



Mobilising European Citizens to Invest in Sustainable Energy



This brochure sets out what the REScoop MECISE H2020 project has achieved.
More details can be found at www.rescoop-mecise.eu

OVERVIEW & GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

REScoop MECISE stands for 'Renewable Energy Cooperatives Mobilizing European Citizens to Invest in Sustainable Energy'. In this Horizon 2020 project, five renewable energy co-ops (REScoops) from four EU countries found innovative ways to accelerate renewable energy projects in European communities, whilst also promoting energy efficiency.

Why MECISE?

Renewable energy projects typically require large initial investments, this can make it harder for communities to develop their first projects. Ironically, established REScoops, can often find it easier to attract equity from citizens.

MECISE addressed this problem. Thanks to the project development grant, well established REScoops were able to boost their development efforts and get difficult sustainable energy investments launched more quickly.

By setting up innovative financing solutions, and by facilitating collaborations between citizens and municipalities, new REScoops have also got started. By making key investments that help projects generate a stable turnover, those citizen energy communities have in turn been able to hire staff and develop more locally embedded sustainable energy schemes. Meanwhile a new legal framework at the EU level has been established, helping citizens to accelerate the energy transition from the bottom up.

Taken together we believe this will significantly increase the success rate for citizen energy communities across Europe, as other communities are inspired by the REScoop MECISE project, and replicate the concepts and approaches.



What has REScoop MECISE achieved?

- over 110 million Euros of investments in renewable energy projects (wind, photovoltaics, biomass, hydro) and energy efficiency
- support to local municipalities in implementing their sustainable energy action plans (SEAPs) by taking energy efficiency measures in public buildings, helping them to accelerate the energy transition
- creation of a service to help citizens implement energy efficiency investments in their homes
- set-up of a dedicated cooperative investment vehicle that will act as a mutual to help citizen energy communities finance their renewables and energy efficiency projects
- recognition of citizens and citizen energy communities as legitimate actors in the energy transition in the new European Renewable Energy Directive and the Energy Market Directive

How has REScoop MECISE supported investments in sustainable energy?

The renewable energy projects developed under REScoop MECISE go beyond “business-as-usual”. REScoops are embarking on innovative developments, such as a few wind turbines on a complex site or rooftop PV installations on public and commercial buildings in a city. Traditional investors are often less interested in these projects because of their complexity and rather limited profitability.

However, local renewable energy projects can bring considerable benefits to the local community: they can trigger new sustainable energy measures, motivate citizens to get involved in the energy transition, create local jobs and generate stable returns for the community’s investors.

This makes citizen energy communities ideal partners for the development of such complex projects. This Project Development Assistance grant provided financial leverage that allowed the cooperatives in the consortium to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, that would not have been possible on own resources. Doing so, the REScoops of the consortium have been mobilising over the four years duration of the project an additional 50.000 European citizens to contribute to a clean and fair energy transition.

The success stories below are just a few examples of RES projects launched during REScoop MECISE. If you’re curious about more stories, make sure to visit us at www.rescoop-mecise.eu.



RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Thanks to REScoop MECISE, five established REScoops were able to speed up the development of renewable energy projects in a number of communities. Experimenting with innovative business models, they were able to invest in complex projects that traditional investors did not dare to tackle because of the comparatively low returns – as these projects however provide important benefits for the community, the co-ops supported them among others through the REScoop MECISE financing tool, thus enabling the participation of citizens into Europe's transition towards fair and clean energy.



COLLABORATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES

REScoop MECISE fosters collaborations between energy cooperatives and local authorities to help overcome the challenges municipalities face. By aggregating renewable energy and energy efficiency projects at the local level, municipalities and REScoops were able to reach the European thresholds required to receive grants to speed up the implementation of energy efficiency, decentralised renewable energy and urban transport in their communities.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Citizens and municipalities often lack time, resources and technical expertise to initiate energy renovations, leaving the potential for energy savings largely untapped. At the same time, the European climate targets require 80% of energy savings in the building sector by 2050. REScoop MECISE is bridging that gap. The project partners are helping citizens and municipalities to initiate energy efficiency measures and save energy in their homes or buildings.



INNOVATIVE FINANCING TOOLS

The project created a dedicated financing tool to help local energy cooperatives finance their Renewable energy and energy efficiency projects: the European cooperative society REScoop MECISE. It supports citizens wanting to realise innovative projects such as district heating, smart grids, offshore wind – projects where, traditionally, citizens were not taken seriously as market players. By aggregating funds from cooperatives, municipalities and institutional investors, citizens will finally get the chance to become a major actor in the energy transition.



REScoop MECISE

Mobilizing European Citizens to Invest in Sustainable Energy

**At least 5 new
REScoops**
started due to MECISE
developments

**48
municipalities**
were effectively
involved in MECISE
developments, of which
3 co-investing with a
REScoop in a newly
developed
project

**50.000
European citizens**
have joined the 5
REScoops of the MECISE
consortium since the
beginning of the
project

**Almost
100 million €** in
sustainable energy
investments were
unlocked

**Over
10 million €** were
mobilised for energy
efficiency developments,
including district
heating

116 GWh/year
additional renewable
electricity will be
produced – this equals
the electricity consump-
tion of about **38.000
EU households**.

31 GWh of energy
for heating will be
saved – that's the energy
needed for heating
around **2000 family
homes** in Europe.

**35.900
tons of CO2**
emissions will be
avoided every year





RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Through REScoop MECISE, five established REScoops unlocked almost €100 million in renewable energy projects in a number of communities and used the revenues to initiate energy efficiency investments in private homes and public buildings.

Spreading the energy transition in England's schools

The Schools' Energy Cooperative (Energy4All)



The Social Enterprise Energy4All has been helping schools and communities in the UK start community renewable energy projects for years. After the success of the Wey Valley Solar Schools Energy Co-operative in 2011, schools across the country contacted Energy4All to join the financial model the cooperative had set up. Due to changing feed-in-tariffs in England in 2013, Energy4All adapted the Wey Valley model and founded the Schools' Energy Cooperative in order to support more English schools in creating

renewable and energy efficiency projects. Profits and energy savings are paid back to the schools, reducing their monthly bills.

The first solar PV project was a 150 kW installation on a primary school in Bexhill in 2014, which remains one of the largest installations on a school in the UK until today.

When the conditions for feed-in tariffs changed again a year later, E4A helped the cooperative to pre-register 52 more potential project sites and submit the applications for feed-in tariffs for these projects. The Schools' Energy Cooperative now owns and operates 1,76MW of solar PV on 44 schools.

Overall, E4A helped the Schools' Energy Cooperative raise £1.9 million, and continues to support the schools with monitoring of the systems and administrative tasks.

All locations can be found on the map of the cooperative's website:
www.schools-energy-coop.co.uk.



French farmers go big on renewables

Lums del Larzac (Enercoop)

Collective action has a history in Larzac in the South-West of France. In 1985, local farmers managed to convince the government to jointly manage an abandoned military terrain, and started their cooperative 'Société Civile des Terres du Larzac'. When one of the farmers suggested to include solar PV in the plans for his new roof, the cooperative grabbed the idea, looking into opportunities for the whole of the terrain. The vision: to collectively produce local renewable energy, use the returns to restore and conserve the former military estate and to mobilise new farmers to join the initiative.



This initiative is the perfect illustration of a renewable energy project anchored in a local community. 17 farmers from 12 towns are participating, with support of the French renewable energy cooperative Enercoop on legal questions, project feasibility and economic viability. Énergie Partagée, a fund co-founded by Enercoop, contributes to the starting capital in equity, so the farmers can focus on the involvement of citizens in the project. The solar panel installations are carried out by the local company C2A (Compagnie des Artisans Associés). Today, the project consists of 19 roof-top solar PV installations of 9 kWp and 1 larger installation on a warehouse of 100 kWp which hosts processing, drying and storage of wood pellets to supply local farms equipped with automatic boilers.

More information is available at

<https://energie-partagee.org/projets/lum-del-larzac>
(in French)





ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Thousands of European citizens join a citizen energy community every year. There is enormous potential in supporting these citizens in the renovation of their houses to improve energy efficiency. Over the years, this will heavily reduce the energy use in buildings – not only because of the energy investments themselves, but also because of the awareness that has been created among the citizens. The Ecotraject facilitation service and the district heating project in Eeklo already demonstrate in reality how RESCoops mobilize efficiency investments by bringing together citizens and local authorities.

Efficiency makes warmer homes and happy wallets

Ecotraject (Ecopower)

In winter, keeping your house warm can be a challenge. You consume a lot of energy, but for little return. As there are many ways to improve energy efficiency in your home, it can be difficult to choose what is best for your situation. This is why the cooperative Ecopower developed its cost-covering service “Ecotraject” to assist its members with deep energy renovations in their homes. They start with a thorough inspection of the home, to understand what would be most effective, and help the home-owner choose the best option and contractor. This model allowed Ecopower to trigger the interest of over 400 members. When renovations have started already, the energy investments per home are in the range of 25.000€. As a permanent facilitation service, Ecotraject is expected to have huge impacts over the years.

More information can be found on www.ecopower.be/energiebesparing/ecotraject (in Dutch).



Collective Efficiency

Group purchase of efficient lighting (Courant d'Air)

We all know that reducing our consumption -including energy- is the key to stopping climate change - this includes energy. Using LED lighting equipment cuts electric consumption in 5, compared to the light bulbs and lamps that are still used by many of us. Courant d'Air decided to encourage its members to participate in a collective purchase of efficient LEDs. With clear, straightforward communications, the cooperative managed to mobilise over 600 of its members, each one investing on average €100 - €60.000 in total- over only a few months' time. This resulted in energy savings of about 228 MWh per year, providing financial savings of €33.600 each year.

More information is available at
www.courantdair.be/wp/project/commandes-collectives
(in French).



Turn up the heat - and make it your own!

District Heating Eeklo (Ecopower)

Eeklo - a city in Flanders of about 30.000 inhabitants - is for long a forerunner in renewable energy production on its territory. With signing the Covenant of Mayors, the ambition was set to become energy self-sufficient and climate neutral all at once. Key element in realizing this ambition is putting to good use the 15 MW of condenser heat that is lost at the waste incineration plant on the territory of Eeklo. To turn its plans into action, the city tendered the right of using the public underground for a district heating system. The requirements in the tender were genuinely innovative with obligations to: (1) allow at least 30% financial participation of citizens, (2) turn to 100% green heat in the system by 2036 and (3) supply heat at a cost comparable to heat from fossil fuels. Ecopower teamed up with waste and energy industrial giant Veolia and won the tender. The municipality being keen to involve all kind of local stakeholders, any party connecting to the DH system, individual citizens, but also SMEs, schools, elderly homes, the hospital, ... is allowed to co-invest and have a say in the vehicle that is set up to own and operate the project. Ecopower helped the city of Eeklo to make it happen! Through this district heating project, Eeklo will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions over 40% by 2030.





COLLABORATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES

With the publication of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the United Nations clearly recognised the role for local authorities in the transition towards a more sustainable future. Unfortunately, a lack of technical expertise, insufficient budget and public support often stands in the way.

And that is exactly where citizen energy communities come into play. REScoops and municipalities are “natural allies” who both serve the same stakeholder: the citizen. The REScoop MECISE project successfully facilitated collaboration between local authorities and cooperatives to support the implementation of the sustainable energy and climate action plans of municipalities.

Rural municipalities team up with citizens to harvest the wind

Amel-Büllingen (Courant d’air)

The rural municipalities of Amel and Büllingen in East Belgium are a great best-practice example for transition planning. When both municipalities realised the potential of wind energy for their energy transition plans, they secured an access of significant capacity to the local electricity grid. A plot of land owned by both municipalities being appropriate for siting, building and operating wind turbines was tendered in 2016 by both municipalities jointly. The local cooperative Courant d’Air joined forces with the Flemish REScoop Ecopower and won the tender, proposing a 20 MW wind farm with 60% co-ownership of both municipalities. As such, this development was another successful implementation of the REScoop-municipality approach, set up thanks to the MECISE project. Having recently obtained all licences to build and operate the wind farm, the first turbines might start turning by the end of 2020. The future wind farm already became a main trigger for further sustainable energy projects in these communities, resulting from the collaboration between the municipalities and the cooperatives. Courant d’Air will play a role in the implementation of the climate action plans of 2 municipalities in different ways, such as: implementation of an ambitious photovoltaic plan (500 installations in the next 5 years), the installation of 5 charging stations for electric cars in each municipality, the implementation of 2 e-Carsharing vehicles, analysis of the feasibility of small local heating networks for village quarters that could be operated with local wood waste.

More information is available at
www.courantdair.be (in French).

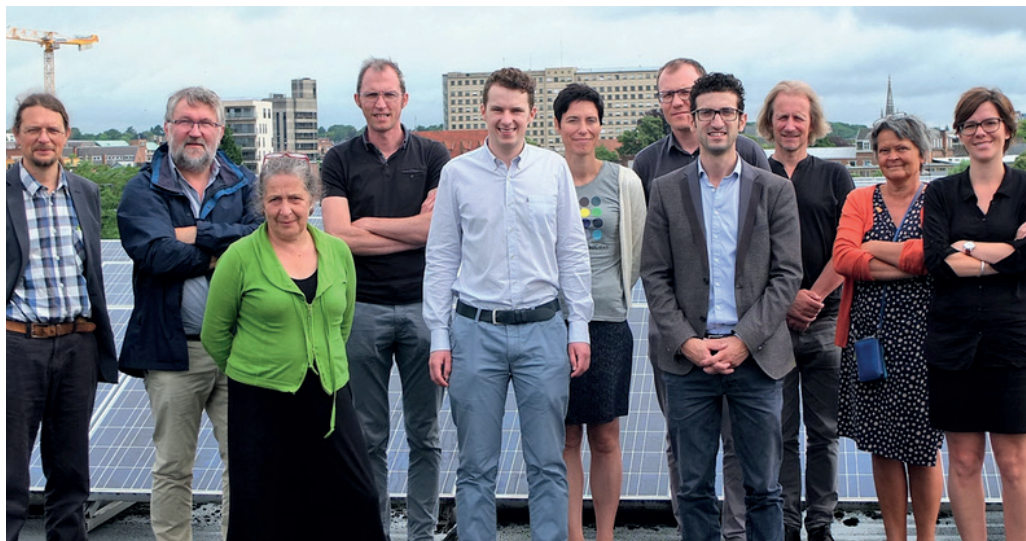


Broad partnership can achieve great things

Licht Leuven (Ecopower)

The city of Leuven in Flanders has high ambitions to become climate neutral by 2030. Through a competitive tender procedure, the city selected the REScoop Ecopower as its strategic partner for achieving its ambitious goals. The result: the PDU (project development unit) “LICHT Leuven” was composed to develop every possible sustainable energy project in the city. Together with their citizens, the city and Ecopower want to trigger new wind, solar and energy efficiency projects, and introduce shared electric mobility in the city. The key to success was the transparent, collaborative and decentralised nature of the proposed approach. To ensure broad support from all stakeholders in the community, Leuven and Ecopower consulted citizens, the local university, SMEs and other local actors. Another plus: this innovative model of collaboration can easily be replicated by other municipalities and cities!

More information can be found on
www.lichtleuven.be (in Dutch).





FINANCING TOOL

Through REScoop MECISE, five REScoops joined forces to develop new financing models for sustainable energy projects. This resulted in the foundation of new investment schemes that support sustainable energy development at a local level.

A new generation of energy citizens

Generation Kwh (Som Energia)

Before the change in governments in Spain in 2018, renewable energies were going through a rough time. The acting government had decided to stop all support for renewable energy generation – a dubious decision at a time when the impacts of climate change all over Europe are calling for more, not less clean energies.

The REScoop Som Energia decided to take matters in its own hands. Som Energia raised €3,5 million to invest in solar energy projects. How? Through 'Generation kWh', members of the cooperative were invited to provide a long-term zero-interest loan of €100 minimum each. Som Energia guarantees that the investment will be paid back in 25 years. In the meantime, the investors pay electricity at cost price for the duration of the loan. A win for everyone! After the first successful investment through this model in 2016, Som Energia used the approach to finance other sustainable energy projects.

More information can be found on www.generationkwh.org.

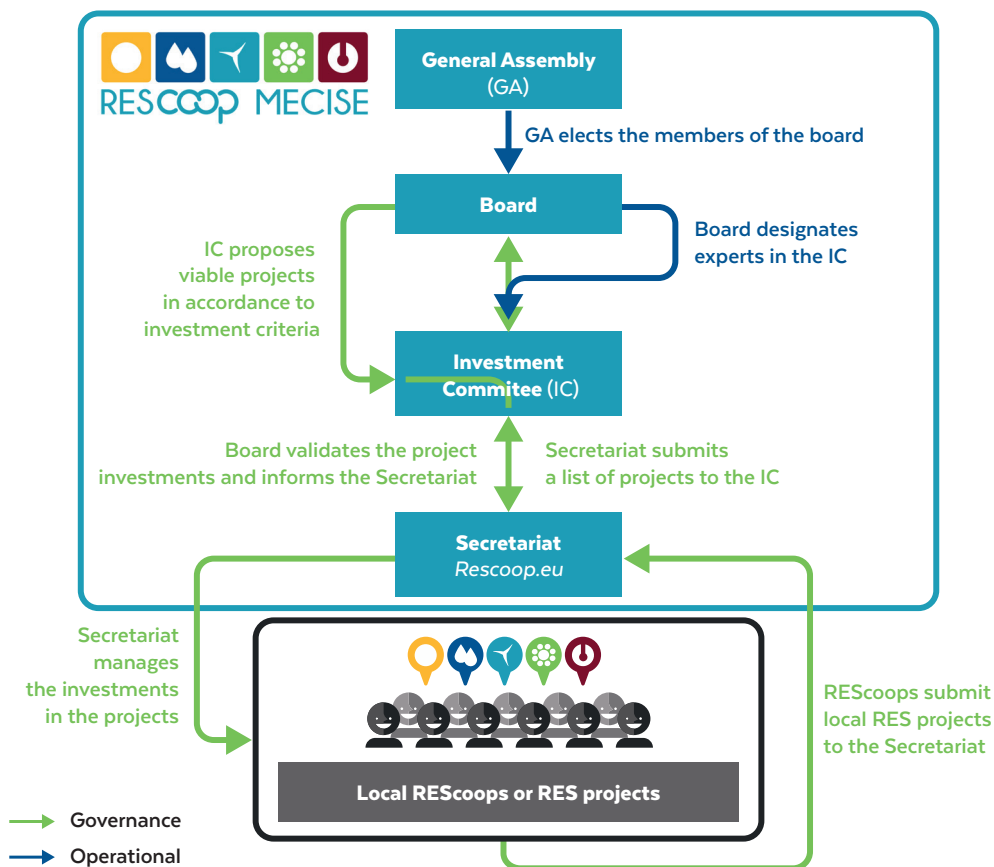


Big money for people power

REScoop MECISE (REScoop.eu)

In 2018, REScoop MECISE sce (European Mutual for Energy Communities Investing in a Sustainable Europe) was founded as a financing vehicle for citizen energy communities. In the REScoop MECISE mutual, REScoops, municipalities and institutional investors put their money together in one pot. This vehicle is meant to facilitate REScoops in financing their development more easily and with less risk for individual cooperatives..

The game-changer here: larger scale projects have economies of scale, and increase negotiating and purchasing power of citizen energy communities. Projects of over €25 million of investments are eligible to instruments like soft loans from the European Investment Bank and similar financial institutions. The mutual REScoop MECISE will support municipalities and REScoops to work together to get access to these funds.





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