

ENERGY **COMMUNITIES** REPOSITORY

SETTING UP COMMUNITY ENERGY ONE-STOP-SHOPS

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT





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Introduction

Who is this guide for?

This document is targeted at entities wishing to set up a one-stop-shop for energy communities.

Definition of 'energy community one-stop-shop'

For the purpose of this guide, an energy community one-stop-shop is defined as an organisation at national, regional or local level that provides a range of services to energy communities in order to help them overcome barriers in the process of setting up their organization and/or projects at different stages of the process.

Context

Following the creation of the EU definitions for Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) and Citizen Energy Communities (CECs), national governments have been working on transposing the EU directives and putting in place enabling frameworks for energy communities. One-stop-shop offices providing administrative, technical, capacity-building and/or



financial assistance to energy communities in this context have emerged as an effective way to support the set-up and development of energy community projects.

The importance of one-stop-shops is further reflected in the [EU Solar Energy Strategy](#), which emphasizes that information is key to enhance clarity and predictability on the benefits of self-consumption for potential investors, citizens and SMEs. The Strategy stipulates that one-stop-shops in Member States should share such information and give citizens advice on both energy efficiency measures and solar energy projects in an integrated manner, from the technical requirements to administrative steps and support measures.

The set-up of one-stop-shop or similar mechanism for the provision of technical, administrative and financial advice and assistance on energy efficiency is also an obligation as part of Article 22 (3) (a) of the recast Energy Efficiency Directive.



Disclaimer

This guide was developed through interviews with existing one-stop-shops in various EU countries, as well as a review of relevant literature and the results of projects focusing on this area. It does not claim to be exhaustive, nor does it promote one activity or business model over another. Rather, it aims to provide inspiration and information for the set-up of energy community one-stop-shops based on existing examples and previous work carried out on the subject.

The one-stop-shops interviewed differ greatly in terms of national context (regulatory and cultural), services provided, and challenges faced. The structure of the case studies provided in this guide varies according to this diversity.

The content of this document reflects only the author's view. The sole responsibility for the content of this report lies with the authors. It does not reflect the opinion of the European Union, nor does it constitute binding guidelines on what elements should be covered by an energy community one-stop-shop.



One-stop-shops featured in this guide



Austrian Energy Communities Coordination Office



Austria



Set up in: **2021**



Communities supported since set-up: **300**



Homegrade Brussels



Belgium



Set up in: **2017**



Communities supported since set-up: **n/a**



Asenovgrad



Bulgaria



Set up in: **2020/2021**



Communities supported since set-up: **69**
(27 communities created)



SHAREs OSS (operated by REGEA)



Croatia



Set up in: **2022**



Communities supported since set-up: **3**



Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland



Ireland



Set up in: **2006**
(2012 for the financing scheme)



Communities supported since set-up: **790**



Agenzia per l'Energia e lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (AESS)



Italy



Set up in: **1999**



Communities supported since set-up: **40**



Introduction



Energie Samen

-  Netherlands
-  Set up in: **2018**
-  Communities supported since set-up: **325**



Osona Energía

-  Spain
-  Set up in: **2022**
-  Communities supported since set-up: **40**



Regional Energy Agency Asturias (FAEN)

-  Spain
-  Set up in: **2022/2023**
-  Communities supported since set-up: **10**



Defining your services & activities

When setting up a one-stop-shop (OSS) for energy communities, the first elements to define are your goals and objectives, as well as the services you are going to offer. These may vary depending on the needs of the energy communities in your country or region.

KNOW YOUR CONTEXT

It is useful to take a look at the context you are planning to operate in. Taking into account the constitutional setup in your country: Is the best possible way to support energy communities through a national structure, a regional or provincial structure, or maybe a combination of the two? Thinking about the bigger picture in the medium term will help set your OSS on a sustainable course.

IDENTIFYING YOUR PRIORITIES

The one-stop-shops reviewed for this guide all based their services on the real needs of energy communities. They identified those needs by:





EXAMPLE

ENERGIE SAMEN, NETHERLANDS

Energie Samen tends to use a combination of needs expressed by energy communities, and momentum (i.e. funding available for a specific activity at a certain point in time) for the development of new services. If there is a critical mass expressing a need, and funding is available, Energie Samen develops the service. For instance, their IT member management software Econobis emerged through this process. If there is no funding available at that moment in time, the OSS tries acquire funding to start this activity. This is done either by lobbying for funding, applying for grants, or finding members who are willing to pay for the service. Energie Samen's member administration system is entirely funded by its members (combining a license fee for use and members who are willing to invest in specific new features).

The critical mass around a certain topic or activity determines which service is considered a priority – thus following a bottom-up approach.

The following sections provide an overview of the services offered by one-stop-shops across the EU. The below list does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather aims to provide inspiration for possible activities of existing and new one-stop-shops.



RESOURCE TIP

A detailed checklist of the steps to consider when setting up a one-stop-shop is available in this document by the EU-funded UP-STAIRS project:

As well as an overview on how this framework was adapted to the pilot regions of the Up-STAIRS project:



2.1/ Regulatory support

INFORM ABOUT REGULATORY CONTEXT

One important element for energy communities trying to get started or to set up a project is understanding their options within the current regulatory context. There are often a variety of laws that apply to energy communities, and finding the best path for their particular project through the legal framework is not always a straightforward task. One-stop-shops can help intervene in this stage by providing expertise on the legal and regulatory context and help energy communities identify the best legal set-up for their organization and/or project.

SUPPORT THE CREATION OF AN ENABLING REGULATORY CONTEXT

Some OSS (i.e. Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland, FAEN & Energie Samen), as part of their work, communicate the challenges and needs expressed by energy communities to the public authorities responsible for the creation of enabling frameworks. By helping create a better understanding of the reality of energy communities within public institutions (i.e. through stakeholder dialogues or trainings for public authorities), they contribute to helping remove current barriers at the regulatory level.



EXAMPLE

NORTH-WEST CROATIA REGIONAL ENERGY & CLIMATE AGENCY (REGEA), CROATIA

One of the roles REGEA takes up is the facilitation of information exchanges and conversations between various stakeholders, including authorities, grid operators and citizens. The objective of this activity is to help create an understanding among relevant stakeholders of the barriers pertaining to energy communities, and find solutions for overcoming them.

The energy community one-stop-shop operated by REGEA was set up as part of the EU-funded [SHAREs](#) project, which set up national OSS websites in six pilot countries (see resource section for more information).

The critical mass around a certain topic or activity determines which service is considered a priority – thus following a bottom-up approach.



RESOURCE TIP

The Energy Communities Repository provides an overview of the regulatory frameworks of all EU Member States, and features reports on the topics in its toolbox.

2.2/ Insurances

Insurances are key to limiting the risks of an energy community project. Identifying or accessing an affordable insurance scheme that is adapted to the specificities of an energy community can be a challenge. To overcome this barrier, some OSS are offering insurance contracts to energy communities.



EXAMPLE

ENERGIE SAMEN, NETHERLANDS

Energie Samen offers insurance to the energy communities it supports, and advises them on how to approach banks and insurances in case the community prefers an external insurance, or if it may be better served with an external insurance.

The insurance is provided through Avéro Achmea, facilitated by SAA Verzekeringen in Rotterdam. Energie Samen does not provide insurance advice, and members are free to choose their own insurance. Energie Samen generally recommend communities to seek multiple quotes when considering insurance options.

The insurance is available to legal entities affiliated with Energie Samen (cooperatives/ associations as members, foundations, or other types of associations as supporters). A 100% subsidiary association or cooperative that is not a member itself can take out this insurance if the parent cooperative is a member. >



What does the insurance cost?

The cost consists of two parts: annual premium/policy costs and annual handling fees. These costs are invoiced collectively by Energie Samen. The costs are structured as follows (insurance year from 1.10.2022 to 30.9.2023):

Annual premium and policy costs: The premium is €150 per year (proportional to the duration). In addition, there are €25 in policy costs and 21% insurance tax (no VAT).

Annual handling fees (Energie Samen): €25 excluding VAT (for an individual cooperative; for insuring subsidiary cooperatives, €25 excluding VAT per subsidiary cooperative is charged. Insuring subsidiaries is possible if the parent cooperative owns at least 50% of the subsidiary's shares). Annual handling fees are also charged for periods shorter than a year. >

Defining your services & activities

**> What does the insurance cover?**

The General Liability Insurance offered by Energie Samen covers property and personal injury for which the energy community is liable. Standard activities of energy communities, such as providing information, organizing general meetings, sending advisors, operating a shop, etc. (referred to as 'office risk'), are also covered (for property and personal injury resulting from such activities). If the energy community provides advice, for which members or third parties might hold them accountable, Energie Samen recommends communities to consider a Professional Liability Insurance. This covers what is known as "pure financial loss." The insured amount is a maximum of €2,500,000 per claim and €5,000,000 per insurance year, with a standard deductible of €1,000 per claim (see the example certificate). Energie Samen's group policy has a maximum coverage of €10 million per insurance year. Energie Samen further provides liability insurance for its board members, which covers bankruptcy.

2.3/ Financing support

Inform about relevant funding programmes and financing schemes

At times, there is a variety of funding schemes that may apply to an energy community in a specific country, depending on its activities and/or the region it operates in. Understanding which support programme to apply to, and to what extent a community may be eligible for various schemes, is crucial to ensuring an energy community can receive the most effective support, and that support is distributed in an effective way between communities. This is why many of the OSS interviewed for this guide provide information to energy communities about relevant funding programmes and financing schemes, to help them identify the scheme that is most suited for their particular project or organizational form.

Support and capacity-building to develop financing concepts

A number of OSS provide active support and advice to help energy communities develop their financing concept. This includes guidance documents as well as personal coaching for example. Some OSS further offer trainings to help build capacity within the energy communities.

Defining your services & activities

Provide direct financing to energy communities

In some countries and regions, OSS – such as Energie Samen or the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland – have gone as far as developing grant programmes for energy communities. You can learn more about the Irish community grant scheme in the example box in this section.

To complement ongoing efforts in a number of EU Member States, the European Commission is further planning to set up an Energy Communities Facility in 2024, which will provide small grants to energy communities to help with the development of their legal structure as well as their projects at the pre-construction phase.



EXAMPLE

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY IRELAND (SEAI)

For an introduction to the SEAI, please see [Section 10 – Case studies](#).

Most energy communities come to the SEAI via the Sustainable Energy Communities scheme, and get redirected to the most relevant scheme. The largest programme at the SEAI is the energy efficiency scheme, which provides grants of up to €1.5 million per community/project.

Under the Sustainable Energy Communities Programme, the SEAI pairs energy communities with dedicated mentors from its network, who tailor their guidance to the community's specific needs. Access to SEAI's dedicated funding, ranging from €10 000 to €25 000 per support instance, supports the development of comprehensive Energy Master Plans. Additionally, communities benefit from opportunities to participate in regional and national trainings, events, and webinars. The SEAI further informs communities about additional funding opportunities. >



How do communities apply?

Energy communities can apply via an online form on the SEAI's website. When applying, an energy community needs to designate a project coordinator, who will be in charge of managing the project for which the community receives support. If a community is selected, it receives an offer letter from the SEAI to proceed to the grant stage.

Quality control

In order to access the grant, an energy community currently needs to identify a professional project coordinator. The SEAI's list of project coordinators consists of self-identified experts. >



Defining your services & activities



> The credentials of a project coordinator who gets accepted into the SEAI's network are based on real experience (project references) rather than qualifications. In addition to this, under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, a panel of trusted advisors (technical, legal, planning and grid experts) are available to support the project at different stages.

Each selected community needs to have the buildings for upgrade audited for the expected energy savings generated by the project before being accepted. Every project furthermore undergoes an independent technical assessment. The audits can be part of the Energy Master Plan, or may be supported via the SEAI's [support scheme for energy audits](#) (€2 000 for an audit if the energy spend is at least €10 000 per year). The audits can also be part of the work undertaken by the project coordinator.

Financial solvency & payments

To be eligible for support from the SEAI, a community must provide a financial statement showing they can finance at least one third of the project. In the past, a community had to demonstrate that they could cover 100% of the project. >

> This however was not doable for quite a number of communities, and in some cases led to community taking on more risk to finance the project. As the SEAI's programme was meant to reduce risk for energy communities, such set-ups were of course not in the spirit of the invention. This is why the SEAI changed the pre-financing requirements. Today, there are multiple milestones and interim inspections to verify works throughout the project so that payment can be processed in a timely manner. Payments are made after inspection by the SEAI. There are also a number of community funding agencies in Ireland who can provide bridging financing for this grant. For the Energy Master Plan funding, SEAI have developed partnerships with local authorities, who pre-finance the master plan costs and recuperate the grant from SEAI. This reduces the burden on the communities.

Project duration

Applicants have 12 months to complete the project from the moment they receive the offer.

Support to the wider community

An essential aspect of the RESS initiative involves the requirement for all projects to establish a Community Benefit Fund. The aim of this fund is to enhance the broader economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of the nearby community.

The contribution to this fund is fixed at €2 for every Megawatt hour generated by the RESS Project. >

Defining your services & activities

➤ This arrangement ensures that tangible and measurable on an annual basis. The fund's structure is designed to encourage investments in local renewable energy, energy efficiency improvements, and initiatives related to addressing climate change. If the energy community is involved early on, it is easier to determine where to best allocate the money.

The community benefit funds associated with the initial phase of RESS (RESS-1) are projected to provide approximately €4.5 million per year to support sustainable community projects targeted at communities in close proximity to the RESS-1 Projects.

Challenges

One challenge the SEAI has become aware of since the inception of the grants scheme is that this exposes the communities to risk: if the project coordinator does not deliver, the community does not get paid. This is why, in the future, the SEAI is considering setting up structures that will enable the communities to deliver projects themselves. Such grants would be smaller, to allow the community to build experience.

Furthermore, when setting up and deploying a financing scheme, the SEAI has noted that there is a challenge in finding a balance between existing structure (i.e. existing grid structure and regulations) and providing space and flexibility for innovation. The heterogeneity of energy communities (no two communities are the same) adds to this complexity; a financing scheme targeted at energy communities hence needs to foresee a certain level of flexibility in order to provide financial support in the most effective way possible.

Finally, the support offered to communities so far has not enabled them to build up their enterprises to a point that they would become eligible for commercial funding. For this reason, the SEAI is considering different models of funding that may assist the realization of different types of projects.






EXAMPLE

COORDINATION OFFICE FOR ENERGY COMMUNITIES (COEC), AUSTRIA

The Austrian Coordination Office for Energy Communities' initial support programme started shortly after the national legal framework for energy communities had been set up in summer 2021. The programme is financed by the Austrian Climate & Energy Fund.

The funding was targeted at pilot communities covered immaterial costs (mainly conceptual, operational and legal advice). The main goal of this first programme was to quickly get the first projects operational, in order to learn from them and identify existing hurdles. The programme had two phases:

 **Phase One:** Projects funded by COEC had to prove they had become operational, and report on the set-up-phase.

 **Phase Two (ongoing):** Community projects have to monitor the first two operational years.

Due to different internal challenges (such as contractual, legal or tax questions) and external challenges (such as the unstable energy market situation), a comparatively large number of communities struggled to meet the deadlines or to complete the first phase (get operational and start monitoring).

As COEC's website offers a broad range of detailed information and resources addressing the basic informational needs of communities, in its second financial support programme, COEC decided for its second funding programme to provide support particularly to communities testing/implementing innovative technological or social concepts. [Further information on the funding and selection criteria is available on COEC's website](#) (in German, accessible with free translation tools). >

> The second phase, which started in September 2022, saw less applicants in the beginning, but numbers increased in summer 2023. COEC estimates that the chances of success (in terms of projects becoming operational) are higher due to several reasons (i.e. more specific selection criteria, established processes, higher quality of information and higher knowledge of involved stakeholders).



RESOURCE TIPS

Energie Samen (NL) provides an overview of the types of financial support it offers. If you would like to consult this overview for your own inspiration, you can find it here (in Dutch; free translation programmes can help you access it in your own language):

The EU-funded ACCE project has developed an overview of community energy financing schemes.

2.4/ Deploying experts

Some OSS go as far as deploying experts into energy communities to accompany a project. These interventions go beyond the establishment of a business plan or an investment concept, and can take the form of a project manager that is deployed to an energy community.



EXAMPLE

ENERGIE SAMEN, NETHERLANDS

If an energy community has a project idea and does not know how to tackle the project, Energie Samen helps connect the community to a project manager within their province. If the energy community has sufficient liquidity, they can hire the project manager to coordinate the project directly with their own funds. In case the community does not have the funds to hire a project manager, Energie Samen in most cases can provide the community with a grant to hire an expert for the project through their organization.

In addition to project management experts, one of the challenges for energy communities is identifying contractors. Some one-stop-shops provide services to overcome this hurdle to a certain extent. Unless you have the resources to carry out due diligence on the quality of the contractor on a regular basis, recommending contractors comes with a certain level of liability. Below you will find examples of how two OSS interviewed for this guide have solved this element:



EXAMPLE

COORDINATION OFFICE FOR ENERGY COMMUNITIES (COEC), AUSTRIA

COEC has a list of experts on their website which energy communities can resort to. The experts can sign up to the website without any prior requirements, however they have to sign an agreement to ensure COEC's quality standard. Only then will they be published on the website. Within a few months of signing up to the website, the experts have to name at least two reference projects they supported with their services to prove their expertise in the field and remain on the list. COEC keeps in contact with the listed companies.



EXAMPLE

HOMEGRADE BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Homegrade Brussels has a database of contractors who adhere to a collaboration charter developed by the OSS. Homegrade communicates clearly that this should not be considered a quality seal, it does however help hold the contractors accountable. People who receive in-depth support can receive support in their search for a contractor thanks to this tool. This database is an exclusively internal tool. Homegrade does not guide customers in the choice, not does it endorse particular contractors.

One service Homegrade offers however to help homeowners in the process is reviewing the offer made by the contractor and providing advice on the offer.



EXAMPLE

ENERGIE SAMEN, NETHERLANDS

Energie Samen puts energy communities in touch with peer communities in their area/province who might be able to share their experiences with specific contractors. They further provide a [checklist for how to identify a good contractor](#).



2.5/ IT support

Some one-stop-shops are providing tools and software to help energy communities with their internal management (both for internal organization and member management). In some cases, these tools are based on open-source software – you can find examples of such tools in the resource highlighted in this section.



RESOURCE TIPS

You can find an overview of useful digital tools – for internal management as well as for specific activities or technologies – in this guide recently published by the Energy Communities Repository.





2.6/ Training

A number of OSS interviewed for this guide provide direct trainings to energy communities to help them build their skills.



EXAMPLE

ENERGIE SAMEN, NETHERLANDS

Energie Samen (ES) offers trainings on how to become an energy coach (to help your community achieve energy savings), how to start a community process in heating districts, as well as Masterclasses on policy, project manager trainings for wind and solar projects (the latter is done at provincial level). Below are a few examples of the types of capacity-building activities they offer to energy communities:

Training for Energy Coaching for communities who want to tackle energy efficiency and support members with renovation. There are several types of trainings available, such as the basic [training for energy coaches](#) including conversational techniques and in-depth training on air quality and insulation. >



> **Training Cooperative Neighbourhood Guide:** Participants learn how to collaborate with the community to create a plan for sustainable heating and insulation. The [step-by-step process](#) serves as a guide for the training. Over six sessions, the focus is on the initial phase of the community process, where participants progress from a group of initiators to a supported neighbourhood energy plan. You can learn more about the training [here](#) (in Dutch).

Cooperative Heat Masterclass: In this masterclass, a group of active stakeholders – including administrators, members, and professionals from energy cooperatives or other collectives – come together to explore. The masterclass provides insights into the advantages of cooperative solutions for the heat transition. Experts play a significant role in sharing their knowledge, and there is ample room for interaction. This masterclass delves into four substantive processes that residents' initiatives engage with: (1) organizational development, (2) resident participation and communication, (3) collaboration with the municipality, and (4) technology, calculations, and drawings, working with real-life examples. You can find some of the masterclass videos and materials [here](#) (in Dutch).



EXAMPLE

HOMEGRADE BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Homegrade Brussels has been organizing webinars for citizens on a large variety of renovation activities, including heat pumps, window replacement, energy sobriety, roof insulation, biodiversity in cities, solar PV, elements to pay attention to when buying or selling a building, accountancy for homeowner associations, acoustic insulation, eco-friendly insulation materials, and more. The webinars are organized in both official languages of the region ([Dutch and French](#)).





Financing your one-stop-shop

Access to sustainable financing is one of the key elements for delivering your support to energy communities and it is, unsurprisingly, one of the key challenges outlined by the one-stop-shops interviewed for this guide.

This section provides an overview of the main funding sources existing OSS are relying on. In some cases, OSS use a combination of sources, and as you will see, some of the financing mechanisms already combine various levels of governance.

If you are a one-stop-shop, we hope that the examples outlined below will help you gain an understanding of some of the types of funding mechanisms you may be able to tap into. If you are an institution providing funding for one-stop-shops (or considering to do so), you may find some inspiration in the below examples.

The below list is meant to be illustrative and does not claim to be exhaustive.



NATIONAL-LEVEL FUNDING

The national Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving ([Instituto para la Diversificación y el Ahorro de la Energía, IDAE](#)) in Spain has developed a funding programme to set up energy community transition offices. The programme was set up thanks to the [Next Generation EU](#) programme, as part of the [national recovery plan](#) on the back of the COVID-19 crisis.

The programme will allocate €20 million for the implementation of projects to establish and operate 'Community Transformation Offices', as well as the adaptation of existing offices into community one-stop-shops, to promote and set up energy communities.

The grants will be provided through a non-repayable subsidy, which will be distributed to the beneficiaries upon project execution verification and investment certification. To facilitate project financing, IDAE offers the option to disburse 80% of the granted aid to the beneficiary in advance. The funding will cover a period of up to 3 years.

Financing your one-stop-shop

REGIONAL-LEVEL FUNDING

Homegrade Brussels is funded by three entities of the Brussels region, namely [Bruxelles Environnement](#), [Urban](#) and [Bruxelles Logement](#). The regional funding is allocated for one year at a time, and has been renewed every year since the inception of the organization. Homegrade Brussels needs to submit impact reports every 6 months.

EU-LEVEL FUNDING

The set-up and operation of the first stage of the Asenovgrad OSS in Bulgaria was financed by the EU-funded [UP-STAIRS](#) project. This funding allowed Asenovgrad to hire experts with different profiles (two economists, one lawyer, two technical experts). The municipality is planning to fund at least another 1.5 years of the Asenovgrad OSS once the UP-STAIRS project ends.

The Regional Energy Agency (REGEA) in Croatia has received EU-funding via the [SHAREs project](#). The project developed a [blueprint for one-stop-shop websites](#), which was customized for each of the pilot regions.

COMBINING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FINANCING SUPPORT

The Asturias Regional Energy Agency (FAEN) finance their OSS activities through a combination of regional, national and EU funding:



The Asturias Energy Ministry funds FAEN to promote and actively support activities in the energy sector, and to provide support in particular to energy communities.



In addition to this, FAEN will receive support from IDAE (see 'national-level funding' in this section) to set up an energy community office for a duration of three years, which will finance two full-time positions as well as the indirect costs for the operation of the energy community office. The combination of these resources allows FAEN to bring in experts from the energy agency into the office when needed.



FAEN receives private funding via its board of Trustees and Collaborating Companies, as well as income from own finance and investment plans.



Finally, FAEN participates in EU-funded LIFE and Horizon projects to finance part of its activities.

DEVELOPING A SELF-SUSTAINING BUSINESS MODEL

Osona Energia (OECoop) in Spain started its activities through the [Singulars project](#) promoted by the social economy program of the department of business and employment of the Catalan Government, which has allowed the OSS to hire one full-time expert and one part-time expert for one year. Thanks to the project funding, the services provided by OECoop are available to energy communities for free at the moment. In order to complement possible subsidies which allow the OSS to develop new services, OECoop is working on a model for monetizing the services they provide, in order to become self-sustaining over time.

Making yourself known: effective communications

The services of your one-stop-shop will only ever be as effective as your communications campaign. Reaching your target audiences is key in being able to provide your services to energy communities.

In addition to traditional communications approaches (website, newsletters, social media, brochures, events etc.), experience from existing one-stop-shops shows that the following approaches have yielded impactful results:

PARTNERING WITH YOUR LOCAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The importance of having the backing of a regional or national authority for successful outreach was mentioned by various one-stop-shops. An example of such a collaboration is outlined in this example:

Homegrade Brussels, a home-renovation one-stop-shop covering the Brussels region, had their outreach breakthrough when they partnered with the [Renolution](#) campaign organized by the regional government. Particularly since the beginning of the energy price crisis, the campaign attracted a lot of attention among citizens, who would be redirected to Homegrade Brussels for hands-on support in their renovation projects. In addition to this, Homegrade Brussels is partnering with as many municipalities as possible in the region to reach more citizens; this is in the interest of the municipalities for various reasons (reducing energy poverty, achieving the renovation targets, regularizing the buildings in the region). These partnerships have proven so effective that Homegrade Brussels does not need to resort to proactive communications anymore at this stage.



Making yourself known: effective communications



©Homegrade Brussels

ADVERTISING IN PUBLIC SPACES

Advertising your services in public spaces, such as public transport facilities or festivals, is another effective way to make sure you reach a wide range of your target audiences. Homegrade Brussels for instance advertised its services in the Brussels metro (underground) for a period of time.

Setting up temporary information stands (for instance at public, free events) as well as a fixed, physical office or information center has further proven an effective outreach strategy for community energy one-stop-shops.

BUILDING AND CAPITALIZING ON PARTNERSHIPS

Asenovgrad in Bulgaria relied on a combination of outreach channels and partnerships for the communications around its OSS services and how citizens can benefit from these, particularly at the beginning. From announcements on the municipality’s website, interviews with the Deputy Mayor (who is also the coordinator of the OSS) in the local press and on local television, to promotional brochures placed in the municipality’s information centre as well as in the mailboxes of multi-family dwellings, and a publication in one of the country’s main newspapers (with a distribution of over 9 000 copies at regional level), Asenovgrad aims to capitalize on the diversity of communications channels available in order to reach their target audiences as effectively as possible.

In Bulgaria, where energy communities are still a new concept, citizens were not used to this type of support. Despite the promotional campaign, citizens did not trust that they would be able to receive real support for their projects (the processes for receiving funding or subsidies are quite complex). It took the creation of the first few communities for people to see that the activities of the OSS were really producing results. From there, a lot of information sharing happened via word of mouth, to the point that Asenovgrad had to put in place a waiting list.



Information flyers ©Asenovgrad Municipality



RESOURCE TIPS

The UP-STAIRS project has summarized the communications and outreach approaches used by their pilot one-stop-shops in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, and Spain.

The [SHAREs](#) Horizon 2020 project has developed national energy community one-stop-shop websites (called Gateways in the context of the project) in collaboration with pilot organisations in six countries. The WordPress blueprint for these Gateways is available for free to entities wishing to use it in their own country.

You can find the national Gateways here:

To get access to the blueprint, you can [contact the SHAREs project](#).





Taking the customer by the hand

An important element for the success of your one-stop-shop is making sure that the energy communities you support experience the collaboration as consistent. Many of the OSS interviewed for this guide highlighted their learning experiences in this regard; the customer journey can determine whether a community reaches its objectives through your support, or whether they feel left alone.



EXAMPLE OF A NEGATIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

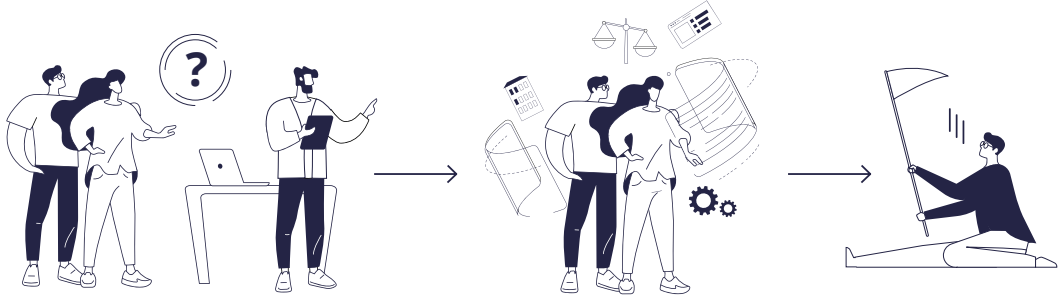
Based on experience shared by community OSS

2

OSS does not cover the need of the community, redirects them to other structures

4

Community may give up



1

Community question to OSS

3

Community feels lost in the system



EXAMPLE OF A POSITIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

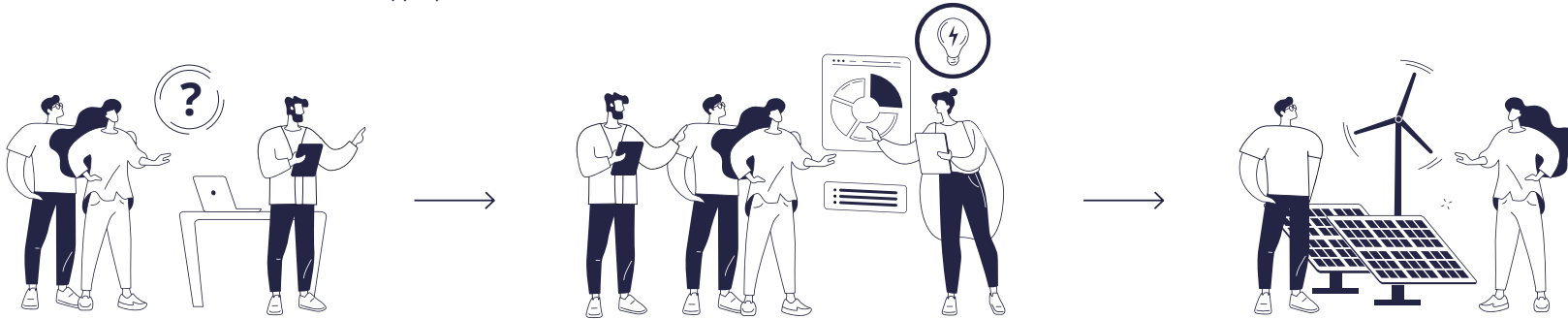
Based on experience shared by community OSS

2

OSS does not cover the need of the community, puts them in touch with **the relevant expert** within appropriate institution

4

Community moves to the next stage of their project



1

Community question to OSS

3

OSS remains contact point for the community, follows up on the progress of the query and **ensures the questions are answered** to the satisfaction of the community

Taking the customer by the hand



STEP 1: ENTRY POINT

For most OSS, the energy communities get in contact via e-mail or a contact form on the website, by phone, or by visiting their physical offices.



STEP 2: NEEDS ANALYSIS

The needs analysis is systematic process to ensure a thorough understanding of the requirements and priorities of the energy community. It includes the identification the problem or question at hand, definition of objectives, gaining a better understanding of the context and stakeholders involved, and analysing existing data (where relevant). Oftentimes, a prioritization of the community's needs is necessary in order to develop an effective action plan.

At **Energie Samen**, depending on the complexity of the community's needs, the needs assessment can take the form of an e-mail exchange or, if the problem is more complex, the OSS meets with the energy community (online or in person) to discuss the best way forward.



STEP 3: EXPERT SUPPORT

Once the needs and priorities of the community are clear, it is time to bring in the expert (or experts) who will help the community in its project. The extent and shape this support can take depends on the services structure of your OSS as well as the resources at hand.

After carrying out a needs analysis with its client, the Homegrade Brussels helpdesk puts the client in touch with an expert. Support can for instance include the analysis of an offer by a contractor (the OSS is mindful of the short deadlines in such cases; the cost of material evolves so fast that offers expire within two weeks, requiring fast support). Homegrade uses a CRM system to keep track of client queries.



STEP 4: EVALUATION

Once the support has been provided and the energy community has achieved its next step, consider asking for feedback to improve your services. This could be done via a customer satisfaction survey, or by asking for personal feedback in a call, meeting or e-mail.

In addition to asking for feedback from the community, it is useful to monitor your impact in other ways (see next section) in order to assess the effectiveness of your support and adjust it over time.



Monitoring your impact

Assessing the impact of your OSS on a regular basis will help you gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of your service offer as a whole as well as of individual activities, and identify areas for improvement. It further helps make your case when applying for financing, and will make your reporting more impactful.

The **Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland** works with an independent company to evaluate the impact of its support programme. For this purpose, the company developed a set of impact indicators, working with a variety of data sets provided to the SEAI through its programmes. The SEAI is further working on mapping the impacts of energy communities (i.e. if a sustainable energy community is involved in a project, how does this change the outcome of the project in said community?). The latter is currently under development, and has proven challenging due to the fast-changing nature of energy communities, the emerging policies and the related difficulties of obtaining sustainably viable data sets.

The municipality of **Asenovgrad** in **Bulgaria** tracks the development of energy communities through a municipal register. The register includes the legal form, address, funding applications and their success, as well as the status of the community.

In Asenovgrad, this register is intricately linked with the development process of the energy community; in order to receive funding as an energy community, in addition to entering the register, you are required to carry out an energy audit in the building. This audit outlines the possible energy efficiency and renovation measures, as well as an indicative overview of the impact these measures will have on the building (i.e. expected energy savings and CO2 emission reductions).

As the funding procedure is done through calls for proposals, the expected energy savings and related economic indicators are used as selection criteria. In this way, energy communities of large buildings with poor energy performance have the highest chances to be selected.

The municipality also tracks the successfully funded energy communities for building renovation, and provides support throughout the process of contractor selection and control over the execution of building works.

Homegrade Brussels in **Belgium** carries out regular quality studies on their services, both for reporting and financing purposes, as well as for internal improvements.



Training needs for OSS staff

One element highlighted by many of the OSS interviewed for this guide is the need to train the staff that will be operating the OSS. The effective implementation of OSS services depends on the capacity of the staff to understand the regulatory and economic context in which energy communities operate, as well as the internal functioning of energy communities. As energy communities are still a relatively new actor and topic for many energy experts, there is a significant need to train the experts that will deliver the OSS services.



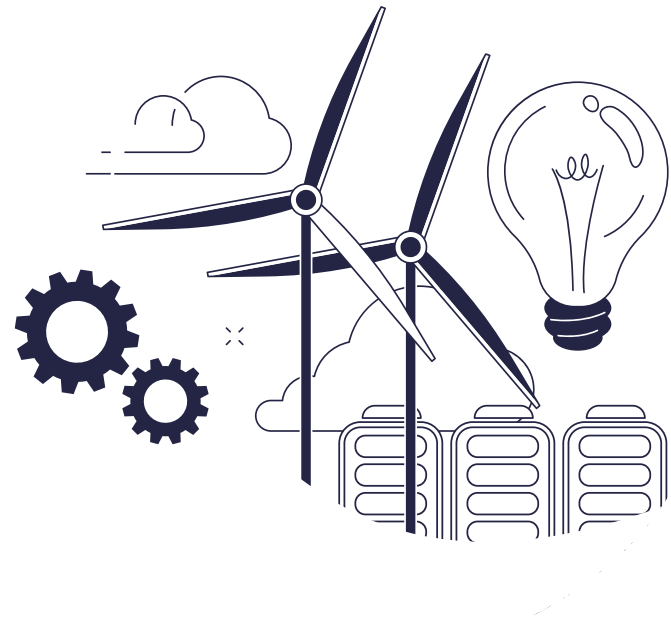
RESOURCE TIPS

The EU-funded UP-STAIRS project has documented the training modules and programme it implemented with its pilot partners.



Useful resources

This section summarizes the resources highlighted throughout the guide in alphabetical order.



Checklist for setting up a OSS

The EU-funded UP-STAIRS project compiled a checklist of elements to consider when setting up a OSS.



Database of community energy financing schemes

The EU-funded ACCE project has developed a database of financing schemes available to energy communities in Europe.



Digital tools for energy communities – a short guide

The Energy Communities Repository compiled an overview of examples of digital tools used by energy communities for their internal management, communications, and services.



Guidance documents for renovation-focused OSS

The Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland has created a set of resources for entities wishing to set up a renovation-focused one-stop-shop.



Useful resources



OSS communications guide

The UP-STAIRS project has summarized the communications and outreach approaches used by their pilot one-stop-shops in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, and Spain.



OSS financial support structure (NL)

Energie Samen provides an overview of the types of financial support it offers. If you would like to consult this overview for your own inspiration, you can find it below (in Dutch; free translation programmes can help you access it in your own language).



OSS training modules

The EU-funded UP-STAIRS project has documented the training modules and programme it implemented with its pilot partners.



WordPress blueprint for OSS websites

The SHAREs Horizon 2020 project developed national energy community one-stop-shop websites (called Gateways in the context of the project) in collaboration with pilot organisations in six countries. The WordPress blueprint for these Gateways is available for free to entities wishing to use it in their own country.



Case studies

Coordination Office for Energy Communities (COEC) | Austria

 **Set-up:** 2021

 **Main funding sources:** [National Ministry for Climate, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation & Technology](#)

 **Budget (2023):** €5 million

 **Employees (2023):** 3

 **Communities supported since set-up:** 300



BACKGROUND

The Austrian Coordination Office for Energy Communities (COEC) was established in summer 2021, following the publication of the national legal frameworks for energy communities. It was set up within the national Climate & Energy Fund, an existing institution for research and support schemes for carbon-free energy and mobility, supported by the national Ministry for Climate Action.

Due to preparation work by an external expert and a staff member within the Climate & Energy Fund, the COEC team was able to hit the ground running and start offering support to energy communities from the moment of COEC's launch.

CONCEPT

COEC acts as a single point of contact for energy communities in Austria, and collaborates with nine federal offices who also support energy communities. The federal and national offices provide the same information to energy communities, and meet every two months to exchange information on progress in the federal state. They further collaborate for the creation of tools for energy communities, such as information brochures or sample contracts.

Energy communities reach COEC and the federal community offices by telephone or e-mail. The communities are redirected to the relevant information, and can get back in touch with COEC in case they face a dead-end or need further support.



Case studies

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Information:** The national and federal offices operate a joint homepage, which features factsheets and brochures on topics such as taxes, legal entities energy communities can take (including a comparison of which legal entity is tailored to which business model), as well as [tools](#) where energy communities can modulate parameters to identify the best concept for their projects.
- **Financial support:** Energy communities can apply to receive financial support for the concept and set-up phase (more information about the financing scheme is available [here](#)).
- **Facilitation:** COEC facilitates communications between energy communities and network operators whenever problems arise. Austria has more than 120 network operators, COEC has a monthly exchange with the national association of network operators in order to discuss any issues or barriers that may become apparent over time. COEC describes the cooperation as constructive, however flags capacity issues within smaller network operators in particular, making it challenging for them to provide the services communities need. COEC is also organizing a conference for network operators and their employees on energy communities in November 2023.



Homegrade Brussels | Belgium

 **Set-up:** 2017

 **Main funding sources:** Regional government agencies

 **Budget (2023):** n/a

 **Employees (2023):** 56

 **Citizens supported since set-up*:** > 100 000

BACKGROUND

Homegrade Brussels acts as a focal point for supporting citizen-led renovation in the Brussels region in Belgium. The organization was created in 2017 by merging together two organizations, Centre Urbain and Maison de l'Énergie, in order to provide the most comprehensive support possible on citizen-led renovation in the Brussels region. This merger and scaling-up of the support activities was catalyzed by the regional renovation programme [Renolution](#), which was called into existence to help Brussels achieve its contribution to the EU's decarbonization targets.

**Homegrade does not support energy communities; this example was included in the guide as the business model is considered relevant for energy communities.*



CONCEPT

While Homegrade Brussels has acted as a focal point for citizen-led renovation in the region since its inception, the need for new services in recent years has led the organization to set up a dedicated one-stop-shop. Together with the regional environment agency Bruxelles Environnement, Homegrade Brussels organized workshops starting in 2021 to assess the situation at the time (incl. a SWOT analysis), outline the needs and identify priorities for expanding the work of Homegrade Brussels in the future.

In addition to providing support to citizens, Homegrade collects information about the building stock when carrying out home visits. This helps the region gain a better understanding of its progress towards its renovation goals.

As the organization grew, Homegrade put in place so-called 'poles' for the different activities. Each pole has one facilitator who manages the team working within this pole. At the time of writing this guide, Homegrade employed 45 architects. Homegrade's Management Team today consists of a Director, Operations Manager, Human Resources Manager and project managers. They organize regular (bi-weekly) internal meetings to ensure information flow among the poles.



Case studies

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Energy audits** to assess the energy performance of residential buildings and provide personalized recommendations on energy-saving measures and on how to prioritize renovation activities. The analysis covers various aspects such as insulation, heating systems, ventilation, and energy consumption patterns.
- **Guidance on effective ways to improve insulation** in walls, roofs, floors, and windows to minimize heat loss and maintain a comfortable indoor environment.
- **Advice on choosing appropriate technologies** (including renewable energy technologies, heating systems and energy efficiency measures).
- **Support homeowners in accessing financial incentives and grants** for energy renovation projects by providing information on available subsidies, tax credits, and financing options to make energy-saving upgrades more affordable (concrete examples in the Brussels region include [Crédit ecoreno](#) and [Primes Renovation](#)).
- **Train citizens on adopting energy-efficient habits** such as optimizing thermostat settings, using energy-efficient appliances, and managing lighting and ventilation effectively.

New services to be offered under the expanded OSS:

- **Homeowner association package:** Information for homeowner associations to set up their legal entities (advising on legal forms etc.), as well as how to set up and manage energy sharing projects. >



©Homegrade Brussels

- >
- **Digital calls:** All grant applications are digital since 2022. While this is helpful for citizens who know how to work in a digital environment, it creates a barrier for those citizens who feel less comfortable with digital technology. This is why Homegrade decided to create a service to help the latter group navigate the new grant making environment.
- **Tools** to help estimate the costs for renovation works (Homegrade does not oversee the construction works, but supports citizens in the process).



Asenovgrad | Bulgaria

 **Set-up:** 2021

 **Main funding sources:** [UP-STAIRS](#)

 **Budget (3 years):** €161 250

 **Employees (2023):** 4 persons in the project team and 5 experts in OSS Asenovgrad

 **Communities supported since set-up:** 69 (27 new communities created)

BACKGROUND

The One-Stop-Shop (OSS) initiative in Asenovgrad was established by the municipality in 2020-2021 to address the need for enhancing energy efficiency in large multifamily residential buildings, particularly those with more than 36 dwellings owned by individual owners. The reason for this focus was that these constellations face a challenge in triggering collective actions for energy refurbishment of the entire building. The initial financing for the OSS was secured by the municipality by participating as a pilot in the H2020 UP-STAIRS project.



The OSS started its public-facing activities after approximately 1.5 years of preparatory work, with services starting in June 2022. The journey involved initial conceptualization, adjusting to local circumstances, and establishing an organizational structure within the OSS that encompassed financial, administrative, and technical functions.

Overcoming citizen scepticism was a challenge at the beginning, as many were unfamiliar with this form of support. Despite a well-executed promotional campaign, some doubted the feasibility of receiving substantial assistance. However, as the first communities formed and construction projects gained momentum, positive outcomes spread through word-of-mouth (see more information in [section 4](#) of this guide).

CONCEPT

The Asenovgrad OSS facilitates homeowners to form owners' associations that act as Citizen Energy Communities (CEC). The availability of funding for refurbishment activities is a significant incentive that encourages action by the OSS team. Since the beginning of the one-stop-shop's activities, 69 buildings with 2 420 dwellings and 7 309 inhabitants have been supported in CEC establishment, among which 27 communities have already secured funding and are expected to commence the renovation works.

Case studies

The Asenovgrad OSS emphasizes the importance of implementing energy efficiency measures throughout entire buildings within energy communities. Moreover, it aligns its focus with the potential integration of RES in buildings such as solar panels and biomass-fuelled boilers although. At the time of writing, legislation for the establishment of Renewable Energy Communities is at the draft stage in the Parliamentary Commission on Energy and is expected to be voted in Parliament shortly.

Political commitment from the municipal council has been a crucial element for the success of the OSS. Furthermore, in the case of Asenovgrad, the fact that the staff members are public servants who understand the internal processes is considered an asset. The staff members were trained on the topics of energy communities and energy efficiency, as well as on economic and financing issues, and legal aspects of energy refurbishment in buildings at the beginning of the OSS' activities.

The challenge of financial constraints was particularly pronounced for communities in larger buildings, where initial funds posed difficulties. Acknowledging the presence of energy-poor households within these structures, the OSS underscored the importance of funding mechanisms to ensure equitable access to energy efficiency initiatives. The OSS suggests that it would be beneficial if municipal support prioritized energy-poor households, potentially offering staggered funding based on income levels. This targeted approach aids in achieving energy efficiency targets, benefiting both the municipality and its citizens.

The municipality maintains a register of all the energy communities created for multi-family buildings, as well as which ones already applied for funding.



Building before renovation ©Asenovgrad Municipality



Building after renovation ©Asenovgrad Municipality



ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Financial advice:** Support and review of the documents for funding; launching public procurement of energy service and refurbishment works of the building; undertaking financial reporting and control.
- **Organizational support:** Support emerging energy communities and strengthening them through the process of organization; support during the process of the legal body creation; providing and filling the necessary administrative documentation.
- **Technical support:** Facilitate the implementation of collective actions; understanding the technical and economic information of the energy audit; selection of contractors; performing investor's control.
- **Legal support:** Information on the creation of owners' associations; verifying the submitted documents; acceptance of an application for participation in the procedure; verification of the documentation presented by the association; carrying out public tenders regarding the selection of contractors on behalf of the Association of Owners.
- **Facilitation & mediation:** Mediation between citizens and contractors.



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North-West Croatia Regional Energy & Climate Agency (REGEA) | Croatia

 **Set-up:** The virtual energy communities OSS was set up in 2022

 **Main funding sources:** [EU SHAREs project](#)

 **Budget (2023):** n/a

 **Employees (2023):** Currently, REGEA staff are operating the OSS as part of the SHAREs project

 **Communities supported since set-up:** 3

BACKGROUND

The North-West Croatia Regional Energy and Climate Agency's (REGEA) activities with energy communities began with their participation in the [EU-funded SHAREs project](#) in September 2021. One of REGEA's objectives under this project was to develop a national one-stop-shop website for energy communities in Croatia, based on the WordPress template created by the SHAREs project.



CONCEPT

The virtual one-stop-shop is envisaged to operate at national level, since there is no regional differentiation of the legal framework in Croatia. At the time of writing the guide, the SHAREs project financed the staff and IT infrastructure maintenance costs for the OSS website.

The Croatian OSS is still in its initial stages and developing its full services offer. One of the needs REGEA has identified is direct support in setting up projects and investment concepts. According to REGEA, this support would be most effective if provided at local level; due to energy communities being a new concept, REGEA considers it easier to establish trust and realise the projects if the communities can interact with the experts in person.

One of the roles REGEA takes up is the facilitation of information exchanges and conversations between various stakeholders, including authorities, grid operators and citizens. The objective of this activity is to help create an understanding among relevant stakeholders of the barriers pertaining to energy communities, and find solutions for overcoming them.

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Inform stakeholders** at all stages – from citizens who are new to the subject of energy communities to existing communities aiming to set up new activities – about the functioning of energy communities, and the national and regional regulations and context they operate in.
- **Support new communities in setting up their legal structure and activities.** At the time of writing this guide, there were no energy communities established in Croatia. REGEA is taking care of the administrative steps and preparations on behalf of new energy communities, since they often are not yet able to prove the technical and financial capacity required by the regulator (to become a CEC according to Croatian law, a license to carry out the energy activity is required by the regulator).
- **Develop templates and guidance** for setting up contractual relations, energy sharing keys and other elements which can be replicated by CECs and RECs with different stakeholders.



Sustainable Energy Authority | Ireland

 **Set-up:** 2005 (2012 for the grants programme)

 **Main funding sources:** National government agencies

 **Grants administered since set-up:** €210 million

 **Employees (2023):** 9

 **Communities supported since set-up:** 790

BACKGROUND

Back in 2005, the Irish government set up the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) to provide support to energy communities. The motivation behind this initiative was to increase the uptake of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures whilst improving public acceptance and empowering communities. In 2012, the SEAI launched a financing scheme that would foster the take-up of renewable energy and community acceptance, whilst respecting the communities' need to take ownership and increase their autonomy.

Today, the SEAI has administered €210 million in grants between 2012 and 2023. It does this via three main programmes:

- [Sustainable Energy Communities Programme](#)
- [Renewable Electricity Support Scheme \(RESS\)](#)
- [Community Energy Grants](#)


ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Capacity-building:** SEAI organizes regular trainings for energy communities as well as information events and webinars. It further has a mentor programme which teams energy communities up with a community expert who will support them through their project journey.
- **Financing:**
 - SEAI provides 100% financing for energy communities to set up their [Energy Master Plan](#) (a strategic document which includes an assessment of the current situation, relevant technologies and solutions and project pipeline).
 - SEAI further offers [Community Energy Grants](#), which support energy efficiency community projects through capital funding, partnerships, and technical support for the upgrade of homes, community buildings and businesses across Ireland.



Agenzia per l'Energia e lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (AESS) | Italy

 **Set-up:** 1999

 **Main funding sources:** Local Authorities and EU/national/regional funding

 **Budget (2023):** €3 million

 **Employees (2023):** 35

 **Citizens supported since set-up*:** 40

BACKGROUND

The Agency for Energy and Sustainable Development (AESS) is an association founded in 1999 within the SAVE II European programme, on the initiative of the Municipality and Province of Modena, Modena Chamber of Commerce, and local. AESS is part of the European Network of Energy Agencies and the Italian Network of Energy Agencies RENAEL.

While primarily operating with public entities in Emilia Romagna, AESS extend their services to other regions, including Puglia, Veneto, and Lombardy. Members are mainly municipalities unions of municipalities provinces, social housing companies, universities, public entities in various capacities. AESS is registered with ANAC and is defined as a private law entity under public body supervision.



On the back of a new regional law promoting energy communities and collective self-consumption projects published by the Emilia Romagna region (where AESS is based) in 2022, AESS started to develop services for energy communities. The Emilia Romagna region plans to allocate at least [€12 million](#) from the European Rural Development Fund to supporting energy communities.

CONCEPT

AESS acts as one-stop-shop for municipalities and offers master plans for energy communities. These are based on public assets and profile electricity consumption of public buildings. AESS develop the Master Plans to understand how much energy produced by the plants on public buildings could be made available for self-consumption and how much to share with a community. This includes investment projections as well as legal guidance and informing about the benefits of participation in an energy community.

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Information:** AESS have a webpage dedicated to educating stakeholders about energy communities.
- **Project support:** AESS provides expertise on technical, legal and planning aspects of energy community projects.
- **Strategic planning:** AESS supports energy communities with the creation of Energy Master Plans. They are mainly preparing master plans for energy communities. At the moment, they have 40 ongoing projects to support energy communities on legal entity matters.

More information & contact:



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Energie Samen | Netherlands

 **Set-up:** 2018

 **Main funding sources:** National government

 **Budget (2023):** €4.87 million

 **Employees (2023):** 35 (+ 27 regular freelancers)

 **Citizens supported since set-up*:** 345

BACKGROUND

Energie Samen is a national umbrella organization of energy communities. The organization was founded in May 2018, merging together a number of actors who had been supporting the growth of energy cooperatives since as far back as 1979 (see image below) on different activities, and at a smaller scale. After the emergence of the European energy community definitions, Energie Samen decided to set up one overarching one-stop-shop to support the set-up and growth of energy community organizations and projects (moving beyond supporting only cooperatives). The idea is to provide one place where energy communities can find everything they need to do to successfully implement their projects.

CONCEPT

The idea is to provide support as close to the community as possible, and to ensure that the same quality of support is available to energy communities irrespective of where in the country they are based. The Netherlands has a [30 regions plan](#), which is one of the reasons why Energie Samen is trying to work as much as possible at the regional level. In some parts of the Netherlands, there are [regional or provincial organizations](#) in place who represent the one-stop-shop in their region. For all regions where there is no regional structure in place, Energie Samen supports energy communities from the national level.

In the Netherlands, the political context in the provinces can vary, as they have a high level of autonomy on how to carry out large-scale energy projects. The ideal set-up for the Netherlands, according to Energie Samen, would hence be to have regional or provincial structures in place in the entire country in order to be able to respond most effectively to those provincial particularities. This being said, most elements relevant to energy communities are applicable across the country in the Netherlands. For instance, applications for funding in one province can be used as an example to get funding in another, as some provinces have similar policies and funding opportunities. This is also true for exchanges with government at the local or regional level. The national-level OSS structure hence acts as a mediator, informing energy communities across the country. It further communicates challenges identified by the communities with policy-makers.



ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Administrative/organizational:** Support communities in the set-up of their legal entity and related organizational questions.
- **Financing:** Inform energy communities about funding programmes and financing schemes at national/regional levels, provide direct financing.
- **Insurance:** (see section 2.2 for further information).
- **IT support:** Membership management software, calculation tools.
- **Capacity-building:** Energie Samen organizes a training academy for energy communities on a regular basis (see section 2.6 for further information).
- **Support energy communities with the set-up and growth of their organisation:** Help with the creation of statutes, resolve legal issues that arise when a community starts a new activity, changing the organisational structure, help find experts to guide the process or make the necessary changes.
- **Deploy experts to energy communities** (see [section 2.4](#) for further information).
- **Advocacy services:** Share relevant information with policy-makers to support the creation of supporting frameworks.



Fundación Asturiana de la Energía (FAEN) | Spain

 **Set-up:** 2001

 **Main funding sources:** [IDAE](#), [Asturias Ecological transition Ministry](#), EU [LIFE](#) & [Horizon](#) programmes

 **Budget (2023):** €130 000

 **Employees (2023):** 14

 **Citizens supported since set-up*:** 10

BACKGROUND

The [Asturias Regional Energy Agency](#) (FAEN) has played a significant role in promoting renewable energy sources and energy communities in the region for more than two decades. FAEN initially worked on individual PV systems and evolved to include collective self-consumption initiatives. In recent years, FAEN expanded its efforts to provide technical, financial, and administrative support for the development of energy communities. The energy agency applied for a grant by the Spanish Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving ([Instituto para la Diversificación y el Ahorro de la Energía, IDAE](#)) to set up energy community transition offices (see Section 3 of this guide for more information).



CONCEPT

FAEN employs 14 experts overall, who support all activities of the energy agency. The energy community office employs two full-time experts (one legal profile and one administrative profile) for a duration of three years. FAEN plans to allocate two of their technical experts with experience in PV dimensioning, energy system management and collective self-consumption to support the technical activities of the energy communities office as and when needed.

FAEN's plan for the energy community office is to start supporting a number of lighthouse projects, in order to further refine its structure and service offer. Asturias being characterized by the relevance of rural areas with established local communities, FAEN is supporting and exploring possible collaborations with these local and rural communities to promote energy projects (energy efficiency, solar PV or biogas, among others) in their activities.

The agency tries to establish direct contact with all relevant stakeholders in an energy community, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the local situation. They further work with the relevant Councils, installers and system operators, in order to help facilitate an efficient process for the set-up of energy community projects.



Case studies



©FAEN

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED


- **Technical:** project planning, technology dimensioning, sizing facilities, advice on payback plans (with or without storage facilities), grid connection support.
- **Financial:** provide an overview of funding opportunities and financing schemes for energy communities at regional and national levels, develop business models for energy communities, develop financing schemes for a variety of set-ups.
- **Legal:** help energy communities and collective self-consumption projects navigate the regulatory context and administrative processes, support communities in setting up their legal form.



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Osona Energia Coop | Spain

 **Set-up:** 2022

 **Main funding sources:** [Singulars project](#) promoted by the social economy program of the department of business and employment of the Catalan Government,

 **Budget (2023):** €130 000

 **Employees (2023):** 2

 **Citizens supported since set-up*:** 10

BACKGROUND

Osona Energía Cooperativa (OECOop) is a second-level energy cooperative that acts as a one-stop-shop to energy communities in the Spanish region of Osona, and extends its services to all of Catalonia. It was set up by four energy communities in 2022, with the active support of the local energy agency, and now comprises 24 communities overall.

Previous to the establishment of Osona Energia, the Local Energy Agency of Osona (Agència Local de l'Energia d'Osona; ALEO) was supporting energy communities in the area, and applied to a call for applications by the Spanish Department for Renewable Energy (IDAE) to set up an energy community office (one-stop-shop). The regional agency and the local authorities in Osona had been working closely with the citizens in the area, which they cite as one of the key factors to their success to date. It allowed the co-creation of the services with the communities, and goes all the way to deciding together on the quota that will be charged for the services in the future.



CONCEPT

At the beginning of the energy community office, the energy agency took the lead. Now that the first communities are looking at project development and governance questions, Osona Energia is taking the lead over the management of the services to energy communities. Currently, the energy agency and OECOop are cooperating side-by-side to support energy communities.

OECOop currently works with a subsidy from the [Singulars project](#) promoted by the social economy program of the department of business and work of the Catalan Government, which allowed them to hire one person full-time and one person part-time. The OSS is considering subcontracting experts for technical activities on a needs basis. One of the main challenges OECOop faced in its set-up phase was finding the right team structure. The resource needs are estimated at 4-5 experts, the collaboration with the local agency helps close the current resource gap to a certain extent. The local energy agency is not part of the board, however the technical expert from the energy agency currently participates in the decision-making processes at OECOop.

The services are currently provided for free for energy communities due to the subsidies. This is important as the communities OECOop supports are all in the starting phase, and don't have the means to finance expert support. In the long term, OECOop plans to monetize the services they offer to energy communities in order to become financially independent. The idea is to develop services in collaboration with more advanced communities (pioneers) in order to be able to help a broader group of communities. The services would then be provided on a fee-for-service basis, rather than asking an annual quote.

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Administrative support:** OECoop provides accounting and tax management services for energy communities, contract models for projects, data protection policy.
- **IT support:** OECoop helps energy communities set up the Odoo software for automated membership management in their community, and provides communications software.
- **Technical support:** Assessment of project scope, feasibility studies (for collective self-consumption projects in particular), as well as shared e-mobility projects for instance.
- **Financing support:** Devise financing concepts in collaboration with other entities (i.e. coop57) to help energy communities access financing.

Potential future activities

- **Insurances:** OECoop is working on setting up an insurance scheme for civil responsibility and for projects for energy communities in the future.





#EUenergycommunities

The Energy Communities Repository is an initiative of the European Commission.

