

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Energy Communities in Practice

A conference on the implementation, tools and models of local energy transition through the APOLLO, ISLET, COMET and DBU/ECF Fast Forward Energy Communities projects

Date: 24–25 September 2026

Venue: Bluesun Hotel Elaphusa, Bol, island of Brač, Croatia

Working languages: Croatian and English, with interpretation provided

Organisers: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA, Green Energy Cooperative – ZEZ, and the Island Movement

The programme will be updated as participation is confirmed by speakers, panellists and partner institutions.

DAY 1 — 24 September 2026

Public conference day

Focus of the day: The EU programming and funding perspective, implementation in Croatia, experience from the field, decision-makers, and the role of the regional and local level in developing energy communities.

09:30 – 10:00	Registration and coffee Arrival of participants, registration and informal networking.
10:00 – 10:30	Conference opening • Marija Mioč, Head of Service, Directorate for Islands, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds • Marina Dujmović Vuković, Director of the Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA • Katarina Marčić, Mayor of the Municipality of Bol • Zlatko Zmijarević, Deputy Chair of the Governing Council, Croatian Energy Regulatory Agency (HERA)
10:30 – 11:00	INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION From EU pilot projects to workable models of local energy transition Aida Liha Matejiček , Head of Unit for Croatia and Romania, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission
11:00 – 11:30	Energy communities in practice: experience from the APOLLO, ISLET, COMET and DBU/ECF Fast Forward Energy Communities projects Short presentations of project approaches and key lessons learned from working with local communities, energy communities, islands and units of local and regional self-government. Speakers will present what has been achieved so far, the obstacles identified in practice, and the tools, models and recommendations developed for further implementation. Maja Jurišić , ISLET / Island Movement Goran Čačić , COMET and DBU/ECF Fast Forward Energy Communities / ZEZ Kristina Mudronja , APOLLO / ZADRA NOVA
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break and networking
12:00 – 12:10	Regulatory framework for the development of energy communities Zlatko Zmijarević , Deputy Chair of the Governing Council, HERA
12:10 – 13:30	PANEL 1 From obstacles to implementation: what can institutions do to make energy communities work? • Željko Krevzelj, Director of the Energy Directorate, Ministry of Economy

	• Marija Mioč, Head of Service, Directorate for Islands, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds • Ana Juras, Sectoral Adviser, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition • Luka Balen, Director, Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund (EPEEF), tbc • Snježana Blagajac, Specialist for Tariff Systems and the Electricity Market, HERA • Danijela Žaja, Director of the Metering and Market Support Sector, HEP Distribution System Operator (HEP ODS) <i>Moderator: Blaženka Leib</i>
13:30 – 15:00	Lunch break and networking
15:00 – 16:15	PANEL 2 Cities, municipalities and counties as drivers of energy communities • Martin Varenina, Head of the Administrative Department for Spatial Planning, Environmental Protection and Municipal Affairs, Zadar County • Stipe Čogelja, Deputy Prefect, Split-Dalmatia County • Ivan Zoković, Energy Cooperative Apsyrtides, Cres • Darko Knezović, Expert Advisor for Energy Efficiency, City of Mostar • Jovan Brinić, Deputy President, Municipality of Tivat • Marija Klisura Franulović, Mayor of the Municipality of Lumbarda <i>Moderator: Blaženka Leib</i>
16:15 – 16:35	Closing and conclusions of day one
19:00	Dinner



DAY 2 — 25 September 2026

Practical project day

From policy dialogue to practical implementation

Focus of the day: Positive, practical examples of establishing and developing energy communities in Croatia, the region and the European Union, with an emphasis on models that can be transferred to other local settings. The programme links the experience of members of the Croatian Energy Communities Forum with examples and tools developed through the APOLLO, ISLET, LIFE COMET and DBU/ECF Fast Forward Energy Communities projects.

Working language: English, with interpretation into Croatian provided

10:00 – 10:15

INTRODUCTION TO DAY TWO

From first initiatives to operational energy communities

A brief review of the key conclusions from day one and an introduction to the goals of the conference's practical segment.

By presenting practical examples of energy communities and initiatives at different stages of development, we will show the different paths by which citizens, cooperatives, cities, municipalities and development organisations can move from an initial idea to a concrete energy project — from developing and preparing joint energy projects and building institutional links, to completed installations, energy sharing and other benefits for community members.

10:15 – 11:30

Block 1: Energy communities – different development models, a shared goal

This block will present examples from member organisations of the Croatian Energy Communities Forum, showing different ways of launching energy communities — from citizen investment and cooperative ownership to projects initiated by local governments, islands and existing local organisations. Participants will hear how these initiatives brought members together, secured initial funding, defined their first project, and addressed legal, technical and organisational obstacles.

Presentations lasting 5 to 7 minutes.

Citizens as investors: from raising capital to the first power plant owned by its members

ZEZ / ZEZ Sunce Energy Cooperative

An example of organising and implementing the first citizen energy project, showing that citizens can jointly raise capital and take on an ownership and management role in a renewable energy project.

Local government as initiator: an energy community of several cities and municipalities

LAG Sava / SAVA Energy Community

The SAVA Energy Community comprises eight local government units in Zagreb County, making it a good example of inter-municipal cooperation and the joint development of local energy projects.

An island energy community: cities, citizens and the local economy in a shared energy model

OTRA / Apsyrtides Energy Cooperative

This example shows how a local energy cooperative can act as an organisational platform connecting citizens, experts and island institutions, creating the conditions for developing locally

owned projects. It shows how local authorities can move from a supporting role to that of an active member of the energy community.

From founding to an operational citizen energy community

Northern Adriatic Energy Community – EZSJ

How a group of citizens and experts from Rijeka moved from a first informal gathering to registering an association and obtaining one of the first permits to organise a citizen energy community in Croatia. Participants will hear first-hand about experiences with energy sharing, as well as the practical, regulatory and technical steps needed to set up a community whose members want to jointly produce, share and make smart use of renewable energy.

A small local project with a big demonstration effect

REGEA / City of Zabok / Špičkovina Volunteer Fire Brigade

The example of the DVD Špičkovina Energy Community shows that an energy community does not have to start as a large, complex project — it can grow around an existing local institution and a single rooftop.

11:30 – 12:00

Coffee break and networking

12:00 – 13:00

Block 2: Examples from the region and the European Union

This block will present concrete models from neighbouring countries and the wider region, developed through the LIFE COMET and APOLLO projects. Participants will hear how energy cooperatives, national coalitions, cities, municipalities and regional development agencies bring together citizens, public institutions and businesses, and develop projects for energy production, sharing, storage and smart management.

OPERATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL MODELS

Solar School Hrastnik: public institutions, the municipality, citizens and private partners in one community

FOCUS / Zeleni Hrastnik Energy Cooperative, Slovenia

Solar School Hrastnik is one of the most concrete examples within the LIFE COMET network, as it brings together public infrastructure, local government, citizens and private stakeholders in a joint project.

Desmi: how energy communities jointly build service and advocacy infrastructure

Desmi – the Greek national coalition of energy communities

Desmi was formally established at the end of 2023 as an alliance of energy communities, experts, and non-governmental and academic organisations, making it closely comparable to the development of the Croatian Energy Communities Forum.

HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATES THE CONDITIONS FOR A FUTURE COMMUNITY

City of Mostar: public investment as the foundation for a future local energy community

Representative of the City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

This example shows how combining investment in solar power plants on public buildings, electric mobility and citizen education can prepare the ground for setting up energy communities. By using its own buildings and infrastructure as demonstration projects, a city can simultaneously build the knowledge and interest of citizens, entrepreneurs and public institutions in actively participating in the energy transition.

	Municipality of Tivat: connecting public infrastructure, the island-coastal area and local stakeholders <i>Representative of the Municipality of Tivat</i> This example shows how a coastal local government can combine investment in renewable energy sources and green mobility with developing an energy management model tailored to local needs.
13:00 – 14:00	Block 3: Energy communities practical lab, conclusions and next steps Working in several small groups, in a relaxed setting, participants will apply what they learned in the previous blocks to concrete local situations. Topic 1: Local government as founder and member of an energy community – public rooftops as a starting point for developing energy communities Topic 2: An energy community on an island or in a rural area Topic 3: A service point for energy communities Brač conclusions — practical paths to an energy community The closing segment will present the conclusions of the discussions by topic, aiming to identify possible practical paths towards establishing new energy communities.
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch

