Energy communities

This free, short course explores what an energy community is, why they are important, and the benefits of being part of one.

You might be:

- Curious as to what an energy community is and how it could benefit you and your household.

- Interested in reducing your energy consumption and saving costs.

- Part of a household which both consumers and produces energy and has an interest in community energy.

This course will deepen your understanding of the digital energy transition and support your own digital energy journey! The course lasts for around 30 minutes. It is a self-paced, stand-alone course and part of the suite of 12 courses called Digital Energy Essentials.

At the end of the course, we suggest some further learning materials for you to explore, including the course What is the Digital Energy Transition? If you are unfamiliar with what digital energy is and the reasons behind moving towards digitising our production and consumption of energy, you may want to start with this course.

This course is part of a suite of learning materials developed by the Every1 project which aims to enable and empower everyone's engagement in the energy transition. You can find out more about the project here: **https://every1.energy**

How will I be awarded an Every1 digital badge?

You must enrol on the course, view all sections of the course content, and successfully complete the short quiz.

Course learning outcomes

After studying this short course, you should be able to:

- Explain what an energy community is and their role in Europe's digital energy transition.
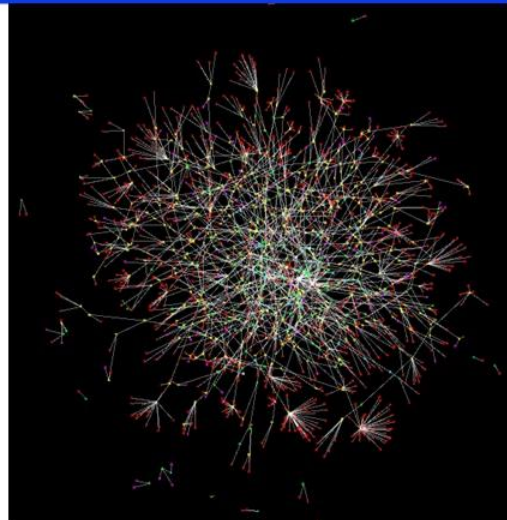- Understand the benefits of an energy community for both individuals and the wider community.

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Energy communities EVERY1

If you view all sections of this course and complete the short quiz, you will be awarded an Every1 digital badge.

Learning outcomes

After studying this short course, you should be able to:

➢ Explain what an energy community is and their role in Europe's digital energy transition.

➢ Understand the benefits of an energy community for both individuals and the wider community.

Introduction

Energy communities are local initiatives that can help everyone engage with the digital energy transition.

In this course we take a closer look at what energy communities are and what their role is within the European digital energy transition.

We look at why you might want to get involved and join an energy community. You might want to save money, are interested in connecting with others interested in the same topics or be an energy prosumer (e.g. be both a consumer and producer of energy).

What is an energy community?

In this article In focus: Energy communities to transform the EU's energy system energy communities are described as "legal entities that empower citizens, small businesses and local authorities to produce, manage and consume their own energy".

Anyone can become involved in an energy community. Energy communities can also take different forms, depending on their members needs.

For example, some energy communities might focus on the production of energy, whilst others might focus on the storage or distribution of energy. There are a range of different energy related services that might also be provided to energy community members.

What is an energy community?

Across Europe, there are three common models for energy communities.

These models can be described as follows:

- Direct agreement with an electricity generator (rather than electricity supplier that usually provides household electricity supplies) which enables the energy community to buy energy directly and in bulk. These are sometimes called *Power Purchase Agreements* (PPA).
- Using membership fees to fund the production of energy by providing financial support for production installations.
- Linking energy consumers and producers in the same region, so that individual households can buy and sell energy according to their national legislation.

Different models may also be combined depending on member needs.

What is an energy community?

Under EU law, energy communities can take the form of any legal entity including an association, a cooperative, a partnership, a non-profit organisation or a limited liability company.

Digitalisation enables and supports energy communities. For example, digital technologies have an important role to play in managing the buying and selling of energy generated by renewables such as household solar panels.

National legislation is also key to determining what form an energy community can take.
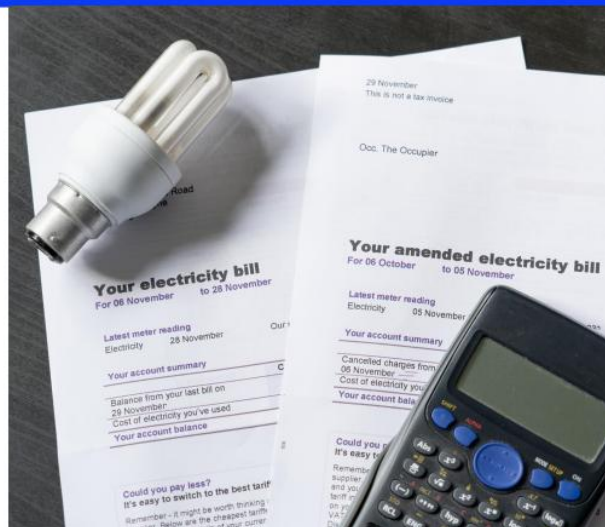
Energy communities within the European context

The article In focus reports that "...as much as 83% of all EU households could contribute to renewable energy production, demand response and/or energy storage in 2050."

As seen in the last slide, energy communities can empower individuals and households to be involved in different aspects of energy production.

Consequently, energy communities have a specific and important role in the European digital energy transition.

Energy communities within the European context

There are a range of European directives that support energy communities across the bloc. Central to these is the Clean Energy for all Europeans package from 2019 which gives consumers the right to choose and take energy supply, production and storage into their own hands, either individually as prosumers, or collectively through energy communities.

In May 2022 the European Commission launched its REPowerEU plan which aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels from Russia. As part of this initiative the EU aims to achieve one energy community per municipality with a population of more than 10,000 by 2025.

Benefits of an energy community

In energy communities, citizens can access low-cost renewable energy by taking ownership of production installations, as well as access information on how to increase energy efficiency in their households. Reliable and up-to-date information on energy efficiency can help you to better understand and control your energy usage and bills while keeping individual investments affordable.

At a local level, energy communities can contribute to the creation of jobs opportunities and enhance social cohesion through annual general assemblies and local activities.

Energy communities can also contribute to increasing public acceptance of renewable energy projects and make it easier to attract private investments in the clean energy transition.

Benefits of an energy community

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Energy communities can be an effective means of re-structuring our energy systems, by empowering citizens to drive the energy transition locally and directly benefit from better energy efficiency, lower bills, reduced energy poverty and more local green job opportunities

Energy communities can also empower local communities to join forces and invest in clean energy.

As seen earlier on in the course, acting as a single entity means energy communities can access all suitable energy markets on a level-playing field with other market actors.

Conclusion

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Energy communities support an increase in clean technologies, enable individual households to engage in the digital energy transition and empower communities.

They have a central role to play in Europe's digital energy transition and have the potential to involve large numbers of individuals and households across Europe.

Additional resources

➤ Review some European Commission reports, key figures and examples of Energy Communities in Europe in Energy Communities Repository products.

➤ Read some further Every1 learning materials on energy communities.

➤ Take a deeper look at different types of energy community in this academic article by Koltunov, M., Pezzutto, S., Bisello, A., Lettner, G., Hiesl, A. van Sark, W., Louwen, A. & Wilczynski, E. (2023) Mapping of Energy Communities in Europe: Status Quo and Review of Existing Classifications, Sustainability, 15, 8201.

Acknowledgements

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Acknowledgements

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The Adapter modified the Original Work "In focus: Energy communities to transform the EU's energy system" in the following respects:

· Selected excerpts from the article were used (e.g. definition of energy community, text from the EU legal framework section) and integrated into course.
· Selected excerpts from the article were revised and adapted (e.g. text from the sections Choosing an energy community model and What is an 'energy community'?).

Full attribution details of the images used throughout this course are given in the [attribution and copyright statement](#).

Course quiz

After successfully completing the quiz, you will be awarded your Every1 digital badge.

GO TO THE COURSE QUIZ

Course quiz

Now it's time to complete the course quiz – it's a great way to check your understanding of the course content.

This quiz contains 3 questions and a pass mark of 70% and above is required if you'd like to be awarded your Every1 digital badge.

You can review the answers you gave, and which were correct/incorrect, after each attempt has been completed.

If you don't pass the quiz at the first attempt, you are allowed as many attempts as you need to pass.

Grading method: Highest grade

Grade to pass: 21.00 out of 30.00