated to other projects and areas.

Some of the projects are also exploring the idea of reducing the demand of electricity, by installing LED lighting for instance.

For a successful energy transition we need people at the heart of it.

Exemplary cases from Belgium – Dirk Vansintjan

Dirk referred to the example of Eeklo again. Ecopower also had the opportunity to work with the city of Leuven in Belgium. The city council were keen on promoting the energy transition and they had done several projects already, but none in renewable energy directly before. In 2016 they organized a tender to find a strategic partner to help them. Ecopower won the public tender and helps the city to make and implement their sustainable energy action plan. Dirk is now aggregating a portfolio of EUR 30M of RES, EE and EV projects and will apply for ELENA funding.

Questions from the audience

Is there a requirement from the city to connect tenants to the system for the example of the district heating network ? Because in Sweden there were issues with connecting households to the network.

Karel: from the city side they have been thinking about obligations when you are making renovations to the house. But facilitating people and encouraging people has a better impact than obligating them to use the district heating developed by the city and the local cooperative.

In the UK, when talking about circular economy for the projects that are not based on renewable energy sources, does the benefit come back to the local communities where the fuel comes from ? No (rhetorical question). How do we make sure that no one is left behind including the communities around mining grounds ? Are we asking these questions now or are we looking the other way ? When developing renewable energy technology when we use rare metals, what is circular and renewable about that?

Mark: there are clearly questions about supply chain management that have to be taken into account.

Dirk : we must go towards circular economy, and we need to consume less of these minerals.

Do you favor one coop for the city or setting new coops for each type of projects even within the same city?

Mark: Edinburgh is one single coop with different sites. It is not so easy to manage a coop (costs of registration, reporting, etc.) so it would make sense to mutualize and not have 1 coop/installation. There are some smaller coops but not a recommendation from the start, would have to be adapted to context.

14h45 – REScoops taking action on energy efficiency

EE projects developed by Courant d’Air – Mario Heukemes

The collective purchase of LED lighting was done through the publication of brochure explaining benefits of LED to their local members (citizens). The coop also organised meetings in several municipalities. Courant d’Air ended up with a group purchase of 7k LED light bulbs. They were pleased with that amount because they are not a very large cooperative.

They also did energy audits in about 15 local schools to define the potential for energy savings and prioritize actions that had to be done to save energy. They provided schools with a platform to visualize the consumption, replaced the traditional light by LED and teamed up with municipalities to help them write climate action plans and sign the covenant of mayors.

Ecotraject – Fiene Biesbrouck

Ecotraject is a model elaborated through REScoop MECISE that supports citizens in making energy efficiency investments in their private homes. It's a form of impartial advice. The added value of the REScoops is the trust between them and their members. Given that trust, it's crucial to be able to supply high quality advice. Services are provided on an individual basis, costs were covered thanks to the MECISE project and it's a long term investment. The target group are people who want to do deep energy renovations.

A video showed how the model works.

Facts and figures: we hired 5 energy experts, developed a set of tools (fiches) to provide people with information about the energy measures they could take, about 350 quickscans were filled out. 28 members decided to run Ecotraject. A set of investments were triggered.

Conclusion: we gained know-how but need to scale-up to make it a cost covering service.

Ecotraject – Rhea Murphy

Rhea used the services of Ecotraject after buying a house from the 1960s. First, she did a lot of research but soon realised she couldn't become an energy expert overnight. She heard about the Ecotraject program and filled out the online quick scan. After that she received visit from an energy expert who came over to identify the needs. In a second meeting he explained the priorities and what each measure would cost.

Rhea soon learned that the refurbishment would be too expensive. She decided to sell her house and move. In the end, she was happy that she used the services of Ecotraject. Otherwise she would have been broke. In that sense it was valuable advice.

Questions from the audience

350 quickscans were filled out but only 28 trajects were implemented. Why is that?

Fiene: the main reason is that only a few members had deep renovation plans. We asked an initial investment of EUR 500 to start-up the service which is quite elevated. € which is non negligible and so mainly adapted for deep renovations. Mainly because not part of our target group.

Is there a danger that energy retrofits will change behaviour and push people to consume more ?

Fiene: this is known as the rebound effect. It is indeed important to take that into consideration when setting up an energy efficiency or energy savings program.

Question about measuring the savings in tons/CO2 saved by the project

Karel: different calculations depending on the average mix of electricity per country. We take into account the energy saved per kWh and calculate back to CO2 emissions. Not a detailed monitoring but overall calculations. Within Ecopower members can participate in Energie ID program to monitor very precisely the emissions they have saved.

16h00 - EU funding opportunities relevant to energy coops - Kamila Paquel

H2020 info day today – people can go to the website for information related to the new calls. The new framework is shifting towards a more friendly context for energy communities. There's the new RED II and a new electricity directive putting forward new definitions for renewable and citizens energy communities.

Interesting programmes: smart finance for smart buildings, Horizon 2020, ELENA, Smart cities and communities

H2020 EC – 1 → Set up and support energy communities

H2020 EE-11 PDA → Technical assistance to sustainable energy investment (note: leverage factor 15)

H2020 EE-17 → European city facility

H2020 EE-2 → Integrated home renovation services

EU Commission recently proposed that 25 % of EU budget will be dedicated to climate action.

Horizon Europe will likely follow the Horizon 2020 program but not confirmed yet. It is foreseen that there will be EUR 15 billion dedicated to climate, energy and mobility. Market uptake will be taken over by the Life program through a EUR 1 billion line for Clean Energy Transition.

16h15 - Panel discussion

Energy Cities – Alix Bolle

Why are cities participating in this effort? They want to produce and invest benefits into their communities. They want to tackle energy poverty and social issues linked to energy in general. Cities are also involved in building a more democratic transition (participative budgets, fearless cities, etc.) The Clean Energy Package brings a lot of hope, cities identified as eligible to fit the definition of citizens energy communities. Their participation in renewable energy project should be supported. We need to look into the governance more. The role of non-state actors is huge but the governance is still very top-down so it's very difficult. We need to review and change the way energy transition is discussed and decided in the European institutions.

EU Commission – Matthieu Ballu

Shareholders of energy communities as defined in the new directives have to include citizens, SMEs or municipalities. Their primary objective is to share social and environmental objectives in addition to economical ones. The MFF – which is the EU budget, voted every 7 years - the EU objectives of the whole budget is to increase from 20 to 25 % of whole budget to climate actions. Talking about a full decentralization process for the energy transition to renewables. This change has been recognized by the EU Commission in its vision on how to make the EU climate neutral. This is a complete game changer on the energy system. Great report published about geopolitics of energy transformation by IRENA. But not going to change overnight. NECP have to be assessed and the Commission can do part of that work but we will need support from external actors like REScoop to help raise flags and assess how the member states are implementing the new directives.

EU Parliament – Florent Marcellesi

We are going in the right direction but that's not enough. We have to recognize and remember that even if the Energy Union is the best legislative package in the world on the topic, it's still not enough to fight climate change. It's good but we need more ambition to survive in the long term. We made a few good steps in the right direction, especially including the definitions on energy communities. But it wasn't as ambitious as we would have wanted it to be. We have to be very careful now, because the Clean Energy Package has to be transposed into national law.

Invest EU – EU Parliament is asking the 55% goes to climate actions. We also asked to focus on small scale projects, not only the large ones. The future is to decentralize our energy system so we need to focus on small-scale financing that fits the needs of smaller actors. We need to put pressure on the EU Council and the EU Commission.

The best way to put pressure on EU Member States is through democracy. We have elections coming up. It will be crucial to make and keep energy and climate a core priority in the EU debates in the weeks and months to come.

REScoop.eu – Dirk Vansintjan

We did put pressure during the process related to the forging of the Clean Energy Package. We did succeed. We succeeded in changing the word « local » into the word « citizen » in the citizen energy community definition. First policy makers thought we were pirates or rich people. We had to do a lot of explaining about who we are and what we do. We start seeing a change now. The transposition is now a challenge for our members, but the bigger challenge is in countries where we have no members and where they do not know how to tackle the transposition of the CEP.

Just transition? RES are common goods and should be used by and for the local people. Key to reviving local economies, create new impulse and social link to the local economy. Also has a link with reviving democracy on a local level in Europe.

Questions from the audience

2030 targets are very important for EU Member States. However the commission hasn't provided the calculation method to calculate the targets. How are they going to do? How shall we push the national government to reach that?

Matthieu: There is a methodology in the Directive, with a formula, but of course the directive does not set the national targets. We are only receiving now the contributions from member states and check if they will reach the collective effort. If not we will have to ask them to modify their national targets. And then regularly we will assess how the member states are contributing to reach the collective target by 2030. It's the result of a negotiation with the EU parliament and Council. More complicated than before but that is how it is planned to work.

Projects developed by energy communities are not looking for profit maximisation but operate in a competitive market. How can we make sure that the definitions will be used for this?

Alix: very important to take into account for the transposition in national law.

Dirk: It is supposed to be taken into account. Thanks to the new definitions, we should be able to get a bike lane for citizen energy communities. We like what is being done in Scotland for instance with a citizen energy community target. We should push for this in other EU Member States.

What can we do as energy companies to help support energy communities?

Dirk: we can't do everything. There is enough work for everyone. But we should be careful because big utilities are setting up cooperatives that do not offer participation to local citizens. We are only asking for 50% direct participation in projects. We want the EC to support us, we want the EIB to support citizen energy projects through our Mutual and then we want the same treatment as banks do.

17h30 – Final conclusions – Josh Roberts

REScoop MECISE was all about:

Linking REScoops to municipalities and cities.

Linking energy efficiency to renewable energy.

Developing an ambitious portfolio of RES and EE project that are not business as usual.

Elaborating innovative financing schemes that address the needs of citizens energy communities.

We showed interesting examples of those things in today's conferences.

17h45 – Final conclusions - Simone Peter

20 years ago we had the Renewable Energy Act in Germany. Today 40% of RES in Germany is in the hands of citizens. Citizens are a key aspect in the energy transition. The transition will not come fast enough. Citizen energy projects are still being hindered. Today we learn that we can find ways around these obstacles, we heard some good news, but it would be better to remove all barriers straight away. Governments everywhere should incentivize energy communities. The new framework should trigger new development of energy communities, even in Germany. "I am convinced that people will have to be the main drivers of the transformation".