Title
Developing support mechanisms for energy communities and other citizen-led initiatives in the field of sustainable energy
Funding Instrument
LIFE PROGRAMME
Code
LIFE-2021-CET-ENERCOM
General information

This topic aims to support actions that foster the collaboration between local and regional authorities and energy communities and/or actions that develop integrated services to facilitate the emergence and growth of community energy projects.

Energy communities can help citizens and local authorities invest in renewables and energy efficiency. The participation of citizens in renewable energy projects may also overcome social acceptance at the local level. Community-owned projects allow citizens to finance sustainable energy investments that deliver local economic benefits, social cohesion, and other priorities such as improving the energy efficiency of housing or reducing energy poverty. An increasing number of local authorities wish to make sure that more citizens and local communities benefit from the energy transition and play an active role in it. In fact, local government is uniquely well-placed to support, partner and invest, and to provide a positive planning and policy environment to help drive community energy.

Designing adequate public interventions at the local level is key but there is no onesize-fits-all solution to trigger the creation of energy communities locally. The level of public participation and the type of actions required vary significantly depending on the specific context of each city and town. Building on initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors, there is also a need to strengthen the technical and financial capacities of local actors to support citizen-led initiatives in the field of energy (particularly in Member States with low levels of community energy activity).

Taking sustainable energy projects off the ground can be complex due to the regulatory and policy context (changing national support schemes for renewables, burdensome licensing, heavy administrative procedures, difficulties in coordinating project implementation in atomized markets, etc.). For relatively small and citizen-led actors like energy communities, there are some additional practical challenges such as lack of information, limited access to finance, difficulties aggregating small interventions, difficulties in managing the public participation and engagement, and establishing effective governance and decision-making structures.

These hurdles prevent energy communities around Europe from developing their potential. An effective way of tacking this complexity, is by supplying integrated services for the set-up of sustainable energy projects through energy communities.

Objectives

This topic will support actions covering at least ONE of the scopes below:

Scope A - Local authorities collaborating with citizen-led-initiatives

Under this scope, proposals should foster the collaboration between local and regional authorities (including energy agencies) and energy communities. This could be done in many ways but all proposals should include at least three of the actions below:

- Participation in and/or set up of municipal energy initiatives and energy communities including diverse and hybrid forms of collective ownership with participation from municipal authorities and citizens aimed at supporting the achievement of local and regional energy policy objectives.

- Support to the emergence of citizen energy initiatives that empower local actors to collectively address energy transition targets through use of public resources, funds and capacity. The role of local and regional authorities could include helping community projects access citizen finance and bank loans (e.g. through guarantees, seed funding for revolving funds, technical support for the early stages of project development) and facilitating procurement of locally generated renewable energy from community energy projects.

- Creation of a supportive local policy framework for the development of community energy projects (e.g. through community participation or investment quotas, more streamlined and simplified environmental permit procedures) and facilitation of a dialogue among different actors involved in community projects (e.g. community members, relevant economic players, national regulators, the local authority and other societal, environmental or energy actors in the area).

- Training and capacity building on community energy development (for local and regional authority officials, local communities and other relevant local actors) and promotion of citizen participation in energy communities.

These activities should make use of existing initiatives, networks and platforms as relevant (e.g. Covenant of Mayors, Smart Cities Marketplace).

Scope B - Developing integrated services to support community energy

Under this scope, proposals should support actions that improve market conditions and develop integrated services aimed at reducing complexity, simplifying decision making and stimulating the creation of community energy projects. These services may be implemented by public or private actors in close coordination with local and/or regional authorities in targeted territories. The integrated services designed should lead to local community energy investment pipelines and could cover:

- Capacity building and facilitating access of local energy communities and cooperatives to information and guidance about setting up, financing and operating community projects (e.g. licencing, public procurement of community energy, business models, legal aspects).

- Connecting different actors in the value chain (e.g. technology providers, financiers, public actors in charge of licensing, aggregators).

- Aggregation of small sustainable energy projects including (where relevant) support for energy commercialisation and participation in flexibility markets.

• Development of financial tools to facilitate the emergence of community energy projects and their access to citizen finance and bank loans (e.g. through guarantees, seed funding for revolving funds, technical support for the early stages of project development).

For scopes A and B (where relevant):

Proposals should justify how selected pilots fit either the definition of "renewable energy community" according to the revised Renewable energy directive ((EU) 2018/2001) and/or the definition of "citizen energy community" according to the Directive on common rules for the internal electricity market ((EU) 2019/944).

Proposals could cover any area related to sustainable energy (renewable energy generation, transmission, distribution, citizen-led renovation, energy efficiency, e-mobility, etc.). Proposed activities can also promote (if they wish to) inter-consumers and/or inter-communities trading/sharing of sustainable energy virtual-net-metering, (collective) energy storage solutions, or peer to peer trading.

Proposals should demonstrate the support of the stakeholders which are necessary to ensure the success of the action (in particular, local or regional authorities). Projects should provide policy feedback to improve public policies, legal and regulatory environments in the field of community energy across Europe.

Proposals replicating existing innovative organisational solutions should justify their choice and show how they will adapt solutions to their local context. Proposals should demonstrate a high degree of replicability and include a clear action plan to communicate experiences and results towards potential replicators across the EU.

Link with CMA Goals
Goal II: A competitive, innovative and sustainable blue economy for the Black Sea / **Priority 1:** Fost innovative business models, stimulate research and innovation, and sustainable growth and up-to-da jobs
Deadline for submission
12 January 2022
Project duration
18 months
Financial allocation
Topic bubget: 7 million EUR Funding rate, Other Actions (Coordination and Support Actions) — 95%
Partnership
Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine
Eligible partners/key conditions
Conditions

1. Admissibility conditions: described in section 5 of the call document

Proposal page limits and layout: described in Part B of the Application Form available in the Submission System

2. Eligible countries: described in section 6 of of the call document

3. Other eligibility conditions: described in section 6 of the call document

4. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion: described in section 7 of the call document

5. Evaluation and award:

- **Award criteria, scoring and thresholds:** described in section 9 of the call document
- **Submission and evaluation processes:** described section 8 of the call document and the Online Manual
- **Indicative timeline for evaluation and grant agreement:** described in section 4 of the call document

6. Legal and financial set-up of the grants: described in section 10 of the call document

Documents

Call documents:

Call document

Standard application form — *call-specific application form is available in the Submission System*

Detailed budget table

Participant information

LIFE General MGA v1.0

LIFE Work Programme 2021-2024

LIFE Regulation 2021/783

EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046

Info session recordings and presentations

Sector of activity
Energy Efficiency; Sustainable energy
Further Info
Call for tender's page