



International Conference

Good Energy and Economy/REScoops and
Local Authorities: transforming communities
through collaboration



INTRO

An overview of the conference “Good Energy and Economy/REScoops and Local Authorities: transforming communities through collaboration” taking place from 30th May to 1st July in Zagreb, organised by REScoop.eu, RIPESS, ZEZ (Green Energy Cooperative) and ZMAG (Green Network of Activists Group) that gathered representatives from more than 140 European cooperatives, companies, organisations, public bodies, policy makers, innovators, enthusiasts, institutes, NGO sector, universities, social entrepreneurs, activists and media.

The aim of the conference was to gather a wide range of partner organisations and stakeholders, more precisely 20 leading energy cooperatives from across the Europe, as well as 10 representatives from the EU cities and the Western Balkans, and many international experts in the fields of renewable energy, good economy, cooperative practices, policy making and bottom-up approach.

Overview of the programme

During three days of the conference in Zagreb participants had an opportunity to partake in the programme with 27 speakers, panelists and workshop facilitators.

At the conference 20 leading energy cooperatives from all over Europe were present, as well as 10 representatives from the EU cities and the Western Balkan region in order to find new ways of comprehending the current state, over hundred local and European experts, researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, social entrepreneurs, innovators, activist and enthusiast involved in civic energy, social and solidarity economy, food-based sovereignty, the development of energy-efficient communities, and energy-based models of different backgrounds, all of which share the same goal – to bring positive social changes.

The focus of this year’s conference was new economy models and practices from 10 EU member states that would showcase how energy cooperatives and other citizens’ initiatives collaborate with local authorities to realize projects and the benefits that it altogether brings to the community.

The conference has gathered numerous guests within the **REScoop network** – a European federation of renewable energy cooperatives with over 1,500 members and from European network of solidarity economies – **RIPESS** bringing together over 40 organizations from across Europe who are involved in developing the economy for good

purposes alike to employees, local communities, the environment, ecosystems and future generations.

The first day

Energy Remunicipalisation

Panelists:

Stefan Taschner, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen; Tim Taylor, EIT Climate KIC; Ian Turner, Energy Cities; Ivana Rogulj, DOOR; Lavinia Steinfort, Transnational Institute

Moderator: Toni Vidan, Zelena akcija

The roundtable has gathered diverse presenters around the topic of Re-Municipalisation with significant attention of the media and public, and has been, as Toni Vidan, the moderator started in his introduction “the smartest moment to organise that sort of the panel in order to see where all energies will be focused after the European elections”.

Conclusions:

Participants had an opportunity to discuss about diverse models and possibilities for creating new horizons in the areas of new energy and new economy:

- Democratization of public bodies with all possible supporting infrastructure;
- The necessity of participative practices between cooperatives and municipalities in constant dialogue;
- Mapping of good practices in order to target good stakeholders with an aim to create better environments for growing the users' council bodies;
- Better investment strategies in order to grow enhanced market for renewables;
- Re-municipalisation has to make an impact not only on the energy sector but on waste distribution, transport, food and economy in large scope, so these areas go hand in hand with democratization of the society;
- Fostering the prosperous, inclusive and climate resilient societies with a circular economy that is building societal prosperity, inclusivity and resilience alongside with mitigation;
- Using the municipal momentum, collaboratives communities, smarter systems, collective momentum of the social processes and capital alignment for creating better solutions;
- Mutual work with EU bodies as a strategic pillar how cities can get back renewable energy communities.

The second day

Welcome & Introduction

Dirk Vansintjan, REScoop.eu; Zoran Kordić, Green Energy Cooperative (ZEZ); Dražen Šimleša, Green Network for Activist Groups (ZMAG); Roberto Morea, Transform Europe

The intro session was dedicated to key topics the conference will thematize. Dirk Vansintjan invited all participants to take active part in co-creating the program with mutual participation, whilst Roberto Morea emphasized the importance of citizen participation in the topic of the commons. Nowadays, economy must change in the most democratic way, making both a shift and change on two levels: societal path and environmental problems by building an increasing network of good economy. On this way we are building Europe.

Zoran Kordić made a recap on the beginnings of the Green Energy Cooperative-ZEZ and his visit to the REScoop conference in 2013, after he co-funded with his peers from UNDP Croatia the cooperative and started the adventure on citizen communities and renewable energies.

Dražen Šimleša has described the process of organising such a complex conference with so many stakeholders as organisers, on this way creating a paradigm on good economy and good energy interlaced together by many sectors that have to work together on similar projects.

World Café

Participants: Dirk Vansintjan, REScoop.eu; Jason Nardi, RIPESS network; Francine Mestrum, Transform Europe

Moderators: Vaiva Indilaite and Sara Tachelet, REScoop.eu

Conclusions:

Panelists discussed on how renewable cooperative can help in the energy sector and the conditions of changing the system by cooperatives. The participants concluded that we are facing energy transition from centralized fossil-based industries to renewables, that could be followed to decentralised system of decision making, giving us a unique chance to take make change, something that is not so obvious to all of the Europeans. We should not grasp this chances that Europe is offering, meaning that goods could be as local as possible with finding a balance with a global economy. In order to transform Europe we have to transform the economy and society. To create a system that takes care about the society, that makes a significant change in the society. Nowadays there are inspirational solutions that are not motivated by the market but are working for the communities, which are re-localizing economy on systematic way with rethought practical and financial side.

There are several European networks with their own currency created in order to build a market where all citizens and cooperatives could work together. We have many trends on how producers of goods and its consumers are working jointly together not only for economic benefit but social benefit too, like the including vulnerable groups like the migrants, special needs in collaboration with care services and supply chains. There is a big discussion taking place now everywhere on how we can create alternative markets which are at the same time mainstream and bring the power to the people, to its users. The possibilities on the energy market nowadays seems to be endless and Europe has to use this position. The first big shift should be made through education, the second shift is made on political level and by advocacy. Alternative economies are taking into consideration all of the above-mentioned forms working on adaptation to new circumstances and possibilities, as well to social change. The amount we have to contribute to make a change should be great and stabile, so we need a system change in people's' minds, societal and holistic change with an aim to create conditions for sustainable growth. To summarize in one sentence, citizens must have the access to the grid.

Pecha Kucha

How can local authorities (including cities and municipalities) work with citizen energy cooperatives to accelerate the energy transition at the local level?

Presenters: Maëlle Guillou, Enercoop (FR); Erik Christiansen, EBO (DK); Mario Rajn, Grad Križevci (CRO); Siward Zomer, De Windvogel (NL); Mark Lumley, Energy4All (UK); Nestor Ruiz, Center for Environment (BIH); Nuri Palmada and Som Energia (ES).

Conclusions:

The PechaKucha programme gave to the audience the possibility to delve into individual cooperative projects across the Europe, as well as to ask various questions on their respective projects. All represented countries have developed strong cooperative based ecosystems as well as economic environment within they could be easily developed and re-adapt according to the project's needs in each city. They also presented their business models, so that the local audience might be inspired with new ideas. Beside the fact that this module presented the best models of practice cases in EU, it also gave an opportunity to new initiatives to present their projects which are currently on hold for various reasons.

12.30-13.45 Panel discussion - Collaborations between local authorities and REScoops as seen from an EU and Balkan perspective

Panelists:

Jean-Claude Simon, New Trends in Society/Nouvelles Tendances de la Société;
Tijana Šimek, REGEA; Thomas Mitscke, GIZ Bosnia and Herzegovina; Dirk Vansintjan, REScoop.eu; Ian Turner, Energy Cities; Zoran Kordić, Green Energy Cooperative - ZEZ;

Ana Seke, UNDP Solar Cities initiative; Tim Taylor, EIT Climate KIC
Moderator: Vedran Horvat (Institute for Political Ecology)

The panel has brought on the stage impressive list of people discussing and presenting new collaborative practices in the regional and European context. The participants agreed upon the themes they mentioned on how economy must change in the more democratic way and why we have to change democratic and environmental problems altogether, working on changing the system, building increasing network and similar topics. By building Europe, we are fostering its strong position and influencing good economies all over the world.

Workshops

1. Successful implementation of climate and energy plans in collaboration with local energy cooperatives – experiences from CoM cities in Croatia and the Balkan Region

Practice cases: Slobodan Jerotić - Grad Šabac, Vedad Suljić - REIC - Sarajevo, Nestor Ruiz – Center for Environment - Mrkonjić Grad

Moderators: Maja Jurišić (REScoop.eu), Zoran Kordić, Deborah Hustić (Green Energy Cooperative)

Subgroups' conclusions:

1.1. Energy Cooperatives and Regional Networking

- Since energy cooperatives aren't well presented and perceived by the wider public, the common activities should focus on cross border networking and partnerships on different projects while communicating with governments, local representatives and population on what energy cooperatives are and what they represent should be undertaken in parallel process.
- Local population could be attracted by enforcing locally produced renewable energy and having benefits of cooperative membership. In addition, new EU directives could be used to reinforce creation and support of local energy cooperatives.

1.2. Finance aspects

- Finance is least of worries when it comes to cooperatives and funding green energy projects for various reasons.
- Existing coops should be aware of and careful about its own activities and partnerships that they make.
- Key ingredient to every cooperative is to get citizens to build, fund and talk about projects while sharing benefits inside of cooperative.

- Main finance vehicles were recognized: self finance, loans, match making, ESCO funding, EU funds.
- One specific financing body was identified: large stakeholder that could take large share of funding of such projects are pension funds that look at long term benefits of investing in such projects.

1.3. Capacity Building (Local communities and governments)

- Capacity Building should be made by enabling framework where cooperatives could show its influence while raising awareness.
- While going down the ladder NGOs are great carriers of capacity building for informing the citizens, but it should be a bottom-up approach.
- While communicating with lowest level local content is needed to get attention of citizens and provide examples of pilot projects.

2. From paper to practice: Using the EU Clean Energy Package to create enabling frameworks for citizens energy cooperatives and local authorities? – experiences from the COMPILE project

Moderators: Josh Roberts (REScoop.eu) and Boris Pavlin (Green Energy Cooperative - ZEZ)

Conclusions:

- Cooperatives should use examples of good practice to promote its work and new partnerships are often overlooked.
- Main benefit of being a part of cooperative is to have networking culture which should be shared in between the community of cooperatives.
- The gap between the cooperatives could be filled with specific and tailored roles of local government bodies (in example: mapping of public buildings, integration of citizen energy, communication, youth involvement and creating local incentives).
- Energy cooperatives should keep its main frame of non-profit; profits should be used to make new projects or to share it within community.
- What is lacking to build energy cooperatives? Trust and recognition

The Third Day

The third day was dedicated to workshops and the REScoop.eu General Assembly.

Four workshops took place, presenting new practices in the following areas:

1. Workshop on new improvements on the REScoop.eu Charter
2. Workshop on the services developed by REScoop.eu: The Mobility Factory, REScoop MECISE, Energy Savings

3. Innovative ways to effectively engage with your members

4. Virtual Power Plants (VPP) – what are they and how can they work for you?

The workshop gave a great overview on creating a portfolio for cooperatives wanting to use aggregation tools in order to plan, predict and strategically analyse the data for their solar or wind power plants. On this way it is possible to redistribute the overall production of energy and to plan several scenarios in case of the big gaps within variables while producing energy.

General conclusions:

- Enhancing citizen participation and community engagement through diverse forms of collaborative practices and legal bodies - cooperatives, SME, start-ups, local communities, etc.,
- Co-creation of all included sides must be a prerogative for future actions,
- Cooperatives assisting citizens in the development, investment and use of renewable energy sources,
- Education as a necessary tool to get the citizens interested into various areas of renewable energies and resources,
- Mainstreaming the topics of cooperative practices, renewable energies (solar and wind power, bio fuels), so that the citizens could recognise its interested in it,
- Access to finances for local municipalities in order to decentralize the system of distribution of the goods and decision making that could be healthier tailored according to the needs of the market and the community,
- EU policies and cities as a tool for creating better local ecosystems and sustainable stakeholders,
- Democratisation of our societies and joint policies to enable the processes of good economies in the context of renewable energy,
- Positive competition that do not excludes, but creates real and virtual territories for better networking and joint international projects,
- Networking within the existing frameworks, as well as creating new forms of cooperative engagements,
- Cooperatives as forerunners in developing concrete and sustainable solutions that can promote the development of local communities,
- Good economy as a prerogative for each cooperative member,
- Balanced benchmarking and measurements of the success,
- Mobilizing the citizens from bottom-up allowing them to own their resources of energy,
- Remunicipalisation on every level and in all possible areas, in example self-sustainable renewable energy, climate changes, circular economy, social rights,

- Energy cooperatives as recognized models of social innovation with an aim to create self-sustainable entrepreneurship companies,
- Inclusive societies based on strategic planning with supported EU policies,
- Investments into renewable energies from private, community, municipal, regional and national stakeholders,
- Supporting and promoting financing models of crowdinvesting and citizens engagement,
- Enhancing better procurement services for cooperatives and SME with an aim to strengthen the sector of renewable energies.