RESCOOP 20-20-20

REScoop ACTION GUIDE

www.rescoop.eu

"Engaging citizens in REScoops is about
waking up their cooperative angel…"

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ABOUT REScoop 20-20-20

REScoop 20-20-20 is an initiative launched by the Federation of groups and cooperatives of citizens for renewable energy in Europe with the support of the Intelligent Energy Europe Program (European Commission). The project is dedicated to promoting the models of renewable energy source cooperatives (REScoops) and to increasing the number of successful citizen-led renewable energy projects in order to achieve the European 20-20-20 energy goals by increasing the involvement of citizens.

Twelve organisations in seven European countries (Belgium, Denmark, UK, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands) have joined forces in REScoop 20-20-20. Coming from various backgrounds (renewable energy cooperatives, federations of REScoops or coops, local energy agencies, academic partners, and sustainability agencies), they all share a work experience related to renewable energy sources and cooperatives, and a tenacious desire to speed up local and citizen-led renewable energy projects across Europe.

Specifically, the project makes an inventory of the existing REScoops in Europe, learns from them, tests methodologies based on best practices and shares practical knowledge about setting up and running local and citizen-led initiatives with existing and new REScoops. It also promotes the REScoop approach to policy makers on a local, national and EU level.

The success of REScoop 20-20-20 relies on raising a collective and citizen-based dynamics around the project and the existent and upcoming renewable energy source cooperatives. The project website (www.rescoop.eu) plays the role of an interactive platform to give REScoops across Europe a chance to pool their knowledge, efforts and enthusiasm.

This action guide dedicated to the stakeholders' involvement in REScoop projects is another tool designed to help in the setting-up and development of RES-projects. A toolbox – gathering other useful REScoop 20-20-20 guides and handbooks among other interesting resources – and a Wiki are completing the set of tools made available on our interactive website.

THE REScoop ACTION GUIDE AT A GLANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

REScoops rely on groups of citizens who join together and cooperate at a local level in the field of renewable energy. Relying on bottom-up and collective dynamics, REScoops face the challenge of engaging citizens and multiple stakeholders in the organizational creation and development processes. This REScoop Action Guide has been developed to facilitate the development of REScoops and more particularly to implement and maintain concrete involvement of citizens and multiple stakeholders in these processes.

What is a REScoop and where are the citizens in REScoops?[1]

The word "REScoop" results from the contraction of "Renewable Energy Sources" (RES) and "cooperative" (coop). REScoops are groups of citizens, cooperatives or community-based organizations that cooperate and develop activities in the field of renewable energy sources, *i.e.* sources of energy that can be naturally replenished on a human time scale (solar, hydro, wind, biomass and geothermal). REScoops are involved in the energy transition movement towards renewable energy and develop the following activities: the production, supply and/or distribution of renewable energy, as well as the provision of other support services to members (for instance to help them reduce their energy consumption) and to other organizations.

REScoops are cooperatives in the sense of the ICA (International Cooperative Alliance) definition, *i.e.* "autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise". Not only cooperatives in the limited legal definition of the word, but rather all the groups of citizens inspired by the cooperative principles, are in the scope of REScoops.

REScoops tend to implement bottom-up and collective dynamics based on the active participation of citizens and the involvement of multiple stakeholders (local authorities, local economic players, other cooperatives, etc.). Some citizens become members of the cooperatives, i.e. owners and users of the cooperative; in that sense, citizens engage in the cooperative through the traditional governance mechanisms of the cooperative model. But citizens can wear different hats in REScoops: citizens can for example become directors of the board, volunteers or employees of the cooperative, being engaged in the organizational structure. They can also finance the cooperative, through their investment – they are then shareholders or investors - or through their consumption – they are then consumers. Citizens can also own production installations, individually or collectively; they then become producers. They can also remain as external stakeholders, such as residents living close to energy production installations, workers in the energy field (engineers, etc.), owners of the production sites/lands or roofs, people aware of social enterprises and/or environmental challenges, etc. These different hats do not imply the same level of involvement and the actions to take to engage these different types of audiences must then be adapted.

What is the REScoop Action Guide for and what it is not for?

The objective of the REScoop Action Guide is to highlight and explore the options for taking actions and setting up mechanisms in the development and operating phases of RES cooperative projects in order to engage citizens. But the aim of the REScoop Action Guide is not to give recipes to help to set up and develop RES projects from scratch; this kind of guides and toolkits already exist (see the

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[1] See the REScoop European Charter for an extended definition.

REScoop Toolbox). Starting from practical experiences and best practices, the idea is rather to design an "illustrated catalogue" of possible mechanisms, tools and actions on which REScoops, local communities and local authorities can draw to help citizens to join and get involved in RES cooperative projects.

How to use the REScoop Action Guide?

The REScoop Action Guide is targeted to REScoop initiators, local communities and local authorities to help them find answers regarding how to encourage citizens to join and get involved in REScoops. The first section identifies the early steps and the questions to ask to get a REScoop off the ground, among which who are we and what do we want to do together? The second section consists of a catalogue of mechanisms, tools and actions; it is structured around five dimensions in which citizens could be engaged: governance and organizational design, finance, production, consumption, and involvement and empowerment. Each mechanism or tool identified is illustrated by practical experiences and best practices, and the question of the application in all national contexts is considered. Finally, the conclusion comes back on some principles that should guide the setting-up of mechanisms, tools and actions in order to foster citizen involvement.

2. HOW TO GET STARTED RIGHT NOW?

You are a group of friends, neighbours or acquaintances and you want to begin something in the renewable energy field? This section proposes a number of questions or steps designed to structure the thoughts and actions of emerging groups.

1. "Who are we and what do we want to do together?"

The first step will be to define your project more clearly while leaving some room for future adaptations. The following questions can help in drafting your early project:

- Who are we?
- What do we want to do together?
- What are our common objectives?
- How to constitute the early group of stakeholders?

2. Talk to people, form a core group of people and define the project together

When you have defined the nature of the early stakeholders, the second step is to talk to people to invite them to join the project: go to meet your neighbours, friends, members of local associations, schools, farmers, local authorities, etc. Most people will be open to listen to you and will find in your project a practical way to move forward together.

> **Tool « Talking to people »**
>
> **Objective**: To design an attractive and to-the-point brochure or flyer to invite – and convince – people to join.
> **Tool:** Examples of flyers and brochures targeted to potential members.

When the core group of people is formed, organize a meeting in order to work on the project together to delimitate it and define its founding principles. The tool "Defining the project" (see Toolbox) can help you in organizing the group reflection.

> **Tool « Defining the project »**
>
> **Objective**: To work together on the definition, delimitation and collective understanding of the project.
> **Tool:** Reflection work in three steps to approach the issues of the vision, values, mission, activities, etc.

3. Organize yourselves

The core group of people who will lead the project has to organize and define the way they will function together, whether or not through a formal legal structure.

A first question to ask is "what are the assets/skills of each of us that could be mobilized for the project?" Indeed, anyone can bring assets to the group and mobilizing skills that people already have can save time and energy for all. Some of the skills/assets you might look for are technical knowledge, writing skills, computer skills, economic/financial analyst expertise, law expertise, media skills, strong roots in the community or political connections, leadership, creativity, social skills, etc.

When you have a clearer idea of who is good at what, you can see how to function together (on a formal or informal basis). If you choose to organize on a formal basis through the setting-up of a formal organization, be aware that it is the project that makes the legal form (and not the opposite), so ask the help of legal advisers (unless you have legal expertise within the founding group) to choose the legal form that best matches your project. Organizing requires making decisions

regarding organizational and governance aspects: How to take decisions together? What are the relationships among the internal actors? What are the modalities to enter or leave the REScoop? How to function with the cooperative principles? Etc.

Tools « Organizing yourselves»

Tool 1: collective writing of the organizational statutes (with all the founding members or through a taskforce)

Tool 2: Ask help to other REScoops or mentors on "how to set up the REScoop" and "how to transcribe the cooperative ideal into a REScoop?"

When you have a clearer view on how to organize yourselves, you can establish the planning with the steps to go through to launch the project and distribute the work and the tasks identified in the planning.

4. Explore the possibilities for the project and ask for help

Before launching your project, it is important to explore the various technical and financial options that are available. In doing this, never hesitate to ask for help: ask your members, other REScoops, mentors, federations, other cooperatives, local authorities, engineers, companies, installers, lawyers, experts of any kind. If your project stays the course, people will be pleased to concretely help you, mostly if you can put forward the community and collective dimensions. Particularly, you will have to look deeper into the various technical and financial options.

Financial aspects

Exploring the various options to finance your project is an important step in order to demonstrate its economic and financial feasibility. It is interesting to include the early founding members as well as experts, mentors or financial consultants in the reflection on the potential financing sources. Make sure to keep the financial model as simple and clear as possible.

The following questions should help in building the financial plan:
- What resources can the initial members bring?
- What resources can other stakeholders bring?
- What are the financial incentives in place to launch renewable energy projects?
- What are the profitability objectives?
- What investment schemes are available?
- What potential financing sources are available?
- What are the risks?

Tool « Financial plan »

Objective: To design the financial plan
Tool: Set of questions and examples of financial plans.

Technical aspects

Exploring the various options regarding the technical dimension of the project is an important step to assess the technical feasibility of your project. Again, it is interesting to include the founding members as well as external stakeholders, experts, mentors, mature REScoops, etc. in the reflection. Three aspects are important in this stage:
- Building the technical plan of the project: what energy sources? what location? what size? Etc.

- Working on the social acceptance of the project: involving the early members and citizens to address the acceptance problems and visit the residents nearby the installation potential site.
- Realizing the impact studies (noise, on the fauna, environmental, etc.) and involving the early members and citizens in these impact studies.

The Best Practice report shows that starting small can be an asset. Moving fast on small projects can attract rapid interest in the community. In this way the outcome of the project can attract media attention and the interest of other citizens. Sometimes, a small project is more likely to succeed and, as a consequence, the REScoop has more arguments for convincing citizens to join the project. REScoops may also be able to quickly accumulate initial capital that could be useful to develop bigger projects.

5. Launch your project and learn by doing

When you have identified the various options available, make your choices and get started. You will always be able to reorient the project and re-think your model in progress.

The following questions will help guide your decisions when your project is in progress:
- Is your project still in line with your vision, mission and strategy?
- To what extent are the citizens involved in the project?
- Is the project scalable?
- Can your project be replicated?
- Is your project helping your whole community?
- Is there something you can change? What advices can you give to newcomer initiatives?

6. Raise enthusiasm around your project

In order to scale up the project, you need to raise a collective dynamic around and mobilize an increasing number of citizens. Communication is of great interest to achieve this goal. Develop a media strategy relying on your success stories, share your experiences, choose relevant spokespeople for the project, go to meet the community and try to interest them in your project. Raising enthusiasm and mobilization will contribute to grow an strengthen your organization.

7. Stick to some principles

The following principles inspired from the cooperative principles should guide all the mechanisms, tools and actions taken.

Transparency and simplicity

Transparency is crucial to instil trust among citizens and stakeholders. Cooperatives must be transparent about the way they are functioning, but also about the outcomes of the cooperative (allocation of profits, investments in local community projects, etc.). Simplicity is also essential: it is important to keep a simple message and to keep the procedures, organizational structure, financial and investment schemes, etc. as simple and readable as possible.

Democracy and participation

Fostering citizen participation in the management and the governance of the cooperative is crucial, not only through the traditional mechanisms (general assembly and board of directors) but also through implementing bottom-up decision-making processes and giving space to collective thought.

However, the other side of the coin is the risk of democratic entropy, *i.e.* a deterioration of the democratic functioning of the cooperative regarding the representation of the members as well as their direct participation in the cooperative. Several factors are highlighted to explain why organizations at first set up on a democratic ideal are experiencing difficulties in maintaining democracy in practice: increase of the size of the cooperative, gradual formalization, burden of the market and of the competition, reinforcement of the external control, etc. REScoop members have to stay aware of this risk in order to prevent a weakening of the democratic vitality of the organization.

On-going dialogue, education & collective learning

To remain in a dynamic of continuous improvement and education, collective learning and dialogue within the organization but also with external stakeholders lead to encourage exchanges of experiences and learning from each other.

Cooperation and local anchorage

Fostering the cooperation between cooperatives in the sector or among various sectors and paying attention to remain locally anchored is also important to develop local and fruitful relationships and to keep the project in line with the community expectations.

3. HOW AND WHERE TO ENGAGE CITIZENS IN RESCOOPS?

The following section identifies tools and actions to take in order to engage citizens in five main areas of the REScoops: governing and managing the REScoop, financing, producing, consuming and informing and empowering the community.

Dimension 1 – GOVERNING AND MANAGING THE REScoop

First of all, REScoops by definition engage citizens in one way or another in the governance and in the organizational structure of the REScoop, by wearing different hats: members, directors, volunteers, etc. Each REScoop should conceive its governance structures not only according to the legal requirements but also with the aim of taking advantage of all the possible roles of these structures in terms of formulation and implementation of the missions, monitoring of the activities (efficiency and coherence with the missions), access to resources, connexions with external stakeholders, etc. The governance structures are often at least twofold: a structure that gathers all the members and takes the most fundamental decisions; and secondly a smaller committee that takes more operational decisions and supervises their implementation and management. In formal entities, these are referred to as, respectively, the General Assembly and the Board of Directors, the challenges of which will be described next. Yet, even in informal emerging initiatives where no such formal structures exist, this twofold organization seems useful.

General Assembly

The general assembly is a decision-making governance structure composed of the effective members of the organization. It is responsible for the achievement of the organizational mission, and in this respect, it takes the fundamental decisions in coherence with the organizational missions (such as electing the Board, monitoring the accounts, making important investments, changing name, location or core activities, etc.). In cooperatives and social enterprises, the general assembly is democratically organized, giving to all the members the same voting power (or at least not directly linking the voting power to the capital contribution). In REScoops, the general assembly generally gathers all the members of the organization, *i.e.* all the people or organizations that have a share in the REScoops.

To make sure the members can fulfill their roles, it is first important to be clear on the rights and obligations linked to the membership. In this respect, designing a "Membership brochure" is of particular interest to support the members in their position. The Membership brochure should address at least the following questions:

- What is the process for new members to join the REScoop?
- What are the rights and obligations of the members?
- What are the governance structures and how do they function? How can members get involved?
- How is the power distributed among the members?
- Are there different categories of members?
- Is there a membership subscription or fee?
- What is the process for leaving the REScoop?
- Etc.

> **Tool « Membership brochure »**
>
> **Objective**: To offer a clear view on the rights and obligations of the members.
>
> **Tool:** A brochure that addresses important questions related to the membership.

Regarding the functioning of the general assembly, it is important to ensure that the members of the general assembly can play their role effectively. Some elements can help in this area:
- Do the members receive transparent, clear and sufficient information?
- Are they sufficiently informed about the progresses and changes regarding the financial situation, the on-going projects, the legal changes, the organizational changes, etc.?
- Are the members sufficiently trained to play their role? Do the general assembly gather the right skills to assume its role?
- Are the members interested in the activities of the REScoop? How can they be better involved? (Ex: collective reflection on the REScoop project, visits of the sites, related activities, etc.)

Tool « Stakeholders »

Objective: To work together on the identification of the stakeholders and on a strategy to involve them in the REScoop through various modes.

Tool: Reflection work in three steps to approach the issues of who are the stakeholders and how to involve them in the project?

Board of directors

The board of directors is a key decision-making governance and management structure; it can be considered as the architect or steering committee of the project. In the main lines, the board of directors is responsible for managing and actively implementing the vision, mission and values of the REScoop. The board of directors is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the latter.

Various internal and external factors will influence the roles fulfilled by the board of directors, its composition and the way it functions: the size of the REScoop, the legal constraints, the available resources and skills, the organizational life-cycle, etc. There is no single "best way" regarding what a board of directors should precisely do, how many and which type of directors it should have, what rules it should follow, etc. Rather, these elements should be the results of a strategic reflection relying on the specific situation of the

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Tool « Board of directors »

Objective: To conduct a strategic reflection on the roles, composition and functioning of the board of directors in order to reconcile them with the specific situation of the REScoop.

Tool: A reflection tool to dynamically address the issues of the roles, composition and functioning of the board of directors.

REScoop. To make sure the directors are able to assume their roles, it is important to adopt a dynamic vision that combines and reconciles the roles, composition and functioning of the board of directors. The tool "Board of directors" can help you going through a set of questions in order to evaluate the coherence among these issues.

Similar to the general assembly, it is also important to make sure the directors have transparent and sufficient information to exercise their responsibility. Informing, training and involvement in the REScoop activities (through collective reflections, visits, related activities) are some mechanisms that can be set out.

Other governance structures

Besides the general assembly and the board of directors, other governance structures can be conceived. These mechanisms can be enforced with a consultative or formal voice; they can report to

the general assembly, to the board of directors or to the management team. They can be composed of members only or a combination of members, directors, volunteers or even external actors; they can focus on particular and punctual tasks or be in charge of permanent mechanisms.

For example, a Belgian REScoop – Lucéole – implemented workgroups composed by members and directors to work on issues related to the functioning of the REScoop; these workgroups have a consultative voice and they work for example on environmental impact studies, social inclusion, membership increase, etc.

This kind of mechanisms has the advantage to directly involve the directors, members and/or volunteers in the activities of the REScoop. It also maintains a lively dialogue between the members, the board and the volunteers as a way of "learning together" and capitalizing skills and experience by keeping the base of the REScoop continually connected to its activity.

Volunteering in the cooperative

Most REScoops partly rely on volunteers, at least during their development phase. Some REScoops have been set up relying only on volunteers, and some continue to develop only relying on volunteering without hiring employees.

Volunteers can develop a range of activities: they can contribute to finding appropriate locations for the renewable energy facilities, be in charge of the security checks of the installations, monitor and measure data, go to meet the neighbours or community members to explain the project and/or invite them to join, take part to impact studies, bring punctual technical, economic or legal expertise, spread the ideas and philosophy of the REScoop, etc. Volunteers, such as members and directors, become the spokespeople of the REScoop and really constitute the social capital of the REScoop.

Examples of REScoops involving volunteers in their organizational structure are numerous: Combrailles Durables or Som Energia for example developed interesting relationships and participation mechanisms for their volunteers.

Local support groups

If a REScoop is expanded towards a wide territory (beyond a specific community), it can promote the creation of local support groups, holding regular town meetings to explain and spread the REScoop business and social model to other interested citizens. A local group can also be the adequate intermediary between the members and the board in order to maintain the values and philosophy of the REScoop. This kind of REScoop grows through expansion based on the replication of such local groups.

The example of Som Energia and the way it has grown through local groups throughout the country is illustrative in this respect.

Information and transparency

Information and transparency are key in engaging citizens and maintaining trust from various stakeholders towards the REScoop. To make the useful documents and information available on the REScoop website or to keep a file physically at the head office of the REScoop with the useful documents available for the members,

> **Tool « Make information transparent »**
>
> **Objective**: To make available a set of organizational and useful documents for members, directors and/or volunteers.
>
> **Tool:** Examples of these useful documents can be found in the Toolbox.

directors and/or volunteers is already a step in the right direction towards transparency.

The following documents can be – for example – made available for the members, directors and/or volunteers (examples of these documents are available in the REScoop Toolbox):

- o Legal texts
- o Organizational statutes and bylaws
- o Organizational charter
- o Activity reports
- o A "Membership brochure" (see above)
- o Etc.

Dimension 2 – FINANCING THE REScoop

Citizens can be engaged in the REScoop through a financial contribution that can take various forms. Transparency and clear information is crucial in the area of financing in order to raise trust and build sustainable relationships. It is important to keep the financial model of the REScoop as simple and clear as possible in order to gain trust from potential investors.

Individual participation

REScoops give the opportunity to citizens to financially participate in the cooperative or directly to the project through two different modes: buying shares or giving loans.

Indeed, REScoops offer the opportunity to invest in a sustainable way by buying shares of the REScoop. Investors receive a sustainable financial and social return with the guarantee that the incomes generated by the project stay in the community or at least locally. In some REScoops (e.g. Som Energia, Meerwind, Energy4All), the investment scheme permits various ways of investing.

Attracting capital from outside the community through various financial implication schemes

Some REScoops do not have geographical or territorial restrictions regarding the investors. Sometimes it is possible to be an investor of the REScoop without the necessity of being either a member of the REScoop or even a member of the local community where the cooperative is established. The condition is to accept that a part of the profits will be reinvested in the community. In this way, a REScoop is not limited to funding from the community and can be supported by people or organizations from other locations (e.g. Torrs Hydro New Mills).

Financing the local economy

REScoops can provide capital for financing new projects of renewable energy production led by other community-based organizations. This is another way of allowing people from the local community to benefit from the REScoop activity itself.

For example, capital surplus can be reinvested in local community organizations for improving buildings in a sustainable way or in activities related to renewable energy. As an example, in 2010, the board of Kilbraur Co-op offered £1000 to three local schools for a specific project that would enhance the school environment and meet criteria relating to sustainable development.

Information and transparency

Information and transparency are key in engaging citizens to financially contribute to the REScoops. It is important to be transparent and as clearer as possible on what is going to be done with the profits and revenues from the activity of the REScoops.

The tool "Financial engagement" can be useful to make these issues clear for all types of investors; the document should at least answer the following questions:

- What are the different investment schemes available to the citizens in the REScoop?
- What are the rights and obligations linked to the different types of investment?
- What are the profit allocation rules?
- Is the profit distribution limited? If yes, to what extent?
- How is the rest of the profit reinvested?
- In what kind of projects? In local projects or outside the community?
- Etc.

> **Tool « Financial engagement »**
>
> **Objective**: To be transparent regarding the allocation of the profits from the REScoop activity.
>
> **Tool:** A document that explains clearly the rights and obligations for all the investors, being citizens or other stakeholders.

Dimension 3 – PRODUCING TOGETHER

REScoops give the citizens and other stakeholders such as the local authorities the opportunity to take an active part in the production of energy, thereby giving them the possibility to regain the energy issues.

Open communication for production planning

REScoops offer the citizens to participate in the reflection and planning phase for implementing RES facilities. REScoops can spend a lot of time communicating with citizens from villages where the facilities will be implemented. This plan can be based on visits to neighbourhoods, formal and informal talks with neighbours – e.g. information sessions to inform about the project itself and to explain the cooperative model – and articles in the local medias. This open communication process consists in intensifying the contacts with the people living close to expected RES facilities in order to create the best positive collective acceptance towards the project. The aim is to establish a dialogue with the community and answer the questions of local citizens through the organization of public meetings. Giving maximum information to people with emphasis on the social aspects of the project will ensure that citizens feel they have a real voice in its development. There are even examples in which children (Children Windmill in Belgium), landowners (Eeklo project of Ecopower) or developers (EWS Germany) can be included in the process.

Creation of consortia

Local governments, conventional business partners and REScoops can work together through consortia or other kinds of collaboration schemes. The role of REScoops can be included in local public policies or plans towards renewable energy. While this can bring visibility and growth opportunities to REScoops, the challenge for them is to keep their autonomy. Starting energy

projects in this way can work out as a win-win-win situation for citizens and different types of partners. One interesting example (among others) is Lochem Energie in the Netherlands.

Working together, sharing knowledge

REScoops provide the opportunity to share the knowledge and facilitate self-learning during the development process. Whoever has knowledge about renewable energy sources can find in the REScoop model an ideal place to share and propagate it. Given their participative approach, REScoops can be an opportunity for citizens to develop the necessary knowledge for a RES project and learn to implement it by themselves. The money, but also the knowledge, the ownership and the governance of the projects, remain in the community, which is a source of economic and social benefit for the community.

Cooperation between cooperatives

Instead of competing between organizations, the cooperative model promotes new ways of cooperation. Solidarity, sharing and learning from each other are principles rooted in REScoop model. A REScoop can be a mentor (a teacher) and an apprentice (student) at the same time, providing what it has learnt from its experience and incorporating what the others have learnt while developing their activity. The members themselves can learn to be teachers for other cooperatives (E.g. Energy4All in the UK).

Dimension 4 – CONSUMING TOGETHER

REScoops give the citizens the possibility to consume certified green energy in the production and management of which they have been actively involved.

Collective consumption

The REScoops buy or produce renewable energy and then sell it to their customers; some REScoops besides restrict the supply of energy to members only. It is recommended to keep the contracts as well as the tariffs for the consumer as transparent and simple as possible.

But the REScoop can also facilitate the purchase of energy technologies (like solar panels) or stimulate citizens to install renewable energy production units by facilitating their connection to the grid by paying special feed-in tariffs. It is important to take into account that in some cases the energy produced by the REScoop can be delivered with no additional production costs ("self-delivery" concept).

Energy savings

REScoops can also encourage their members or clients to save energy by reducing their consumption. In that way, this goes parallel with increasing their awareness of the economic and ecological challenges related to responsible energy consumption (e.g. Lochem Energie, EWS, De Eendragt).

Dimension 5 – INFORMING AND EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITY

Integration in community schemes

REScoops are closely linked to the community in which they emerge. Their goals and their actions should be included in broader community development schemes involving local public authorities, NGOs, social enterprises and businesses. Nevertheless, citizens should not necessarily wait for a global vision to emerge before acting. Indeed, concrete renewable energy and other community-driven projects may precisely give the impulse to build a more global vision. Through integrating different projects, including REScoops, in a broader community scheme, synergies may emerge as well as solutions that are not focused on one specific social or environmental issue.

New media ways for participating and being informed

There are not only communication tools but also specific spaces of participation beyond the general assembly, the working committees and the local groups. REScoops also use new medias. Facebook and Twitter are the most known, but more innovative and specific tools can be conceived. For instance, in Som Energia (Spain), a specific social network platform has been created to foster the interactions between members and thus the democratic vitality of the cooperative.

Education of the members and the community

Some REScoops engage in educational work, for instance by organizing conferences and meetings related to cooperative and energy issues. These meetings can be organized by volunteers, employeers and/or partner organizations. Together with other educational material (books, films, etc.), they are a way to increase the awareness of REScoop members, and more broadly the whole community, .

Advocacy, partnerships and networks

Some members (probably not all) may be interested in becoming advocates and lobbyists on community-based renewable energy issues in the context of the broader movement of energy transition. In the context of this broader movement, REScoops have much to gain in joining together to share experiences and best practices, and to organize their common visibility. While this is being done at the European level in the context of this project, local networking in different countries and regions is key to the development of REScoops in general. But networking among REScoops is not enough and both for their development and for the broader advancement of the energy transition, partnerships with NGOs, business and public authorities are to be encouraged at all levels, from local communities to transnational institutions.

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REScoop.eu federation

www.rescoop.eu

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