



So, you want to start the journey!

Recommendations to start a local energy community

You are interested to start a local energy community. This is great! You might want to do this for different reasons: to make your own contribution to the fight against climate change, to become less dependent of price fluctuations of the energy market, to lower your energy costs, to improve home comfort or maybe to give a positive impulse to your community. No matter what your reason is, the journey you are about to start is exciting. But fortunately, you are not the first to set foot on this path. Based on experiences of many energy community builders that went ahead of you, we have collected some recommendations to take with you along your journey.

Get the right people on board

Surround yourself with the right people and cherish your human capital and networks. You don't need to be energy professionals but a small, motivated, and committed team with a diverse skillset and knowledge on techniques, governmental procedures, financing and a

feeling for network and community building is very convenient. What is the expertise you have in your network?

To complement the right knowhow and capacities within the project, collaboration with local or regional knowledge institutions or universities might be of added value. But be very clear in what you need from them.

To grow as an organisation, be active in building and maintaining a network. And don't be afraid to make use of it. A lot of regions harbour an active energy citizen community. These often have a lot of valuable experience, knowledge, network, and human capital. And they are perfect for sharing your successes...and failures.

Choose a proven solution

Focus on well-known energy technologies and proven energy solutions. Keep it simple. Will you be able to 'sell' your idea to your neighbours? Look around for inspiring examples in similar cities and municipalities. Learn from them. If you are tempted by innovative and non-proven solutions, be aware that you will need a lot of technical, legal, organisational expertise. And persistence.

Keep a clear eye on your goal

Set a goal that:

- a. matches the local needs and
- b. suits your and your team's expertise.

Authorities can help you with this. And while you are in the process: zoom out every now and then to check whether you are still on the right track (helicopter view). Do all steps create added value, or did you take a side path? This helps you to work result-oriented and prevent you to lose energy in work that in the end doesn't contribute to your goal.

Involve your local authority

Build a good partnership with the local authority. Many municipalities now have civil servants working on facilitating and stimulating active citizen participation / co-operatives etc in the local energy transition. These people are very helpful in supporting your journey and getting you in touch with other communities and stakeholders.

Build a professional organisation

And when you start: invest in a professional foundation for your organisation. Consider formally establishing an entity at the local Chamber of Commerce and agree on a clear separation of tasks and responsibilities with your co-initiators. Also do not underestimate the importance of keeping good records, as the external funding and subsidies on which initiatives are often dependent require a solid administration of costs and your performed activities.

Consider setting up an "Energy Community", a legal entity (eg. a co-operative, non-profit organisation or association) that organises collective and citizen-driven energy actions and makes it easier for citizens to team up and jointly invest in energy assets. The possibilities for energy communities will increase dramatically in the coming years with the implementation of new EU legislation. Energy Communities will empower citizens to benefit

from advancing energy efficiency and lower electricity bills by enabling them to produce, consume, store and sell renewable energy collectively.

Improve your pitch and keep it simple

Tell a simple story, even if it is quite complicated. And ask yourselves:

- Why is your initiative important for the local community?
- Who are you targeting and what problem(s) does your solution solve for these different targets?
- And is this also considered a gain in your community? If not: then you probably don't have the best story!

There is a variety of (business) tools available to build your story: Value proposition Canvasses and Business Model Canvasses can be particularly useful to develop and strengthen your proposition. Keep validating with your community and strengthen what you have to offer!

Keep engaging your local community

Constant and clear communication are key. Communicate frequently and positive, stay on top of mind and keep your followers engaged. Say what you do & do what you say, thus creating trust and reliability. Differentiate your communication: think about the key message to different groups of stakeholders, and how to reach them. So, what kind of media fits your community? Regular local papers, leaflets, Facebook, WhatsApp? Think about this. It can be very convenient to have a communication plan.

And while in the process, be supportive. Encourage and facilitate other people to take action themselves within your initiative, this creates support and ownership on the long term.

Don't forget

It takes courage, patience, and perseverance! But we wish you a successful and memorable journey!

Facts

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Interreg North Sea Region programme

Interreg North Sea Region is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme facilitating transnational cooperation between 49 regions in seven countries (UK, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark) by the North Sea. The Programme is part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The overall objective is to support development and foster sustained economic growth across the North Sea region. In order to realize this, projects that directly contribute to one of the specific objectives (such as Stimulating the green economy) can be part-financed for up to 60 % of their total project budget.

More information?

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