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NRGCOM ROUNDTABLE

ENERGY COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRIA

September 11th, 2024

Forschung Burgenland

Legal Forms of Energy Communities

Austria

Legal Forms of Energy Communities

Based on general observations and trends, the distribution of EC registrations in Austria can be assumed to follow the following order:

Association (Verein)

Cooperative (Genossenschaft)

Other legal forms (GmbH, AG, OG, KG, GmbH & Co KG)

Associations and cooperatives have several advantages over other legal forms:

- They are well-known in the population and enjoy a high level of trust.
- They are already restricted in their ability to make profits by their legal form.
- They are able to fulfill the energy legal requirements from the EAG and EIWOG.
- They are focused on the promotion of their members.
- It is worthwhile to conduct a "Quick-Check" of the criteria for the establishment and operation of an EC in advance and to consider all criteria. In essence, the two legal forms, association and cooperative, cover the relevant criteria, but there are differences in individual points (e.g. liability issues, start-up costs and administrative expenses)
- At present, most ECs are founded as associations or cooperatives.

Fact Sheet on legal forms of energy communities (in german language): [Ratgeber-Rechtsformen-Erneuerbare-Energie-Gemeinschaften.pdf \(energiegemeinschaften.gv.at\)](#)

Regulatory Framework

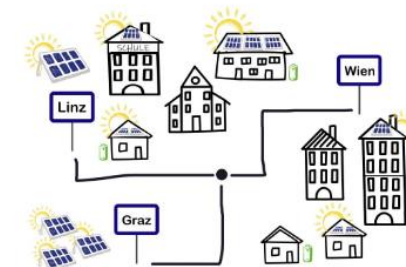
Legal Framework for RECs: all based in EAG§ 79 and ELWOG §16c

- RECs may generate, consume, store, and sell energy from renewable sources.
- Membership includes natural persons, municipalities, small and medium-sized enterprises, etc.
- RECs must be organized as associations, cooperatives, etc., with at least two members.
- Purpose must focus on ecological, economic, or social community benefits



Legal Framework for CECs: all based in EIWOG §16b

- CECs may generate, consume, store, or sell self-generated energy
- Membership includes natural persons, legal entities, or local authorities
- CECs must consist of two or more members and be organized similarly to RECs
- Profit-making is not the priority for CECs.



Note: In order to be able to implement energy communities in practice, a number of follow-up regulations were necessary (for example, for the reduced system utilisation fees for RECs).

Stakeholders and Networks

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Concept of the energy community

What goals are to be achieved with the EEG?

- Active participation in the energy transition (expanding the use of renewable energy sources, reducing the CO₂ footprint, etc.)
- Economic benefits through financial incentives when participating in EEGs (price stability, more favourable prices than with the energy supply company, reduced grid costs...)
- Social community aspects (addressing energy poverty, introducing sharing concepts, raising awareness, strengthening the sense of community...)
- Strengthening decentralisation (active energy management, increasing the self-consumption rate,...) in future also avoiding the transport of surplus generation via the grid.
- Community investment (energy communities can and should grow, utilisation of more and diverse energy sources, new opportunities for community activities,...)

Note: Contrary to the original expectation of the legislature, few generation plants in Austria are built and operated by energy communities themselves; the rule is that members contribute their existing or new generation plants.

Typical starting points for an initiative

- Sharing in the family / among friends
- The municipality as a starting point
- Regional / supra-regional initiatives

Target group profiles and communication messages

Example: Young families – 25+ years, little money left, urban and rural areas, 3-6 people

While many key messages apply to all target groups, there are also some special key messages that can help you get through to young families.

- ✓ You can be part of an energy community without having to contribute financially.
- ✓ Participation is not complicated and takes little time.
- ✓ Create something of value for yourself and your family.
- ✓ You can improve your children's future without much effort.

Avoid these messages

- Statements that put them under pressure and create a bad conscience
- Unclear details about costs
- Information that is too complicated to understand and makes the participation process appear time-consuming

How do I reach young families?

To see how to engage your audience, view our [communication activities](#) and [white label materials](#). To inform young families specifically, these actions may help:

- Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)
- Educational games (card games, etc.)
- Events (e.g. picnic)

Full catalogue of target groups: [Target group profiles \(sharer Renewables.eu\)](https://sharer Renewables.eu)



to reach multipliers

pupils – 10 to 18 years, no money available, urban and rural area, have spare time, can get their parents to take

from different backgrounds, so you may need to apply different strategies accordingly (for some of them you may focus on benefits for the family, for others on climate protection).

Encourage your family to join an energy community.

You can be an example for your classmates.

- ✓ Learn more about renewable technologies and their environmental benefits.
- ✓ The time you spend on the project is time spent on climate protection.

Avoid these messages

- Statements that are too complicated to understand
- Unclear information about the costs
- Unnecessary focus on financial investment, because this group cannot invest
- Condescending, disrespectful comments based on a stereotypical view of children
- Supposedly cool or funny campaigns that have not been double-checked with real pupils

How do I reach pupils?

To see how to engage your audience, view our [communication activities](#) and [white label materials](#). To inform pupils specifically, these actions may help:

- Fact sheets (if the topic is discussed in class)
- Social media (e.g. Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat)
- Presentations

Full catalogue of multipliers: [How to reach: Multipliers \(sharer Renewables.eu\)](https://sharer Renewables.eu)

Establishment of Energy Communities

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What are the requirements for establishing an energy community?

Energy communities must consist of **at least two participants** and include a generation plant.

When setting up generation plants, the **requirements** of the respective federal state and the technical guidelines of the respective distribution system operator **must be observed**. Acceptance of the generation system must be carried out by a licensed company.

Every grid access within an energy community **requires a smart meter**. The grid operator is responsible for providing the smart meter free of charge. The smart meter is also useful for exchanging billing data between participants within the energy community.

Energy communities can be much larger than the minimum requirement of two participants. For example, it can be advantageous to purchase an energy storage system for the community in order to temporarily store energy and use it when it is needed.

ICT systems are optionally used to optimally coordinate consumption, generation and, if necessary, storage. The installed components communicate with each other via data interfaces. The implementation of these ICT systems is offered by professional providers.

[Online-Guide für die Gründung – Energiegemeinschaften](#)

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Step by step guide to establish an energy community

1. Define the energy communities goal

Set priorities and clarify which sector you want to start with: electricity, heating or mobility. Of course, your project can include all of these sectors, but in the beginning, it may be easier to focus on one. Define goals, sub-goals and a realistic timeframe for achieving them.

2. Get informations about energy communities concepts, promotion and strategies

Make your project succeed through sound technical and economic planning.

3. Speak with the people

It's easier to achieve your goals and move forward with the support of your community. Talk to people who could support your idea. Ideally try to involve those who support your ideas and goals, are known in the community and have a good reputation and are willing to spend some of their free time to support the process.

4. Talk to existing energy communities

Get in touch with founders of energy communities for experience and guidelines.

5. Define first energy project

With the help of our calculations tools and guidelines set your main goal of the energy community is to set-up new renewable energy or energy efficiency projects to reduce the fossil energy consumption in your community. You may start, for example, with a larger community-owned photovoltaic installation on a public building, or you may focus on the set-up of a small district heating network.

6. Bring the mayor and city/municipality council members on board

Although the involvement of local politicians, such as mayors or members of the municipality/city council, is not essential for every energy community project, it is highly recommended to involve them and motivate them to support you.

Step by step guide to establish an energy community

7. Involve professional planners

Depending on the first energy project that you want to implement as energy community, you may need professional planners. Smaller projects may be also planned by you or your supporters.

8. Clarify legal form, responsibilities and business model

Step by step and in accord with the other supporters, you should clarify the legal form, responsibilities, and business model of your community.

9. Get a critical mass of supporters

Now that you have defined your project idea, talked to existing energy communities, and got first important supporters on board, it is time to reach a critical mass of members.

10. Organize an information event for the community

To involve citizens, you could hold presentations at information events or even organise your own. The white label communication material offers you easy to use templates for flyers, factsheets, or newspaper articles.

11. Formally establish your energy community

Depending on the business model and the foreseen legal form of your project, it may involve various legal steps. The foundation an ideal occasion for a public celebration which will give your energy community additional visibility.

12. Start and take off

To set-up new energy projects, you may need to involve more citizens to participate.

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