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# Community power: opportunities and challenges of change across Europe

EESC Study

Workshop “Community-energy – Empowering local authorities and their communities to guide local sustainable energy roll-out “

5 May 2015

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## Policy changes in the EU:

- The **EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC**  
→ by 2020, 20% of the energy consumed in the EU has to be generated from renewable sources
- The **EU 2030 climate and energy package** in 2014:  
→ at least 40% GHG emissions reduction  
→ 27% of energy from renewable sources by 2030

*Juncker: “Europe should become Nr 1  
in renewable energy in the world”*



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## **The EU Renewable Energy Directive (2009)**

- national binding targets and an EU-wide target of 20% renewable energy by 2020 - on track to be achieved!
- statements on the benefits of the energy transition.

### **Today:**

- a few “big” players (in Germany: 4, in France: 1) producing electricity in centralized power plants.
- Consumers buy and pay for energy.
- But what about the future?



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## Preamble to the EU Renewable Energy Directive (2009)

- **Production of energy from renewable sources often depends on local or regional small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).**
- The **opportunities for growth and employment** that investments in regional and local production of energy from renewable sources bring about in the Member States and their regions **are important.** ...
- (3) ... the Commission and the Member States should therefore **support national and regional development measures** in those areas, encourage the exchange of best practices in production of energy from renewable sources between local and regional development initiatives and promote the use of structural funding in this area.



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## **Background: Preamble of the EU directive on RES (2009)**



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## Background: Preamble of the EU directive on RES (2009)

- (6) .... The move towards **decentralised energy** production has **many benefits**, including the utilisation of local energy sources, increased local security of energy supply, shorter transport distances and reduced energy transmission losses. Such decentralisation also fosters **community development and cohesion** by providing income sources and **creating jobs locally**. (...)



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## **Background: Preamble of the EU directive on RES (2009)**

- (43) .... In order to **stimulate the contribution by individual citizens** to the objectives set out in this Directive, the relevant authorities should consider the possibility of **replacing authorisations by simple notifications** to the competent body **when installing small decentralised devices** for producing energy from renewable sources."



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## Understanding:

- **RES** is much more than just a **technical question!** It`s on the **structure of the energy production**, on market and money
- we can **combine energy production and regional development!**
- Need for EU, national and regional policies and strategies specifically aimed at **empowering local/regional renewable energy generation**





## Research questions:

- What is the **real role** of civic society, what kind of involvement is foreseen/ happening: simply information, consultation or **active producers of energy**?
- Is civil society ready to play a role?
- Does the legal framework enable/ allow civil society to play that role?

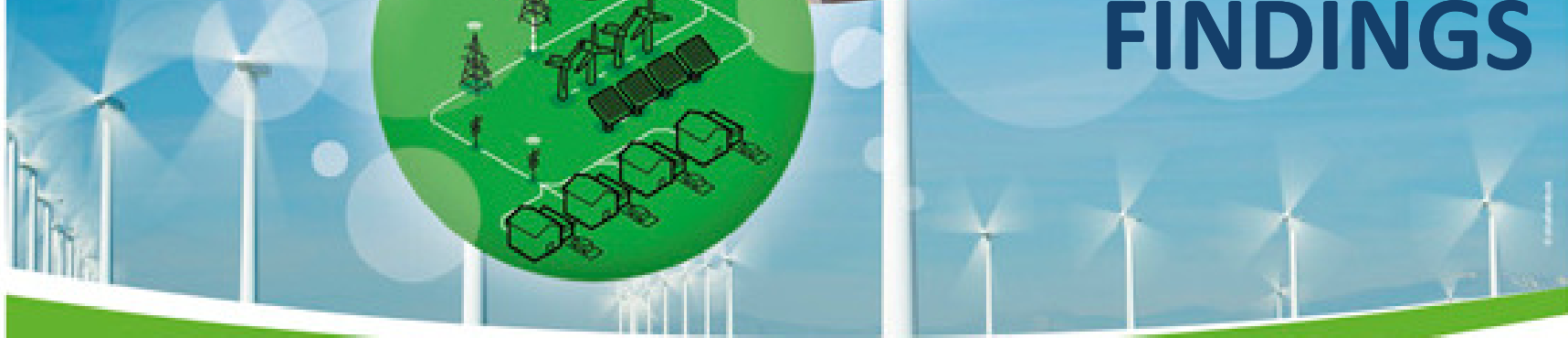


## Methodology:

- Desk research;
- Interviews with EU level stakeholders;
- Missions to six EU Member States (selected for a balanced geographical representation and different implementation levels):
  - Germany (March 2014)
  - Poland (April 2014)
  - France (April 2014)
  - United Kingdom (May 2014)
  - Lithuania (May 2014)
  - Bulgaria (July 2014)
- Stakeholder workshop in Brussels, September 2014.



# STUDY FINDINGS





## Main findings (1)

- **Local acceptance/ local opposition** of renewable energy infrastructure, **depending on the involvement**
  - Stakeholder want to make use of **their** local resources, such a wind, solar and biomass ...
  - ... “we will not allow to steel our wind”
  - technology exist – and becomes cheaper and cheaper
- **civic energy – a new phenomena and movement**



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## **Civic energy:**

- Decentralized renewable energy generation by citizens, communities, local authorities, charities, NGOs, farmers, cooperatives or SME`s



## Main findings (2)

- Civil society is ready to be a major driver of **the energy transition ...**
  - ... contributing with human resources, funds and creativity;
  - Shared **local socio-economic benefits and incomes** that stay within the communities;
- **Climate protection, regional development/ business, job creation**



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## What is needed to promote civic energy?

1. Favourable policy frameworks for civic energy
2. Simple administrative procedures
3. Effective support mechanisms // level playing field
4. Grid development and management
5. Participatory and transparent policy dialogue

→ Political willingness



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## **1. Favourable policy frameworks for civic energy:**

- **Long-term, stable renewable energy policy frameworks** that provide investment security;
- **Civic renewable energy integrated as explicit priority** into energy planning, regional and rural development policies at all levels.





## 2. Simple administrative procedures:

- Simple, fast, transparent and affordable **administrative procedures**;
- **One-stop shops** offering guidance in the planning process through to deployment;
- Reasonable costs and waiting times for **grid connection**;
- Renewable electricity of the magnitudes of civic energy should be **exempt from procedures creating disproportionate burden**, such as direct marketing obligations.



### 3. Effective support mechanisms

- **Feed-in priority** for electricity from renewable sources.
- **Feed-in tariffs** should be the main form of support for civic renewable energy.
- **Net-metering** for civic power production.
- **Tenders and auctions** can put a disproportionate burden, or even exclude small energy producers.



## 4. Grid development and management

- **Invest in grid renovation and improvements** necessary to keep up the pace of renewables' roll-out.
- Accelerate the development of **smart grids** to optimise energy management, reduce peak loads and allow for a higher share of renewables.



## 5. Participatory and transparent policy dialogue

- Design, implement and review renewable energy policies in **continuous dialogue with civil society**.
- Launch a transparent and objective policy dialogue on the **long-term costs and benefits of the energy transition**, and on their fair distribution.
- The **social consequences of the energy transition** must be adequately addressed by strategies to help mitigate adverse effects on jobs and on socially weak households.



## Main findings (3)

- **Highly motivated civil society** in all of the visited countries, aware of the opportunities for local socio-economic development offered by renewable energy.
- **Frustrations** with bureaucratic hurdles and with the non-recognition of civic energy by policy makers, and **anxiety about current policy reforms**.
- **No** consistently implemented, **targeted policy support for civic renewable energy** at any level
- **EU Directive is not implemented.**  
→ **political willingness?**



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... towards a new energy policy!







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## **Changing the future of energy: civil society as a main player in renewable energy generation**

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**Report publication:  
January 2015**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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