



OÖ Energiesparverband (ESV): Empowering Energy Communities in Upper Austria

Enabler

Energy Communities in Upper Austria

The Renewable Energy Directive 2018 introduced a new concept: **Renewable Energy Communities (RECs), where citizens, SMEs and public bodies are allowed to produce, consume, store, sell and share renewable energy** in local proximity without an electricity retailer.

Austria was among the first Member States to fully transpose the relevant articles of the Directive, enabling the establishment of RECs in 2021. In Austria, **RECs benefit from reduced grid fees for electricity shared between the members.** They have to form a legal entity, in most cases this is an **association (which is very easy to set up)**. There are no bureaucratic requirements (other than the interaction with the DSO) for starting and running a REC. Many of the Energy Communities are developed and managed by volunteers.

In Upper Austria, Energy Communities have seen a very strong uptake. There are now over 800 energy communities with more than 36,000 members, illustrating the practical implementation of community-based energy sharing across the region. The regional energy agency - **OÖ Energiesparverband (ESV) - has played a central role in this development through its dedicated One Stop Shop (OSS) for Energy Communities.**



ESV's Role

Recognising the complexity of establishing and operating RECs, **the agency offers holistic support addressing technical, regulatory, financial, and organisational challenges.** This includes **one-to-one advice sessions (over 1,600 to date), workshops, training events, and public information activities** that help local actors understand and navigate the legal and practical aspects of Energy Community projects. The agency has also successfully advocated for regional financial support to help communities with preparatory costs, a programme that was subsequently adopted at the national level.

Through these efforts, ESV is facilitating the emergence of Energy Communities in Upper Austria and helping to embed citizen involvement in the broader regional energy transition, supporting decentralised renewable energy generation and local engagement in sustainable energy systems.



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Challenges

Establishing an Energy Community is challenging on many fronts: from regulatory, organisational and technical issues to the interaction with the DSOs.



Reasons for Success

- **High interest in local solutions** and energy independence.
- **Attractive electricity prices** due to reduced fees/taxes and very low operating costs (many are managed by volunteers).
- **Strong volunteer spirit** of those developing and operating the RECs.
- Relatively **simple administrative processes** (compared to most other countries) and cooperation with DSOs.
- PV boom.
- Facilitation in ESV's "One-Stop-Shop" with 1,600+ **individual advice sessions** and 60+ events.



ESV's Approach:

ESV strongly cooperated with the relevant stakeholders in the region and on national levels and built up a strong know-how base which allows to support Energy Communities in all aspects.



Contact Info



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Co-funded by the European Union under project ID 1012128. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA.