

Mapping the Social Impact of Greek Energy Communities

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In 2019, the EU agreed on a new energy rulebook - called the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package – to help meet its 2030 climate and energy objectives. This legislative package marked a strong shift towards the recognition of the environmental, economic and social benefits citizens and energy communities could contribute to transitioning away from fossil fuels. Greece was one of the first member states to introduce a legal framework for energy communities (law 4513/2018), designed to deliver environmental, economic, and social impacts, including tackling energy poverty, creating local jobs, and promoting community building. The environmental and economic impact of energy communities, most often calculated in carbon savings and financial returns, is widely studied and well understood by citizens, policy and decision makers. Inversely, the various types of social impact that energy communities can create remains an opaque area of study. The present research project aims to empirically unearth the various types of social impact that Greek energy communities are creating, through a series of workshops and participatory methods. Preliminary findings from a scoping literature review and a multi-stakeholder workshop including international academics and community energy leaders, showed that there's a plethora of social impacts being observed from energy communities across Europe. In fact, these impacts closely align with the 7 cooperative principles, such as democratization of governance (Democratic Member Control), skill building and education, strategic networking (Co-operation among Co-operatives) and community building (Concern for Community). The working paper will be presenting these findings coupled with the empirical data stemming from our work with energy communities in Greece.