



ERP-Gathering Kielce

Number of the workshop: 16

Name of the workshop: **Energy communities**

Our responses to challenges of dealing with energy poverty in rural areas:

- Look to energy communities as a way of dealing with rising energy prices and supply problems related to electricity and heating.
- Recognise that the focus on electric vehicles in many countries (eg. Iceland, Sweden) is driving up demand, which is typically provided by centralised & corporate-controlled energy production & distribution systems
- Small scale (renewable) energy production and distribution is not favoured in most EU member states.
- Overemphasis on solar/photovoltaics, which is overloading depreciated grids in many countries (eg. Hungary, Poland)
- Ensure community engagement and co-ownership of solutions (incl. energy communities) to overcome local opposition to wind turbines and other forms of renewables seen as problematic.
- Recognise that coal/wood is still the main heating source in many rural areas.
- Overcome regulatory barriers that block renewable investment by local communities (eg. in planning regulations, heritage conservation)
- Count the real social, economic and environmental costs of centralised vs decentralised energy solutions.
- Recognise that big energy companies set the rules, too often excluding rural communities and not seeing them as potential partners or co-creators of solutions

Our proposals for governments & EU

- Campaign for greater energy awareness in rural areas and invest in animateurs of collective prosumer initiatives focused on heat & electrical energy
- Accelerate transposing of energy community directives into national legislation and programming of EU member states (many member states have no provision for energy community – e.g. Czech Republic), ensuring that local communities can be co-owners
- Assess real social, economic and environmental costs to rural communities of energy production/consumption over the long run.
- Pressure energy companies (producers & distributors) to be more collaborative (through policy and regulations) by forcing them to see rural communities as partners for energy solutions (not just customers or problems because of their opposition to investments).

Good ideas, practices, processes

- Croatia has 10 energy cooperatives. Focus on price/cost issues rather than ideology or good intentions. Most effective way of raising awareness is “organically” by word of mouth & learning from the experience of others (seeing is believing)
- France has 2000+ energy communities, including an umbrella network. Key is to inform about benefits (saving money e.g.). Key need is ‘people’ time to get rural residents mobilised.
- Poland has enacted legislation that enables energy cooperatives as local energy markets serving cooperative members
- Germany has many energy cooperatives and recently introduced into legislation a definition of energy community – all with a focus on feed-in tariffs