

# THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ENERGY

NEWSLETTER NO 1

JANUARY 2020



Community energy is an important and difficult topic. There is a need for knowledge, equipment, appropriate laws; but – above all – a need for the ability of cooperation among people from different social environment, backgrounds and with different views. Civic competences, environmental awareness and entrepreneurship are also necessary.

Today, we need energy transformation more than ever. We (citizens) must free ourselves from thinking that it is someone else's responsibility – that decision makers, politicians

and corporations will do it. While we all breath the same air, many think that they are not affected by the problem. There are countries in Europe whose citizens themselves are engaged in energy production - e.g. Denmark and Germany have been building energy independence for years, including through community energy.

In every country in the world – in the face of a dramatically changing situation - knowledge and tools are needed to enable local communities to associate in cooperatives; financing of local investments was ensured

and possibilities of building cooperation networks were created. There is an urgency for Actions that can stop climate change. Energy transformation, establishing cooperatives and community energy are answers to the challenges of modern civilization.

The “Power of community energy” project is a joint initiative of four NGOs: Poland (SIE), Turkey (TROY), Germany (WECF) and Denmark (INFORSE). For two years, the partners will meet, exchange experiences, learn from each other, learn about best practices.



#### Partners

Poland: The Social Ecological Institute  
Germany: Women Engage for Common Future  
Denmark: INFORSE\_Europe  
Turkey: The TROY Environmental Association



*A project in the frame of Erasmus+ Action 2 Co-operation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Adult Education Strategic Partnership*

*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein*

## Partners

### Poland – SIE ([www.sie.org.pl](http://www.sie.org.pl))

**The Social Ecological Institute** is the project coordinator. The organization has 30 years of expertise in inspiring and supporting grassroots socio-public partnerships working for sustainable development.

SIE is the co-founders and member of the Association of organizations in Polish Green Network ([www.zielonasiec.pl](http://www.zielonasiec.pl)), a nationwide public benefit organization associating ecological organizations from the largest Polish cities.

The goal of Polish Green Network is to develop in harmony with nature, with civic support for sustainable development, by creating mechanisms for social control over the spending of public funds, increasing consumer impact on product quality and global corporation policy, as well as supporting the sustainable development of countries of the Global South and civil society in Eastern Europe.

One of the projects implemented by Polish Green Network is the Climate Program.

The organizations associated in the network initiated the "More than energy" movement - a broad social coalition that works to develop community energy.

The coalition connects local governments, institutions, NGOs and private individuals convinced that Poland needs to improve energy efficiency and the development of distributed energy based on renewable sources.

The creation of the "More than energy" movement is a response to the public support enjoyed by solutions related to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. Opinion polls show that over 88 percent of Poles would like an increase of investment in renewable energy. By participating in the "More than energy" movement, anyone interested in energy cooperatives can join activities aimed at convincing politicians to create solutions that support its development. The movement is already supported by over 150,000 Poles.

### Turkey – TROY (<http://troyacevre.org>)

**The TROY Environmental Association** was established in 2009 to primarily strengthen local communities in climate protection activities. The organization is based in Çanakkale. TROY has been organizing international conferences on energy cooperatives for four years, with Guests and experts from all over Europe. Up to date, around 1,000 people from 24 countries have participated in them and attended 56 expert lectures. Most importantly, half of the participants were women.

In May 2017, eight people, members of TROY, founded the first energy cooperative in Turkey. It is managed by three women! This pioneering action paved the way for further cooperatives - in two years ten cooperatives were established in different regions of Turkey.

The TROY team has developed a handbook on energy cooperatives. It explains in eleven points how to set up an energy cooperative; what are the environmental and climate benefits of energy transformation; what profit members of the cooperative can count on by producing electricity and selling surpluses of generated energy.

The association also advises groups of citizens and municipalities interested in establishing a cooperative; organizes workshops throughout Turkey, to which it also invites representatives of local and central administration, including representatives of ministries. TROY also works with scientific institutes, e.g. Bilgi University. Every support voice counts, because the matter it fights for requires fast and specific action. Time is running out.





## Germany – WECF ([www.wecf.eu](http://www.wecf.eu))

**Women Engage for Common Future** (formerly known as Women in Europe for Common Future), is a non-governmental organization founded in 1994 after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. WECF Germany is part of the international WECF network that consists of over 150 women's and civil society organizations implementing projects in 50 countries with a dedication to a gender just and healthy planet for all. The German team has extensive experience in management, consulting and policy support, working towards transformative gender equality in interconnection with climate justice, sustainable energy, less toxic waste, safe water & sanitation for all.

WECF participates in the negotiations of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, UNEP GC and CSD, is a co-founder and member of the Women and Gender Constituency, closely cooperates with CAN Europe and EEB (European Environment Office), CAN EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) as well as with national and local NGOs and communities.

WECF ensures that the voices of women and marginalized groups are heard at the policy table and combines this with local actions, such as needs assessments and trainings for renewable energy as well as piloting the construction and local management of decentralised technical solutions, e.g. PV, biogas and briquettes in Uganda and Ethiopia. In Eastern Europe WECF develops with local partners solar thermal, insulation technologies and photovoltaic concepts with a focus on rural women. Energy communities and energy cooperatives are a feasible instrument for production and consumption of renewable energy in rural regions.

In Georgia WECF established 5 energy cooperatives, in which 40% of the members are female, in order to locally distribute solar water heaters. In 2015, the application submitted by WECF for the project "Switch to sun – live in comfort" was shortlisted in the list of the ten best energy projects of the prestigious EUSEW Sustainable Energy Award. In these projects, great importance is attached to maintaining gender parities - the goal is to achieve gender balance in decision making positions and in management; to strengthen the role of women, increase their knowledge and skills in managing and influencing decisions related to climate and environmental protection.

## Danmark – INFORSE-Europe

(<http://www.inforse.org/europe>)

**International Network For Sustainable Energy-Europe** (Inforse-Europe) is a network of independent non-profit non-governmental organizations. It was founded in 1994 after INFORSE, a global network, was formed at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. The aim is to work for sustainable energy solutions to protect the environment, and to reduce poverty. INFORSE-Europe has participated on several UN Climate Conferences, where lobby together with other global and national NGOs. INFORSE-Europe cooperates with European NGOs on EU Ecodesign, Coolproducts, community power, EUSEW and EU Green Week. INFORSE-Europe joined Vision Statement on Community Power in 2019 together with 11 other networks and organisations including REScoop.eu, FoE Europe, ICLEI, and EREF.

INFORSE-Europe has 85 members from 35 European countries. INFORSE-Europe and its Danish members have a long experience in citizen engagement in renewable energy and energy efficiency, and also have a keen interest in further developing the local engagement in citizens' energy. The Danish members have held a key role in the energy transformation in Denmark and promotion of community energy. In Denmark citizen's engagement in energy have been an important driver for introduction of renewable energy from windpower cooperatives for local district heating and for individual solar PV installations.

INFORSE-Europe is a member of the European Community Power Coalition. INFORSE-Europe and its members are the catalyst for community energy projects, with experience in supporting the development of sustainable energy in local communities. Denmark is an excellent example of how to conduct an energy transformation in a short time, including with help from the country's citizens. It is thanks to people's environmental awareness and determination, commitment and joint action that Denmark will soon become a country independent of fossil fuels in electricity and heating. One example is the municipality of Ringkøbing, which will become energy self-sufficient this year. It is possible thanks to many wind turbines including three at Hvide Sande Nordhavn - its owner is the local community and the turbines will provide approximately 45,000 MWh of electricity per year.

Today, Denmark has over 250 wind farms, 110 solar farms, over 300 local heating networks belonging to energy cooperatives, and more than 20 eco-communities (Eco-villages), many of which have their own heating systems.

In the discussion, Project partners emphasized that an increasing number of institutions and NGOs believe that energy supplies must be environmentally and socially sustainable; they must use 100% of renewable sources, be owned and controlled by citizens, local communities or municipalities.

This is as obvious as climate change and the fact that there is no Planet B on which we can live. The sooner this is understood by policy makers, politicians, corporations and indifferent to the biggest problem of our civilization - the greater the chance to stop the inevitable process of degradation of our planet.

The next meetings of the project partners held this year are: Frankfurt in April, Denmark in August. In Frankfurt we will participate in the European conference on community energy. and in Denmark at the INFORSE-Europe international seminar at the “Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy”.

