

## **The case of Energy Communities as a key player of social entrepreneurship in the renewable energy sector in Greece**

The energy transition is in our doorstep, and while challenges raise second thoughts on demanding targets, those at the forefront are already reaping the benefits of their proactive response and willingness to invest in the future of green energy technologies. Energy Communities generate renewable energy with the aim to support the energy transition, combat energy poverty and promote energy democracy, thereby proving to be an important contributor to the Social and Solidarity Economy. This study seeks to evaluate the organizational maturity of Energy Communities in Greece after the introduction of Greek Law 4513/2018. Research data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which contained 25 closed-ended questions in a multiple choice format, under four distinct headers; Governance, Finance, Society-Environment and Legal framework. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 Energy Communities of various sizes and ages throughout Greece, yet, analysis was eventually based on feedback by only 19 Energy Communities which completed the questionnaire fully.

Main conclusions drawn from the study can be summarized as follows: i) Energy Communities seem to adopt good governance practices, such as increased majority required in general assembly of members, regular management team meetings with a specified agenda, and implementation of internal policies for outsourcing and managing financial risks, ii) in addition to member contributions, bank lending has been the most likely source of financing capital expenditure, iii) no systematic initiative has been taken to participate in Energy Community platforms or networks of social enterprises in Greece or abroad, and iv) recent amendments in the legislative framework regarding the distribution of the cooperative surplus, the possibility of converting Energy Cooperatives into corporations and the increase of capacity of net metering from 1 MW to 3 MW, have been taken positively by the majority of Energy Communities, in the context of dealing with energy democracy challenges.