

Summary Report of the Introductory Meeting of the Renewable Energy Knowledge Cluster

PRESENTATIONS

Edina Ocsko (Project Coordinator) presented the Smart Rural 27 project framework, the purpose of the European Smart Villages Pilot Observatory and the role of knowledge cluster within that:

- The overall objective of the Smart Rural 27 project is “to prepare Member States and rural communities for the implementation of the CAP post-2020, as well as other policies and initiatives, which could potentially support the emergence of Smart Villages across Europe”.
- The Smart Villages Pilot Observatory has three pillars, one of which is the knowledge cluster of rural communities. The other two are national/ regional Smart Villages Taskforces, and European-level stakeholder platforms.
- Knowledge Cluster members have been engaged at three levels: lighthouse communities, learning communities and follower communities.

Following the introductory presentation, the two lighthouse communities Stanz (Austria) and Haradsback (Sweden) presented their villages and their approach to renewable energy communities and sustainable energy actions. You can read the factsheet on both villages and listen to the [presentation of Stanz](#) and [presentation of Haradsback](#).

DISCUSSION

Questions to the two communities & beyond

Q: **Local currency** in Stanz – How widespread is this, do other villages work with local currencies?

A (Stanz): When you have too much energy, you can store it (it’s very expensive) or you can give it back to the energy supplier for low money (and get it back later for more money). So the question was how to keep this money in the community. We had the [research paper](#) supported by the Smart Rural 21 project on how far a token system would be used by the community and whether we are allowed to do it legally. We cannot say yet if it’s working, but hopefully. We are also using it for system administration (onboarding members, billing, etc.). We use the digital system for remuneration for voluntary work.

Q: What about **taxes** on the things you buy with vouchers?

A (Stanz): There is a chapter on this in the study. Taxes are not an issue on this in Austria. Defining the value of the currency is not that easy. Maybe to stabilise the kw/h price it would be good to stabilise against external shocks. But this is still just a dream.

Samsø (Denmark): Depopulation has been also an issue in our community. Samsø was elected in 1997 to be **Danish Renewable Energy Island**. The idea was to reach carbon (energy) neutrality within 10 years without any subsidies from the government. We started district heating system based on biogas, we also implemented on-shore (electricity) and off-shore (to

compensate for transport emissions) wind turbines. The big goal is to become a fossil-free island, which is a big challenge for us right now.

Q: What do you think about **hydrogen solutions**? What are the different ways to produce and store energy?

A1 (Haradsback): Hydrogen – our goal was to have storage in Haradsback. Batteries is good storage, but it's short term storage, we are looking for long term storage, also to sell energy to other users. Hydrogen is an expensive storage, but it looks it could be a good business. The big trucks that pass by could be a customer base in the future (Haradsback is located next to a big road).

A2 (Stanz): We are not discussing about hydrogen in Stanz, because for that we have way too low amount of energy to use. The energy from windmills go to the big industrial plants. So we have small hydro energy and PV. Hydrogen is very expensive, and very complicated for us. It's a question of scale.

Q: Does anyone know about the **RECAH call** results?

A: Colleagues from the Commission will follow up with the relevant units. Alsomocsolad (Hungary) won this support (expected to be 15h expert support), but they are only having a meeting next week.

The most relevant topics (from a list)

How to build an **energy community** is the most common topic, other topics include:

- Solar energy
- Energy storage
- Connections to sustainable transport solutions

Which other themes are you working on?

 Mentimeter



Other topics that came up (see also image above):

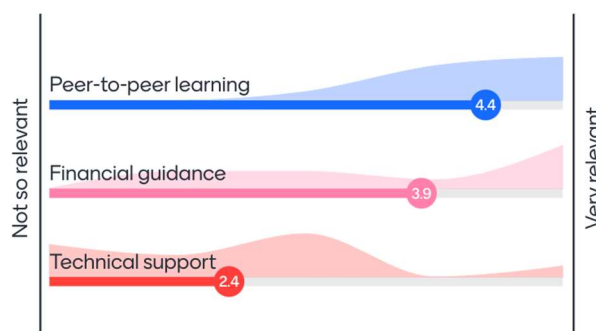
- **Financing / funding/ finding investors** for renewable energy solutions;
- **Legislation** related to renewable energy communities; finding out about the legislation in other countries. Austria is ready to share information on the Austrian legal situation (also covered by the research paper).
- How to **heat in a sustainable way large buildings** in a community (e.g. those owned by NGOs)
- **Energy poverty** is an important topic to discuss.

The short online survey run during the meeting also showed that communities are at very different stages in their energy development (from idea, through feasibility studies, to testing solutions).

The type of support that cluster community members would need

An initial survey was run to assess preference for communities for (1) peer-to-peer learning, (2) identification of funding sources, (3) technical expertise. The outcomes of the quick survey are presented below.

How relevant these forms of support are for you?



Peer-to-peer learning and financial guidance were identified as most common needs.

NEXT STEPS

As next steps:

- The **outcomes of the meeting** have been summarised (in the current report) and assessed following the meeting.
- Emails will be sent out to members to **confirm their status** and updated them on the upcoming activities.
- **Peer-to-peer learning opportunities** will be created through the planned **smart café** sessions (that are likely to be dedicated to specific renewable energy themes with presentations from relevant communities). Specialist expertise will be engaged whenever relevant. Peer-to-peer exchanges will be targeted at rural communities to keep the informal nature of these sessions. **The next smart café is expected to be held on 25/04/23 targeted at cluster members.**
- The cluster will **closely work on specific energy community topics** (during smart cafés and other sessions) with lighthouse and learning communities. Followers will also be invited to selected online events. Other Observatory members (regional, national, European) will be regularly informed about the outcomes (through direct mailing/newsletters).
- Cluster members will be **invited to the Observatory Meeting** (to be held in Austria on 11-12 May). During the cluster meeting an update will be provided to other Observatory members on the state-of-play of the cluster work.



- It is planned that the profiles of the cluster members (with additional information on lighthouse and learning communities) will be uploaded on the **geomapping tool**. Cluster members will be tagged in the database to be able to search for their profiles.
- **Cross-visits** will be organised to selected communities: (1) interest from potential lighthouse communities to host other communities will be assessed; (2) a short survey will be run among cluster members on their interest to visit lighthouse communities; (3) based on the outcomes match-making will be made between communities (financing for travel costs provided as much as possible by the project).
- Members will be provided with **specific information requested**, such as the legal framework on renewable energy community (based on RECAH research and other relevant sources); and information on financial resources (with support from national experts in the relevant countries and the Core Team experts).