



Good Energy Summit: Conclusions and Recommendations

Island of Vis, 2nd to 5th of May 2018

INTRODUCTION

Good Energy Summit took place on Island of Vis, as third in the row of our thematic events, after Krk in 2014 and Kaštel Lukšić in 2016, intended for everyone who views the development of renewable energy sources as a chance to develop local communities and create a positive change in the society. **Good energy** encompasses new economic models and practices that through ownership and use of renewable energy sources improve quality of life in local communities and are based on the principles of fairness, democracy and concern for people and the environment.

At the conference, we gathered more than 80 local and European experts, researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, social entrepreneurs, innovators, activists and enthusiasts who deal with RES and community energy.

Aim of this conference was sharing experiences and inspiring individuals to dare to approach various environmental, climate, social and political challenges in an innovative way, to contribute to fair energy transition – towards renewable energy sources in hands of citizens and local communities. As the result, we here present Recommendations for the development and promotion of community energy.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

In three and a half days there were more than 30 lecture and panel discussions, and more than 10 successful projects of cities, municipalities and energy cooperatives have been presented at the conference as the best projects of good energy. Overview of days and topics covered is given below:

DAY 1 – day's topic: Energy sustainable communities

Within the first day we discussed energy independence of island and the role of cities in the energy transition. Knowledge networks - such as Energy Cities, which support

European within the initiative Covenant of Mayor - are key to sharing experiences and initiating local initiatives in Croatian cities and municipalities. Innovative tools for the development of sustainable communities were also presented - civic crowdfunding (ZEZ / UNDP Alt Fin Lab) and blockchain technology (PowerLedger).

Panel 1: How can islands become energy independent?

Panel 2: Role of local authorities in the cities' energy transition

DAY 2 – day's topic: Energy poverty

The theme of the second day was energy poverty, fighting it at both national and local level. Our guests from Slovenia (Focus), Germany (Caritas), France (Enercoop, Energie Solidaire) and the United Kingdom (Robin Hood Energy) presented their solutions. The main tools in the fight against energy poverty are a network of energy consultants, and non-profit urban power supply utility.

Panel 3: Fighting against energy poverty on national level

Panel 4: Cities fighting energy poverty

Panel 5: Energy as a Common Good

DAY 3 – day's topic: Community energy

The third day was marked by models of civic energy and opportunities for their development in Croatia and the region. The models of energy cooperatives within the European federation of renewable energy cooperatives (REScoop.eu), and Energy4All from the United Kingdom, were presented. We discussed ways of boosting the solar energy market in Croatia, and also presented the first initiative in Croatia which will enable citizens to invest in a specific RES project through crowdfunding, PV plant on the roof of the Technology Park and Development Center Križevci - project by ZEZ „Sunny roofs of Križevci“.

Panel 6: How to bring more power to local communities?

Panel 7: How to boost development of solar based on the market principles?

Panel 8: Unlocking potential of community energy in the Balkans

DAY 4 – day's topic: Good energy & good economy

On the closing day, participants were linking good energy models and good economy principles for sustainable local development. Examples of building a good ecosystem in Europe, as well as the Adriatic Plastic Challenge program, were presented in order to educate and inspire to seek solutions to the major waste and plastics problem in the Adriatic.

Panel 9: How to build a good energy ecosystem?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The participants had the opportunity to discuss the models of good energy through 9 panel discussions, and some of the main messages and conclusions are as follows:

- **Good energy** is renewable energy that involves citizens and society in production, not just in consumption. It is the energy that brings added value to the local community through new jobs and reducing energy poverty, in order to create energy independent, resilient and safe communities.
- **Energy transition** towards renewables is moving faster in those countries where citizens and local communities are actively involved in the development and implementation of local energy initiatives.
- Almost all cities in the region are **energy-poor** and investing in energy efficiency and renewable resources can create opportunities for new development projects. Small decentralized heat systems that use local biomass instead of oil are great investment opportunities and good demonstration examples, especially in rural areas.
- **City and municipalities** are under-qualified in energy expertise, and citizens are not sufficiently informed to engage and initiate problem solving. The obstacle is centralized decision-making and budget management – lack of local government autonomy.
- Collaboration of cities and suppliers is a model that works in Europe. Sharing experiences with other, more successful small European cities (for example, through a network of Energy Cities) can help develop models of **local supply** in Croatia.
- **Solar energy** becomes a commercial reality, profitable even without state incentives, and is a good leverage for further development of the OIE sector. It is important that Croatian citizens and the local economy benefit from the investments - RES represents economic opportunity for citizens, energy cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Cooperation with cities and municipalities, **action at the local level** for the development of community energy in Croatia and the region, is the key. By launching and realizing good local projects, we have the opportunity to create our own definition of community energy and to design models that are applicable in the local context and for the needs of local community.
- **Citizens' trust** in their local community and representatives of public authorities is crucial for the development of community energy models, especially for the development of energy cooperatives and crowdfunding of local projects.
- It is important to create synergy, to act in the common interest of all stakeholders, and continue to advocate community energy. A **strong collaboration and good communication** should be established between citizens, cooperatives, local government, educational and research institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the development and promotion of community energy in the Republic of Croatia were developed as one of the results of the Good Energy Summit. The recommendations are intended for all stakeholders who should contribute to fair energy transition: local and national authorities, power companies, citizens, energy cooperatives, civil society and local entrepreneurs.

Recommendations for local governments – cities, municipalities, islands

- Create a long-term vision for decarbonisation. A good example is the island of Krk which is implementing all the activities according to the Strategy for the island with zero CO₂ emissions.
- Invest and encourage municipal and citizen co-ownership of renewable energy sources because this will keep in huge financial resources that were previously spent on energy imports and fossil fuels. This means investing in new jobs in the local community and socio-economic development. A good example is the City of Pleternica, which owns a small hydro power plant.
- Promote participatory forms of ownership and creation of public policies. A good example is the City of Pazin which has launched a model of participative budgeting for small communal actions.
- Launch education programme for energy advisors for energy-poor households which can create local jobs through new employment and self-employment opportunities. A good example is the City of Velika Gorica.
- Encourage models for financing renewable energy through crowdfunding and crowdsourcing by the citizens themselves, while they also initiate projects they want and need in their local community.
- Enable citizens to invest in renewable energy sources in public buildings. A good example is the City of Križevci, where in cooperation with ZEZ they initiated a PV project to be financed by citizens through micro-loans,
- Create models of ownership and management of renewable energy sources that are linking public authorities with civil society, where they create added value and invested funds remain in the local community.
- Join EU networks such as Energy Cities and Covenant of Mayors and replicate their good practices.
- Develop and encourage developing of public energy supply companies as it enables non-profit supply and lower energy cost for households. A good example is the City of Nottingham in the UK.
- Include measures to combat energy poverty in local energy and climate plans.
- Use available financing tools and EU funds to invest in renewable energy on islands and coastal areas.

Recommendations for national government

- Include models of community energy and citizens involvement in renewables into the energy and climate strategies that are being drafted.
- Launch a national program to combat energy poverty through a network of energy advisors for energy-poor households, developed based on the experiences from Germany (Caritas) and Slovenia (Focus).
- Energy cooperatives need to be recognized as social enterprises and need easier access to funding from EU and national funds.
- Create a more favorable environment for energy cooperatives through changes in tax policy.
- Create all the prerequisites for the development of market-based solar energy. It is suggested to introduce net metering with annual calculations (as in Slovenia) or virtual net metering (as in Greece).
- Money collected through solidarity funds should be directed towards investing in renewable sources and energy efficiency instead of one-time financial assistance and separate measures.

Recommendations for power companies

- Build partnerships that involve local community in financing and ownership of renewable energy projects and / or establishing local suppliers. This could also involve energy cooperatives and / or local authorities.

Recommendations for small investors in RES – citizens, energy cooperatives, civil society and small businesses

- Mobilize citizens through energy cooperatives and use available financing instruments (grants and loans from national and EU funds) – following examples from Scotland and England where local communities are gathered in form of energy cooperatives, to co-own and manage local renewable energy sources.
- Invest in renewable energy sources through crowdfunding (e.g. micro-loans) or cooperative model. A good example is the announced project Sunny roofs of Križevci, that will enable citizens to invest in a PV plant via crowdfunding, for the first time in Croatia.