

Lessons Learnt Report

COMMENCE: Community Energy in Central Europe

November 2025

Project partners:

- SAPI – Slovak Association of Sustainable Energy
- Frank Bold Society
- National Society of Conservationists
- WiseEuropa
- Austrian Energy Agency

This project is part of the European Climate Initiative (EUKI). EUKI is a project financing instrument by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN). The EUKI call for project ideas is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. It is the overarching goal of the EUKI to foster climate cooperation within the European Union (EU) in order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

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Executive Summary

The COMMENCE project was launched to accelerate the development of energy communities (ECs) in the Visegrad region (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). Energy communities are a cornerstone of the EU's clean energy transition, enabling citizens, municipalities, and local actors to jointly produce, share, and manage energy. While Austria has already established more than 3,500 energy communities since 2021, the aforesaid project target countries have been facing significant regulatory, technical, and awareness-related barriers.

The COMMENCE project was designed to swift the rollout of energy communities by focusing on four key areas. It worked to develop national guidelines for ECs' founders and policy recommendations to empower policymakers. The project also facilitated knowledge exchange among stakeholders through multiple workshops and a study tour to Austria, which helped to spread foreign expertise and best practices. Furthermore, it aimed to strengthen cooperation between civil society, municipalities, and policymakers. The overall measurable goal of these efforts was to directly support the creation of at least 16 energy communities across the Central Europe region.

Over two years, the COMMENCE project achieved significant results by contributing to policy and regulatory improvements across all four participating countries. Partners successfully engaged in legislative efforts, while utilising best practices from other Member States, leading to necessary amendments and regulatory clarifications that directly addressed critical operational issues for energy communities, such as gaps in electricity sharing, metering, and tariff structures. Furthermore, the project conducted comprehensive capacity building, utilising national workshops and practical guidance materials. This effort effectively equipped key stakeholders, including municipalities, NGOs, and citizens, with the practical knowledge required to successfully initiate and manage ECs. In terms of learning, the cross-border learning component, specifically the study tour to Austria, was highly valuable. It provided participants with hands-on insights into successful EC models, which served as inspiration for replication in the target regions. Finally, the project achieved substantial awareness raising. Through various outreach channels, including media coverage, podcasts, and social campaigns, it significantly increased public and



professional awareness and understanding of community energy models and their benefits.

COMMENCE has laid the foundation for a more inclusive and decentralised energy system in Central Europe. While challenges remain, such as economic viability and technical implementation, the project created momentum for continued development. This document should inform future initiatives and policy reforms, ensuring that energy communities become a practical reality across the Central Europe region.

Introduction

The COMMENCE – Community Energy in Central Europe project led by SAPI - Slovak Association of Sustainable Energy was launched in December 2023 under the EUKI programme to accelerate the development of renewable-based energy communities in the Visegrad region (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). Despite the EU's ambitious targets under the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package and REPowerEU, the practical implementation of energy communities in Central Europe has faced significant challenges. Legal frameworks have often been incomplete or unclear, technical infrastructure insufficient, and awareness among citizens and local authorities limited. Austria, with more than 3,500 registered energy communities since 2021, served as an advanced reference point for the region.

The objectives of COMMENCE were to create enabling conditions for energy communities by combining policy analysis, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge exchange. The project aimed to develop national guidelines tailored to each country's legal and institutional context, organise workshops and study tours to share best practices, and facilitate dialogue between civil society, municipalities, and policymakers. Through these activities, COMMENCE sought to remove regulatory and technical barriers, raise awareness, and inspire the establishment of new energy communities across Central Europe.

The consortium brought together leading organisations in the field:

- ➊ SAPI – Slovak Association of Sustainable Energy (SK) – Project lead
- ➋ Frank Bold Society (CZ)
- ➌ National Society of Conservationists (HU)
- ➍ WiseEuropa (PL)
- ➎ Austrian Energy Agency (AT)

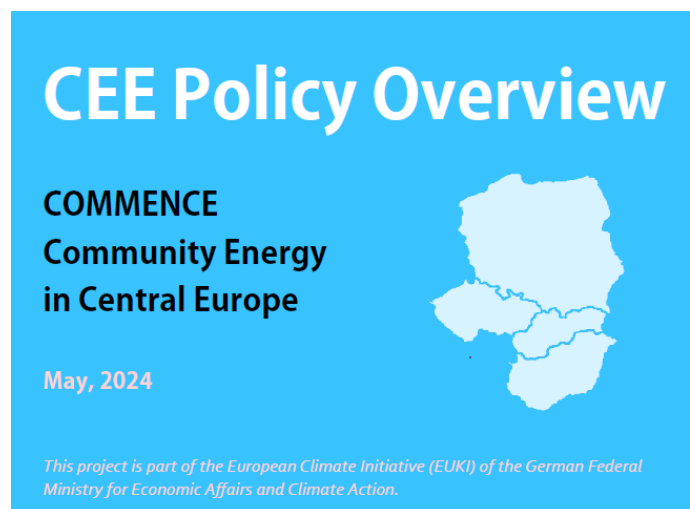
This Lessons Learnt Report summarises the experiences and insights gained during the project. It reflects on initial conditions, activities implemented, success stories, and challenges encountered in each country. It also highlights overarching deliverables and cross-cutting lessons relevant for policymakers, local authorities, civil society organizations, and citizens interested in community energy. The report aims to share knowledge, inspire replication, and inform future policy and practice in Central Europe.

Overarching project deliverables

The COMMENCE project produced two key deliverables that shaped its impact: [Community Energy in Central Europe – Policy Overview](#) and [Study Tour on Renewable Energy Communities in Austria](#). Together, these outputs provided the analytical foundation and practical inspiration for advancing energy communities in the Visegrad region.

Community Energy in Central Europe – Policy Overview

Published in May 2024, this report offered the first comparative analysis of the regulatory and institutional frameworks for energy communities in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. It examined legal definitions, conditions for establishing communities, and rules for electricity sharing. While all four countries had transposed EU directives such as RED II and IEMD, implementation remained incomplete. Czechia introduced legal definitions in early 2024 but awaited secondary legislation and data infrastructure. Hungary recognized energy communities in law but lacked detailed rules for sharing and settlement. Poland had earlier adopted energy clusters and cooperatives, yet these forms did not fully align with EU requirements, prompting the introduction of CECs in 2023. Slovakia defined energy communities in 2022 but faced major technical and regulatory barriers.



◀ Figure 1: COMMENCE: CEE Policy Overview (Source: Frank Bold Society)

The CEE Policy Overview document highlighted common challenges: unclear tariff structures, missing financial incentives, administrative complexity, and low awareness. It also identified opportunities for harmonization and cross-border learning. This analysis guided national guidelines, workshops, and advocacy efforts, ensuring that project activities were evidence-based and tailored to real needs.

Study Tour on Energy Communities in Austria

In April 2025, COMMENCE organised a two-day study tour to Austria, bringing together experts from Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The event allowed participants to see how community-energy models function in practice and what makes them successful in the European regulatory environment.

The Austrian experience clearly demonstrated that community energy is no longer a laboratory experiment but a functioning part of the energy system. The solutions and operational models visited during the tour work reliably within existing EU-level rules and are fully feasible from a technical point of view. What limits their replication elsewhere is not technology but the way regulations, business models and institutional frameworks are organised. Austrian communities have been able to adapt the European legal framework to a clear practical goal – sharing energy among citizens and local actors. This was one of the strongest lessons for all participants.



▲ Figure 2: Presentation at the study tour to Austria held in April 2025 (Source: SAPI)

Three examples illustrated this message particularly well:

- 1 [Energy Community Göttweigblick](#), a regional cooperative with more than 500 members and about 3 MW of installed PV capacity, enables households and small firms connected behind the same transformer to exchange locally produced electricity. Members benefit from reduced network charges and joint investment in three neighbourhood-scale batteries. The community shows how energy sharing, when supported by clear tariff and settlement rules, can work efficiently and lower costs for participants while easing pressure on the public grid.
- 2 [Energy Community Elsbeere Wienerwald](#) connects several municipalities in the Wienerwald region that jointly develop and exchange renewable electricity within a coordinated local framework. The initiative combines municipal leadership, citizen participation and mapping of regional PV potential. It demonstrates that community energy can serve as a tool for regional development, where knowledge and infrastructure are shared across administrative borders.
- 3 The third visit, to [Beyond Carbon Energy](#), focused on a different but complementary dimension – the decarbonisation of heating and cooling systems in Vienna’s urban districts. The company designs and operates zero-emission systems for residential and office buildings, integrating renewable sources, heat pumps and local thermal networks. These projects prove that large-scale decarbonisation is achievable when organisational and financial arrangements are well aligned.



▲ Figure 3: Group photo from the organized study tour in Austria (Source: MTVSZ)



Slovakia

Context and initial situation

In Slovakia, the concept of energy communities is still evolving. At the beginning of the project in 2023, only one energy community was officially registered. Although a basic legislative framework had been adopted in 2022, electricity sharing within communities was not practically possible. The main missing elements were technical and regulatory mechanisms, especially a fully functional electronic data central infrastructure essential for efficient electricity sharing among members regardless of their supplier.

The 2022 amendment to the Energy Act introduced the terms “Energy Community” and “Renewable Energy Community” into Slovak law and quickly transposed European legislation, but this did not help practical development. While energy communities could be legally established, regulatory and technical barriers slowed their growth. From 2023, electricity sharing was formally allowed without fees and with the possibility of flexibility aggregation, but implementation remained limited because of unclear application of distribution charges, administrative burden, low motivation of participants, lack of financial support mechanisms, and the absence of detailed legal guidelines for interested parties.

Project activities and outputs

The first project activity was the Slovak Policy Overview, which mapped the current state and identified key needs. The analysis confirmed the same barriers: unclear application of distribution and other charges, administrative burden, low public motivation, lack of support schemes, and the absence of detailed legal mechanisms and guidance. These findings became crucial for planning workshops, creating methodological materials, and setting up effective support.

Legislatively, the goal was to influence the creation of a regulatory and legal framework that would be clear and supportive for those interested in community energy. Awareness of energy communities, their establishment and management were found to be very low; the main barrier to development was a lack of awareness about energy sharing opportunities.

The first major activity was therefore the creation of a handbook to help readers navigate this new topic. The handbook was designed to cover all aspects of establishing an energy community and describe the activities and responsibilities that future founders would encounter. It provides an overview of how energy communities function in Slovakia, identifies key development barriers, and offers recommendations to overcome them.

The draft of the National Guidelines for Energy Community Founders in Slovakia was first presented to the public in September 2024 at a national workshop held in hybrid format at the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SIEA) in Bratislava. More than 70 participants attended in person and about 30 joined online. The event presented the handbook draft and informed participants about electricity sharing options, ongoing legislative changes, and available financial tools. A Q&A session confirmed that poor awareness remained a major barrier.



◀ Figure 4: Presentation of the handbook at the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (Source: SAPI)

SAPI invited readers to provide feedback on the handbook, which was incorporated into the final version presented in March 2025 at the second national workshop titled “The Future of Community Energy.” Participants appreciated legislative and regulatory updates and were inspired by real-life examples from the founders of Slovakia’s first energy communities.

Communication and dissemination

SAPI’s dissemination strategy focused on providing expert, in-depth content through targeted channels to reach policymakers, municipalities, and potential

founders. In total, SAPI has published more than 40 outputs via various channels, the main ones being SAPI web page, SAPI LinkedIn account, energy news websites, and newsletters, such as:

- [SAPI Podcast – Energia zajtrajška](#). SAPI used the podcast to highlight the potential of energy communities in Slovakia and emphasised the importance of public awareness and legislative clarity for their development.
- [TERAZ.sk](#). SAPI on URSO Regulation SAPI criticized the new URSO decree for negatively impacting energy communities, pointing out that the regulation creates barriers to electricity sharing and contradicts the goals of sustainable energy policy.
- [EURACTIV.sk – Slovaks Unaware of Electricity Sharing Benefits](#). SAPI drew attention to the low public awareness in Slovakia about the benefits of electricity sharing, contrasting it with Austria, where local leaders successfully promote energy communities as part of their political agenda.
- [Energie-portal.sk – Analysis of URSO Decree](#). SAPI provided expert commentary on the URSO decree, explaining its technical and legal implications for energy communities and advocating for regulatory adjustments to support their growth.
- [SAPI recommendations on the development of community energy in Slovakia](#). News on the SAPI website.

Good practices and benefits

An international study tour to Austria was one of the project's biggest successes. It gave participants the opportunity to see how energy communities operate there and to network with representatives from Austria, Czechia, Hungary, and Poland. Slovak participants included representatives from government institutions, municipalities, the private sector, and media. They appreciated inspiring stories, new technologies, and practical advice that could be applied in Slovakia and later shared their experiences with professional circles, expanding the discussion on implementing similar solutions in the Slovak context. The tour significantly contributed to international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and support for sustainable energy initiatives in the region.

Slovakia, inspired by developments in Austria and Czechia, has adopted the approach of introducing IMS smart meters for customers to enable 15-minute

interval metering as part of its community energy development. Implementation in Slovakia is not yet fully free of charge, but it reflects the influence of similar initiatives in Austria and Czechia. Slovakia also served as an inspiration for Czechia in introducing the concept of the prosumer – a customer who can share electricity without being a member of an energy community. This approach, rooted in Slovak legislation and practice, was recognized as a best practice and later reflected in Czech regulatory developments.

The country draws further inspiration from Austria in the categorization of network charges, particularly in exempting shared electricity that is produced and consumed on-site within apartment buildings as part of a single energy community. The system operation tariff does not apply to electricity generated and consumed by an energy community in a residential building without using the distribution grid. While this provision is not yet formally embedded in legislation, there is consensus on the matter with the Regulatory Office for Network Industries (RONI).

According to feedback received by SAPI, the Guideline was considered valuable not only for community founders but also for professionals in green energy and sustainability. It provided essential information to understand the topic and helped spread awareness within their networks. Furthermore, SAPI will keep it up-to-date under the framework of [LIFE EnerGISE project](#) (2025-28).



◀ Figure 5: Guideline for Energy Communities Founders (Source: SAPI)

The publication prepared in close collaboration with lawyers has been praised as a unique resource in Slovakia, filling a gap where no similar material had existed before. Readers highlight that it serves as a credible and practical guide, offering clarity on complex processes and empowering local actors to establish energy communities. With overwhelmingly positive feedback, the handbook is already becoming a reference point for all interested in energy sharing.

During the project, through numerous interviews and meetings, [we identified several areas](#) where improvements could be made in the regulatory framework, legislation, and financing opportunities. These recommendations were subsequently presented to the relevant institutions, with whom SAPI held constructive and successful discussions. Based on these exchanges, SAPI can confidently state that there is a genuine effort in Slovakia to foster the development of energy communities, and the legislative framework is moving in the right direction.

The COMMENCE project naturally built on other SAPI activities. The topic was integrated into the annual [SAPI Energy Conference](#), featured on national expert platforms, and discussed in the [SAPI Podcast](#). During the project, SAPI collaborated intensively with the Slovak Energy Communities Cluster (KEKS) and the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SIEA), whose international project REC4EU aligned thematically with COMMENCE. This cooperation contributed to knowledge sharing, strengthening expertise, and connecting relevant initiatives.

Legislative contributions and emerging communities

During the COMMENCE project, SAPI submitted a proposal to amend the Energy Act to the Ministry of Economy and actively participated in interdepartmental consultations. Key proposals included:

Smart meters (free of charge) – support for the introduction of intelligent metering systems (IMS) and their use in electricity sharing;

- Distribution and network charges: waiving them for energy community members;
- Community source: allowing free connection of larger sources above MRC level at shared consumption points;

In addition, SAPI initiated a proposal to amend the price regulation decree (RONI), advocating for exemptions from network charges for electricity sharing within energy communities.

The project focused primarily on municipalities and private companies considering or initiating energy communities. Events, including the international study tour, attracted mayors, local officials, and representatives from domestic and international firms who showed active interest in the topic. During the

project, six new energy communities were certified, with others operating as active consumers sharing energy within sharing groups.

Challenges and lessons learnt

One of the main challenges of the project was generating interest in the topic of community energy at the highest levels of political leadership in the country. The approach taken by political leaders and ministry representatives significantly influences not only public opinion but also concrete policy decisions and the level of support in this area. The project aimed to promote the development of community energy in Slovakia, and it achieved positive results in this regard, alongside several other initiatives and organizations actively engaged in this topic. Nevertheless, multiple barriers persist that remain difficult to overcome without systematic support from the state.

Politicians have the power to shape public discourse, and in the field of green solutions and energy decentralization, their active support would represent a major boost. A recurring pattern specific to Slovakia, however, is that while the state transposes European legislation into the national framework with a declared intention to support sustainable energy, the resulting regulatory conditions often fail to create a favourable environment for its actual development.

Another major challenge is the significant lack of personnel and expertise at the municipal level. Many local representatives engaged during the project openly admitted that they do not have sufficient capacity to systematically and effectively address community energy in their municipalities. These challenges underline the need for sustained political commitment, clearer regulation, and targeted support for local authorities.



Czechia

Context and initial situation

Before the launch of the COMMENCE project, Czechia was at a turning point. A solar boom in 2022 had generated public and political interest in decentralised energy, but community energy remained more an ambition than a reality. The main obstacle was the incomplete legislative and regulatory framework: transposition of key EU directives RED II and IEMD, due by mid-2021, was still not finalised, leaving municipalities, businesses and citizen groups without clear rules for operation, especially for electricity sharing. The basic framework was agreed only in the second half of 2023, triggering high expectations among potential end users such as municipalities and local action groups. At the same time, a lively political debate about the nature and benefits of community energy – often marked by conflicting views – reinforced doubts about whether it would ever move from theory to practice.

Technical infrastructure was also missing. The Energy Data Centre (EDC), needed to manage data flows for electricity sharing, remained under development, with launch dates shifting from early 2024 to mid-2024. Municipalities and other actors therefore sought practical guidance to navigate the anticipated legislative changes and translate the concept of community energy into viable projects.

Since 2022, Frank Bold Society had actively communicated with stakeholders about community energy and its benefits, helping to create political demand for a national framework. The situation then evolved rapidly: the basic legislative framework applicable to community energy entered into force on 1 January 2024, decrees describing the principles of electricity sharing during the first half of 2024, and the EDC became operational on 1 August 2024. As of August 2025, over 16,000 active customers, more than 700 apartment buildings and 50 energy communities were registered for sharing in the EDC, marking a shift from ambition to established reality.

Project activities and outputs

Throughout the COMMENCE project, Frank Bold Society built the knowledge, capacity and policy support needed to kick-start the community energy movement in Czechia, aligning activities with the evolving legislative timeline.

Frank Bold Society focused on informing local authorities and potential energy community founders in the V4 region through national guidelines.

The first task was to coordinate research and analysis of regulatory frameworks across all four Visegrad countries. This resulted in the [CEE Policy Overview](#), which provided a baseline understanding of legal and practical differences across the region.

Building on this, Frank Bold Society prepared the national guidelines [The Economics of Electricity Sharing: A Guide for Active Customers and Energy Communities](#). Through more than 14 in-person and online consultations with municipalities, pilot projects and energy experts, the COMMENCE project partner identified a clear demand and a critical knowledge gap: the economic aspects of building an energy community. Reflecting the reality of community energy development in Czechia, the guideline focuses on the main economic activity that energy communities will engage in in the coming years, namely electricity sharing, and on creating sustainable business models for this activity. Our partnership with the [Community Energy Union \(UKEN\)](#), the national federation for community energy coordinated by Frank Bold Society, allowed us to test and refine the content with over 100 member organisations.

Frank Bold Society organised two national workshops. The first, in December 2024, focused on [Economic aspects of community energy and electricity sharing](#), introduced the draft guidelines and opened debate on the economics and effective management of community projects. To enrich the discussion with foreign practice, participants heard from a representative of the Austrian Energy Agency presenting the current landscape for energy communities in Austria.



▲ Figure 6: First national workshop in Czechia (Source: Frank Bold Society)

The second workshop, in February 2025, addressed [Decarbonising Czech Heating: Community energy in the heating and cooling sector](#), the first event focused specifically on community energy in the heating sector and national framework conditions. Together, these events attracted over 140 in-person participants.



▲ Figure 7: Second national workshop in the Czechia (Source: Frank Bold Society)

Communication and dissemination

Our dissemination strategy focused on providing expert, in-depth content through targeted channels to reach policymakers, municipalities, and potential founders. In total, the COMMENCE project partner has published more than 30 media outputs via various channels, the main ones being LinkedIn, Frank Bold Society and associated brands websites, and newsletters.

Our flagship publication [The Economics of Electricity Sharing](#), a comprehensive national guideline, which became a go-to resource for the emerging sector in Czechia, was downloaded by more than 1700 users, demonstrating high interest in the topic.

Frank Bold Society published a series of explanatory articles on its own platform to demystify complex topics for a wider audience, including:

- [Sdílení elektřiny mezi grafy a paragrafy: jak ho nastavit, aby se ekonomicky vyplatilo](#) (Electricity Sharing Between Graphs and Paragraphs: How to Set It Up to Be Economically Viable), summarizing the consent and key messages from the first national workshop.
- [Zákaz dodávek elektřiny od jiného obchodníka se na sdílení nevztahuje](#) (The Ban on Electricity Supply from Another Trader Does Not Apply to Sharing), reacting to identified challenge regarding energy supplier reactions to electricity sharing introduction.

While Frank Bold Society did not focus on traditional print media, our digital outreach within the professional community was highly effective. Our social media channels, particularly LinkedIn, proved crucial for promoting workshops and disseminating findings. For example, the [LinkedIn summary post for our December 2024 workshop](#) achieved over 1,870 views, demonstrating significant engagement with a highly relevant professional audience. This strategy ensured our expert content reached the decision-makers and practitioners who could act on it directly.

Good practices and benefits

The COMMENCE project helped shape the emerging community energy sector in Czechia. Focusing the national guidelines on the economics of electricity

sharing proved highly successful: the publication met strong demand, generated invitations to present at seminars and conferences and supported the creation of a network of interested stakeholders.

Our leadership role in the Community Energy Union provided a direct channel for dissemination to over 100 member organisations and a feedback loop with pilot projects that enhanced the relevance of the guidelines. UKEN also supported event promotion and broad dissemination of project outputs.

The project facilitated tangible policy improvements by transferring successful models from other countries. Inspired by the Austrian model, Frank Bold Society successfully advocated for the right for anyone interested in electricity sharing to have a smart meter installed free of charge, which was implemented in Czech legislation. Learning from Slovakia, the COMMENCE project partner promoted the concept of a simplified “prosumer” status, allowing individuals to share electricity without formally joining an energy community and providing a more accessible entry point for smaller-scale sharing.

Legislative contributions and emerging communities

Frank Bold Society actively engaged in the policy-making process. It submitted formal comments on the National Smart Grid Action Plan, advocating measures to support efficient use of grid capacity and motivate sustainable grid use by communities.

Following the publication of our guidelines, the COMMENCE project partner prepared a policy paper with concrete recommendations for amending the tariff structure and implementing regulations to improve the economic sustainability of community energy projects. Frank Bold Society called for a cost-reflective local distribution tariff, more dynamic electricity-sharing methods to maximise the value of locally generated power, and the gradual removal of geographical and technical limits on sharing groups.

Building on this work, Frank Bold Society scheduled strategic meetings with key decision-making bodies, including the senior management of the Energy Regulatory Office (ERU) and the Energy Data Centre, for June 2025 to present our data-driven recommendations and foster dialogue on a more functional framework for electricity sharing.

These efforts, together with broader legislative progress during the project, supported the emergence of new active customers and energy communities.

Challenges and lessons learnt

The project also highlighted persistent challenges that require long-term attention. The most significant is the limited economic viability of energy communities under the current regulatory framework. The “static allocation method” for electricity sharing, managed by the EDC, is inefficient and does not allow communities to fully utilise their generated electricity, making it difficult to cover essential operating costs such as administration and energy management from shared-electricity revenues alone. There is a tangible risk that, because of these economic and technical limitations, many initiatives will abandon the comprehensive, collective-benefit model of an energy community and default to a simpler prosumer status focused on cost minimisation, which would be a lost opportunity for wider social and grid-balancing benefits.

The project laid important groundwork, but the full potential of community energy still depends on further regulatory evolution. The benefits cannot be fully unlocked until the Energy Data Centre is equipped with more dynamic and efficient sharing methods, which is not expected until 2027, creating a multi-year period of constrained development.

From the energy market perspective, as electricity sharing becomes more common, an emerging challenge is that some energy suppliers are discussing or introducing less favourable, more expensive tariffs for members of energy communities, creating a new obstacle to financial sustainability.

Key lessons from the project include:

- Sustainable community energy development requires not only legal definitions but also practical regulatory and market instruments.
- Civil society engagement in policymaking helps ensure rules reflect real community needs.
- Stronger cooperation among municipalities, DSOs and citizen groups is vital to overcoming technical and financial barriers.
- Long-term commitment and pilot demonstrations are essential to build trust among market actors.

Context and initial situation

At the start of the COMMENCE project in late 2023, Hungary had already taken initial steps toward creating the legal and institutional framework for energy communities. The definitions of Citizen Energy Communities and Renewable Energy Communities had been transposed into national legislation, but significant gaps remained in their practical implementation. Regulations governing electricity sharing, settlement mechanisms, and access to data were still missing or insufficiently detailed. Although important amendments were made after 2021 as part of the transposition of the Electricity Market Directive (EMD) and Renewable Energy Directive (RED), the regulatory environment remained incomplete and uncertain.

Beyond the legal framework, the main challenge was to ensure that the establishment of energy communities brought tangible benefits to citizens. There were few incentives to formally register as an energy community, and the market and financial environment did not yet provide adequate support. In addition to subsidies, tailored financial instruments and simplified administrative procedures were needed to make community energy initiatives viable.

Since 2020, more than 20 consortia have received state funding to establish pilot energy communities in Hungary. However, in the following years it became clear that only a few of these initiatives could reach the operational or registered stage. By October 2025, only 13 consortia (five of which were not financed through the two national calls) had achieved official registration. This slow progress was evident well before the COMMENCE project started, reflecting persistent legal uncertainty, weak community structures, and the absence of feasible business models. These systemic challenges provided the foundation and rationale for Hungary's engagement in the COMMENCE project.

Project activities and outputs

In May 2024, MTVSZ (National Society of Conservationists) prepared the Hungarian Policy Overview, summarising the national legal framework, gaps, and institutional roles. Based on this analysis, MTVSZ identified several focal areas for policy dialogue and capacity building.

During spring and summer 2024, MTVSZ organised field visits and community meetings in Veresegyház, Budapest-Pesthidegkút, Szentendre, Parádsasvár and Miskolc. The purpose of these meetings was to raise awareness about community energy and to assess local needs and readiness. The visits revealed recurring obstacles: a lack of early adopters willing to lead initiatives, limited cooperation between residents and local authorities, and insufficient technical or financial knowledge. These insights shaped the planning of the national workshops and the development of practical guidance materials.

The first National Workshop served as a central knowledge-sharing and networking event for Hungarian stakeholders. MTVSZ invited representatives from municipalities, energy experts, NGOs, and policymakers to discuss European best practices and the current Hungarian legal situation. Presentations from Angela Holzmann (Austrian Energy Agency, Austria) and David Blažek (Frank Bold, Czech Republic) illustrated how layered renewable energy systems and stepwise legislative progress enabled successful energy sharing abroad. Participants engaged in lively discussion with Hungarian experts, exploring how these experiences could inspire national solutions.



◀ Figure 8: First national workshop in Hungary (Source: MTVSZ)

Following the workshop, MTVSZ began developing the Hungarian National Guidelines for Energy Communities. This document aimed to provide a realistic, actionable framework for new initiatives. Drawing on national legal expertise and stakeholder consultations, nine distinct project model concepts were elaborated, covering topics such as condominium-based sharing, municipal partnerships,

public institution models, and mixed ownership structures. These models are now used as reference materials for early-stage community initiatives.

In April 2025, the Austrian Energy Agency and Wise Europa organised an international study tour in Austria under the COMMENCE project. MTVSZ coordinated the participation of the Hungarian delegation, which included ten representatives from municipalities, expert organisations, and the Ministry of Energy, along with members of the MEKH licensing department, who participated in the project at their own expense. The tour offered first-hand exposure to successful Austrian energy communities, their governance structures, and the supporting legislative environment.

Communication and dissemination

MTVSZ maintained an active communication strategy throughout the project. The organisation shared COMMENCE-related content via Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as the channels of its own community energy initiative, KESZ – Community Energy Service Company. Posts reached between 500 and 8000 users, with the most popular topic being energy sharing in condominiums. MTVSZ's communication extended beyond social media through expert interviews, podcasts, and short video clips, each reaching more than 10,000 listeners. Coverage by national media outlets such as 24.hu further amplified the project's visibility.



◀ Figure 9: Project article on 24.hu website (Source: MTVSZ)



Az energiaközösségeket tekintve Magyarország meglehetősen elmaradottnak számít a régióban: hazánkban csupán kilenc ilyen kezdeményezés létezik, míg Ausztriában mintegy hétezer, de Csehországban is több mint ötven. Miért

project's communication helped demystify the concept of energy communities for citizens and encouraged local actors to consider participation.

Good practices and benefits

The study tour provided valuable insights into how long-term, step-by-step policy support and municipal engagement made Austrian energy sharing a success. Hungarian participants shared their impressions widely within professional circles, inspiring further discussions on replicating good practices in the Hungarian context.

The COMMENCE project contributed to strengthening Hungary's regulatory and professional foundations for energy communities. MTVSZ's analytical and educational outputs – especially the Policy Overview, National Guideline, and model concepts – have been shared across multiple national and international contexts. The CEE Legal Overview produced within COMMENCE served as a reference in other EU-funded initiatives such as Solar4CE-Cities and DECA. MTVSZ integrated COMMENCE findings into training materials for community energy development, policy consultations, and its broader advocacy activities.

Synergies between COMMENCE and other international efforts are a key achievement. In the LIFE RePower the Regions project, MTVSZ used its COMMENCE experience to promote citizen-led planning and monitoring mechanisms for the just transition in Central and Eastern Europe. These linkages ensured that Hungarian lessons informed European-level dialogue and policy innovation.

Legislative contributions and emerging communities

Parallel to stakeholder engagement, MTVSZ played an active role in policy advocacy. In May 2024, colleagues joined two working committees responsible for drafting amendments to the Electricity Act. MTVSZ proposed key legal clarifications: recognising associations as an appropriate legal form for energy communities and allowing them to provide energy efficiency services as part of their portfolio. Both proposals were accepted, and the Hungarian Parliament adopted the amended legislation in October 2024.

Following government reorganisation and staff changes at the Ministry of Energy, further transposition of the EMD resumed in spring 2025. MTVSZ continued its advocacy efforts, focusing on creating a functional regulatory environment for electricity sharing and improving conditions for first-mover communities. The organisation prepared targeted Policy Briefings for the Ministry of Energy, the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority (MEKH), the National Energy Agency (NEÜ), the Association of Hungarian Energy Trader Companies (MEKSZ) and the Hungarian National Bank (MNB). Key recommendations included simplifying the registration template for energy communities, accelerating the roll-out of smart meters for households, and enabling partial supply contracts for members receiving **shared electricity**. **MTVSZ also called for** a review of crowdfunding regulations to create a secure, transparent framework for citizen investments in renewable energy projects. Two of the bilateral meetings – with the Authority and the Energy Agency – took place on 10 November 2025, and the meeting with the Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Energy was held on 26 November, where the content of the Policy Brief was discussed.

Finally, the COMMENCE project also helped initiate a pilot energy community applying the new legal form and activity scope, demonstrating practical feasibility.

Challenges and lessons learnt

While progress has been made, several challenges continue to hinder the broader uptake of community energy initiatives in Hungary. Market actors, including energy suppliers and traders, remain hesitant or resistant to develop fair contractual arrangements for shared electricity. Many see energy communities as competitors, not partners, and their pricing practices often make participation economically disadvantageous for both prosumers and recipients.

Although the Electricity Act now enables the formation of energy communities, implementing energy sharing in practice remains complex. Technical standards and data exchange mechanisms are under development, and clear business rules are still missing from supplier and DSO frameworks. Recognising this, the Ministry of Energy has recently shifted attention toward enabling energy sharing in multi-apartment buildings. Preparatory work for regulatory and technical frameworks

began in April 2025, led by the new Head of the Electricity Department, with MTVSZ contributing expert materials and legal analysis.

Key lessons learnt:

- Sustainable community energy development requires not only legal definitions but practical regulatory and market instruments.
- Civil society engagement in policymaking ensures that emerging rules reflect real community needs.
- Stronger cooperation among municipalities, DSOs, and citizen groups is vital to overcoming technical and financial barriers.
- Long-term commitment and pilot demonstration are essential to build trust among market actors.

Poland

Context and initial situation

Poland adopted its first legislation on energy communities in 2016, when energy clusters (klastry energii) were introduced into national law. Subsequently, a number of communities decided to explore this form of activity, resulting in the registration of several entities in the national register. However, as the rest of the legal framework did not follow these initial changes, most of these entities did not proceed to full operational phase.

The later implementation of the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package, although delayed, did not substantially improve the regulatory environment for energy communities in Poland. The definition of energy communities in national law still diverged from EU concepts, and the system remained highly centralised, with limited incentives for collective energy production and sharing, and without a coherent vision of their role in the national energy framework.

An attempt to address the remaining barriers and to unlock the potential of citizen energy was undertaken through the publicly financed KlastER project, carried out by the AGH University of Science and Technology in cooperation with the Ministry of Development, which was responsible for promoting decentralised energy development. The outcome of this project was a draft Strategy for Distributed Energy Development, endorsed by the Ministry but never formally adopted by the government.

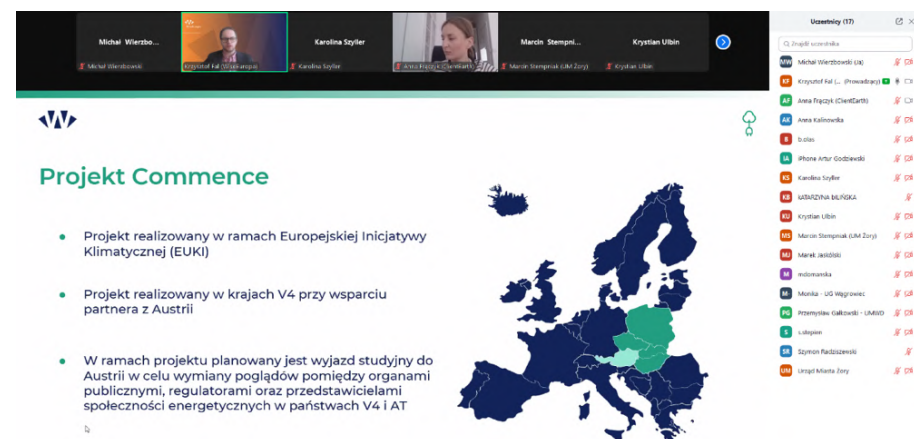
To sum up, although Poland was among the front-runners in Central and Eastern Europe in introducing dedicated legislation for energy communities, the lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework and the dominant approach based on centralised energy generation prevented their full-scale development. Nevertheless, despite these barriers, Poland remained relatively advanced in implementing community energy initiatives compared to other CEE Member States, with examples of successful entities such as Z-Klaster, an energy cluster in south-western Poland.

Project activities and outputs

Within the COMMENCE project, WiseEuropa acted as the Polish partner responsible for research, stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy activities supporting the development of energy communities.

In the analytical phase, WiseEuropa prepared and published the National Guidelines on Energy Communities in Poland, a comprehensive reference document summarising the regulatory and institutional landscape. The Guidelines mapped the main legal provisions related to clusters and cooperatives, identified the gaps in transposition of the RED II and IEMD, and described the administrative and technical procedures necessary to follow in order to establish an energy community. The document quickly became a recognised point of reference for municipalities, regulators and investors seeking clear information on how to start and operate local energy initiatives.

In the capacity-building phase, WiseEuropa organised two national workshops gathering representatives of local governments, regulatory bodies, energy clusters, NGOs and private actors. The discussions focused on practical barriers, emerging financing mechanisms and the changing role of communities in balancing the Polish power system. Both workshops were well attended and followed by extensive dialogue with stakeholders, helping to translate the analytical findings of the National Guidelines into practical steps for stakeholders.



The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are video thumbnails for participants: Michał Wierzbowski, Krzysztof Fal, Karolina Szyler, Marcin Stępnik, and Krystian Ułbin. Below the thumbnails is a list of participants with their names and status icons. The main content area displays a slide titled "Projekt Commence" with a map of Europe. The slide contains three bullet points:

- Projekt realizowany w ramach Europejskiej Inicjatywy Klimatycznej (EUKI)
- Projekt realizowany w krajach V4 przy wsparciu partnera z Austrii
- W ramach projektu planowany jest wyjazd studyjny do Austrii w celu wymiany poglądów pomiędzy organami publicznymi, regulatorami oraz przedstawicielami społeczności energetycznych w państwach V4 i AT

▲ Figure 10: Second National Online Workshop in Poland (Source: WiseEuropa)

Additionally, WiseEuropa contributed to the Field Visit in Austria (April 2025), which provided an opportunity for Polish participants to learn from established Austrian community models. The knowledge gained during this visit was later used in follow-up discussions in Poland, including an expert workshop held in Lower Silesia, in cooperation with the regional administration, to explore potential community projects in the region and to consider how the Austrian experience could be adapted to Polish conditions.

In the advocacy phase, WiseEuropa developed a Policy Brief and National Policy Recommendations addressing regulatory and institutional reforms needed to integrate energy communities into the broader energy framework. The recommendations included, among others:

- 1 Developing a long-term national vision for community energy, reflected in the updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP).
- 2 Creating a techno-economic model for community and cluster operations within the Polish power system and energy market.
- 3 Establishing a “National contact point for citizen energy” to serve as a knowledge and support hub for local initiatives.
- 4 Implementing training and advisory programmes for municipalities to build local capacity.
- 5 Launching a pilot debt-financing scheme with partial state guarantees to improve the bankability of projects.

These recommendations were used as the basis for bilateral meetings with key public institutions, including the Energy Regulatory Office (URE), the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, the Marshal Office of the Lower Silesia Region, and the Bureau of Research and Analysis of the Polish Parliament (BEOS) – an analytical support office assisting Members of Parliament and Senators in legislative work.

Communication and dissemination

Many activities carried out by WiseEuropa within the COMMENCE project attracted interest from national and industry media. Information about the Polish workshops, publications and study visit appeared in well-recognised professional outlets, helping to raise public awareness of community energy and to extend

the project’s reach beyond its direct participants. In cooperation with Newseria, WiseEuropa has also prepared an article promoting the policy brief. Its distribution resulted in over 10 publications on industry portals.

Selected examples include:

- Publication on the first national workshop in Poland [Dialog z interesariuszami: WYZWANIA DLA ENERGETYKI OBYWATELSKIEJ W POLSCE – Nowa Energia](#)
- Publication on the Polish national guidelines [Raport: KRAJOWE WYTYCZNE DOTYCZĄCE WSPÓLNOT ENERGETYCZNYCH W POLSCE – Nowa Energia](#)
- Publications on the field visit [Austriackie społeczności energetyczne oparte na OZE - Polityka; Austriackie społeczności energetyczne oparte na OZE – Nowa Energia](#)
- [Publication on the Polish Policy Brief](#)

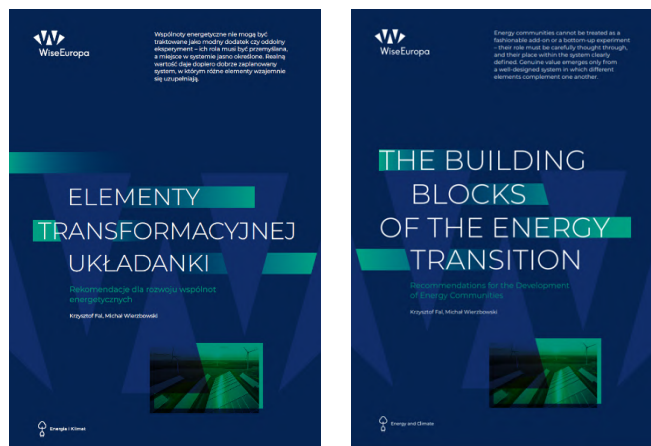
These publications, together with WiseEuropa’s social-media outreach and online posts announcing the release of the national guidelines and policy brief or announcing the organisation of workshops ensured broad dissemination of project results and strengthened the visibility of community-energy topics in Polish public debate. The consistent presence of COMMENCE outputs in professional media confirmed growing recognition of WiseEuropa’s expertise and its role in shaping the discussion on citizen energy in Poland.

Good practices and benefits

The COMMENCE project considerably strengthened the visibility of community energy in Poland and helped consolidate the expert and institutional ecosystem surrounding it. WiseEuropa’s activities combined evidence-based research, practical guidance and policy dialogue, resulting in a tangible contribution to both knowledge and implementation.

A major achievement was the recognition of WiseEuropa’s analytical outputs as credible and policy-relevant materials by national and regional authorities. The Policy Brief “Elements of the Transformational Puzzle” was officially distributed among ministries and regional governments, providing data-driven proposals for

future regulatory and institutional changes. It has also been translated into English.



◀ Figure 11: Policy Brief “Elements of the Transformational Puzzle” (Source: WiseEuropa)

Equally important were WiseEuropa’s contributions to national consultations on the update of the National Energy and Climate Plan, as well as on two key strategic documents – the Long-Term Development Strategy 2050 and the Medium-Term Development Strategy 2035. These inputs underlined the lack of integration between community energy and national strategic planning and advocated for a more consistent role of citizen initiatives within the Polish energy mix and a clearer recognition of their potential benefits for the system.

The Lower Silesia regional workshop served as an example of how analytical work can be translated into policy dialogue and local capacity building. It gathered representatives of the regional administration, energy clusters and municipal actors, and became a starting point for continued cooperation between the region and WiseEuropa in 2025, with a view to identifying concrete community projects.

Legislative contributions and emerging communities

In addition to its analytical and capacity-building work, the COMMENCE project contributed directly to strengthening the policy and institutional environment for energy communities and to the emergence of new initiatives.

The Policy Brief and National Policy Recommendations developed by WiseEuropa outlined specific regulatory and institutional reforms needed to integrate energy communities into the broader energy framework, ranging from long-term vision building and NECP integration to financing instruments and advisory support structures. These proposals were discussed with national and regional authorities and fed into ongoing policy debates on the future of the Polish energy system.

As a direct outcome of the COMMENCE project, WiseEuropa also received three Letters of Support from newly emerging or developing energy communities confirming that the project’s analyses, workshops and consultations provided them with practical knowledge and tools to proceed with their own initiatives. These confirmations demonstrated that the project’s impact went beyond awareness-raising and effectively contributed to the creation of new community structures and to strengthening existing ones.

Challenges and lessons learnt

At the same time, several systemic challenges remain. The legal framework for energy communities is still fragmented and complex, discouraging smaller entities from entering the market. Financial and administrative barriers persist, and there is a lack of a coherent vision integrating community energy into national system planning.

Nevertheless, the COMMENCE project created a new dynamic in Poland – one based on cooperation between regulators, local governments and communities – laying the groundwork for more inclusive and decentralised energy development in the coming years. An important lesson is that sustained policy dialogue, combined with practical guidance and targeted support for frontrunner communities, is essential for gradually overcoming systemic barriers and turning early legal provisions into functioning, citizen-led energy structures.



Lessons Learnt Report

COMMENCE: Community Energy in Central Europe

Project in short:

The **COMMENCE project** advanced energy communities (ECs) in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia to foster a clean energy transition and energy market decentralisation. Key activities included developing national guidelines, elaborating policy briefs with actionable recommendations for decision-makers, conducting eight national workshops, and organising a field visit to Austria. This effort successfully supported the establishment of over 16 energy communities in the Visegrad Four region.

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