



T3 FOSTERING THE CO-CREATION OF LOCAL ENERGY COOPERATIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CITIZEN BASED PILOT ACTIONS

A.T3.9 IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT ACTIONS IN TOWN OF PRELOG

D.T3.9.2 - Report on pilot project implementation in Town of Prelog

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Content

List of Tables	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Implemented pilot action in Town of Prelog	5
2.1. Specification of implemented pilot action	5
2.2. Lessons learned while planning and implementing the pilot action	9
2.3. Lessons learned while using the tool Community energy investment guidelines for defining technical, legal and economic aspects of selected pilot action	10
3. Established citizen energy group in Town of Prelog	11
3.1. Specification of established citizen energy group	11
3.2. Lessons learned while establishing and working with citizen energy group in Town of Prelog	13
3.3. Lessons learned while using the tools for participatory energy planning in establishment and future operation of established citizen energy group in Town of Prelog	14
4. Policy recommendations for creating more stimulative energy focused community	15
5. Conclusion	16



List of Tables

Table 1 - General information on implemented pilot project action	5
Table 2 - General information on established citizen energy group.....	11



1. Introduction

The report on pilot project implementation in the Town of Prelog is developed for providing main information on lessons learned from implementing the pilot action, establishing the citizen energy group and using participative tools for citizen engagement during the implementation of mentioned activities in the frame of ENES-CE project. The document highlights the main problems and obstacles which posed a risk for successful realization of implementing pilot action and establishing the citizen energy group and clearly describes counter actions and solutions adopted by responsible Croatian project partners (Town of Prelog and Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd.) in real case scenario.

Through the first chapter of the document, the implemented pilot action was specified by means of its experimental nature and demonstration character, expected impact and benefits of its implementation for the concerned territory and target groups and leverage of additional funds if applicable, sustainability of the pilot action results and transferability to other territories and stakeholders. After specifying the pilot action in the Town of Prelog, the lessons learned and added value of the action to transnational cooperation were elaborated as well as its contribution to relevant regulatory requirements, sustainable development (including possible environmental effects) and horizontal principles including equal opportunities and non-discrimination. To prove the realization of the implemented pilot action, additional documentation including pictures and photos and other relevant project deliverables, web-links were also provided. Within the first part of the document the relevance of using the tool D.T2.2.2 Community energy investment guidelines - technical, business, and legal aspects for identifying and final selection of mentioned pilot action was also elaborated.

The second part of the document deals with the issue of establishing the citizen energy group in the Town of Prelog and elaborates the legal status and other relevant data of the newly established citizen energy group. In connection to that, the main lessons within establishment of citizen energy group were outlined as well as the contribution of using the tool D.T2.2.1 Co-design workshop methods for engaging participants into local energy planning in engaging the citizens to join mentioned citizen energy group. To ensure the sustainability of established citizen energy group in targeted region and its operation outside of the project duration, it is important to invite new members to be a part of the group and further encourage the implementation of community energy projects. Linked to this statement the relevance of using the tool D.T2.2.3 Communication methods for local energy plans and creating an atmosphere which will help public officers reach out to their community and engage the citizens in future energy planning was also elaborated.

All the lessons learned within the mentioned activities are key (both positive and negative) experiences collected throughout the lifecycle of a pilot project action and establishment on citizen energy group and are reflecting the knowledge and understanding of relevant partners, which can be convert into actions aiming at fostering the implementation of energy projects important for the community in the future. All the lessons learned while implementing the pilot action, establishing the citizen energy group, and using participative tools for citizen engagement during the mentioned activities in The Town of Prelog are compiled with main lessons learned in other project partner regions in one common document D.T3.14.3 Lessons from developing citizen energy in Central and Eastern Europe.



2. Implemented pilot action in Town of Prelog

2.1. Specification of implemented pilot action

Table 1 - General information on implemented pilot project action

Project deliverable and title of the pilot action	D.T3.9.1 Installation of a PV power plant on the roof of Town Prelog kindergarten “Fijolica”
The main goal of pilot action	The main goal of the pilot action is to produce electricity through the installation of PV power plant on the roof of the kindergarten which will result in reduced monthly bills for electricity and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
Start and end date of the pilot action	December 2021 - June 2022
Technical information on the implemented pilot action (break down of investment costs)	<p>Materials and equipment: 42.401,85 HRK/5.653,58 EUR</p> <p>Installation works: 23.966,00 HRK/3.195,46 EUR</p> <p>Electrical equipment: 217.155,71 HRK/28.954,09 EUR</p> <p>Electrical installation works: 43.247,82 HRK/5.766,38 EUR</p> <p>Development of the main project: 8.000,00 HRK/1.066,66 EUR</p> <p>Professional supervision of electrical installation works: 5.000,00 HRK/666,66 EUR</p> <p>Equipping the metering point: 1.332,65 HRK/177,69 EUR</p> <p>VAT amount: 85.276,01 HRK/11.370,13 EUR</p> <p>Total investment cost: 426.380,04 HRK/56.850,65 EUR</p> <p>Estimated production: 58,328 kWh</p> <p>Total installed capacity: 58.32 kWp</p> <p>Cost per kW: 974.79 EUR/kWp</p>

Please describe the implemented pilot action in Town of Prelog in accordance with the following aspects:

Experimental nature and demonstration character of the pilot action:
<p><i>The Town of Prelog identified the suitable buildings to install the PV plant drawing from the SECAP where a full list of potential building rooftops was identified. After a preliminary assessment of the technical conditions of the roofs, the Town administration in collaboration with the newly established citizen energy group “Green Energy Club Prelog” and other citizens decided to install the PV on the roof of the local kindergarten “Fijolica”.</i></p> <p><i>With this pilot action, for the first time, a photovoltaic (PV) power plant was installed on one of the existing public buildings in town’s area. Accordingly, it will serve as public demonstration example on how to use renewable energy for producing electricity.</i></p> <p><i>Production of electrical energy from the Sun is still something unknown and incomprehensible to the general population in towns area, and there is a lot of skepticism about how this technology is applicable. By implementing this action, citizens, private companies and public institutions in the town’s area were introduced with the possibility</i></p>



to exploit the renewable energy from the Sun for electricity production for their own needs as well as with the opportunity of installing PV power plants for electricity production for their personal or business needs. By installing such system, the general public has the possibility to be acquainted with the technology which is used for functioning of PV power plant and see how PV looks closely.

The benefits as well as the experimental nature in installation of PV power plant can be seen through savings in electricity costs as well as through the reduction of CO₂ emissions into the environment before and after the installation of the PV power plant. Emphasizing the total savings achieved through the implementation of the pilot action will increase the interest of the general public for investing in renewable energy projects in the future.

Expected socio-economic impacts¹ and benefits of its implementation for the concerned territory and target groups and leverage of additional funds if applicable:

The installation of PV power plant which was initiated by Town of Prelog and selected by citizens and newly established citizen energy group “Green Energy Club Prelog” resulted in many benefits for local community. Firstly, the general public gained relevant knowledge on possibilities in exploiting renewable energy and by doing so decrease their carbon footprint. In addition, the pilot action resulted in new collaboration between different stakeholders including citizens, local companies, local government, utility companies, designers and constructors. Thanks to this collaboration the solid foundation for further local investments in renewable energy was established.

With the possibility to show how a PV power plant looks like and how it functions, the interest of citizens no matter their socio-economic background was evoked. It was possible to represent how owning a PV on a roof of a private or public building is something that is easily accessible and not reserved only for big private companies or even high-income citizens.

Relevant target groups also received quality information on various possibilities of subventions and national incentives for installations of PV. Besides this, the installed PV power plant will reduce emissions and take the town one step closer in realizing its SECAP goals and becoming greener and sustainable town.

Through decrease of the cost of electricity for the kindergarten, saved funds will be invested to raise quality of service given to citizens of Prelog in pre-school education of their children. The comfort of stay in the kindergarten will also increase as will their energy sustainability and independence.

Other public buildings owners will have a chance to see benefits gained through this pilot action and be motivated to install similar systems in their buildings. Since the whole region is small and tightly connected, the replicability of the investment will surely be well represented.

Sustainability of the pilot action results in the future after the project end and transferability to other territories and stakeholders:

The installation of PV power plant serves as a demonstration project for similar projects in the region and beyond. Since the kindergarten’s building was energy refurbished within the last two years, with this additional installation of a PV power plant, it became a good example of a building with increased energy efficiency which will consequently

¹ Such as new knowledge and improved skills, stronger community engagement, integration of socially excluded, target groups, etc.



create a better working environment for kindergarten staff and affect the quality of service to citizens and their children.

This investment is considered to be a very important energy community project where citizens and other stakeholders were directly involved from the very beginning - in the process of deciding on the type of pilot action which was implemented as part of the ENES-CE project.

One important driver for launching such projects on local level are finances. Energy related projects, especially those including investment involve generous energy resources and often local budgets cannot cover the full cost of the investment, so additional sources of funding need to be sought. This process often demotivates local government employees and hampers the implementation of similar investments in the future. Nevertheless, the sustainability of such investments is in many cases conditional by large extent on the available funding sources.

Please shortly describe if your pilot action has had any relevant impact on the attitude of stakeholders towards similar projects in your region. Existence of increased interest or dialogue, changes in relations while implementing pilot action:

Implementation of pilot action in the Town of Prelog had a positive impact on the attitude of citizens and other stakeholders towards solar energy as an environmental-friendly source of electricity production for personal and business needs.

With this investment, the town administration stimulated additional interest of citizens for investing in the installation of PV power plants on their private homes which makes this investment a main driver for launching similar projects in the future.

In addition, the implemented investment also encouraged the Town administration to launch additional energy projects and initiatives such as installation of an integrated charging station for electric vehicles to the kindergarten building and the purchase of an electric vehicle for Town Prelog business purposes.

Other positive effects which can be mentioned are: increased awareness of the importance of energy projects, increased economic activity in the town area, promotion of renewable energy sources usage, etc.

Main problems/milestones/challenges/risks connected to the pilot action which influence its successful implementation and the solutions for overcoming them:

There were no significant problems in the realization of the pilot action, but it was a challenge to break the communication wall with the citizens who are not so acquainted with the renewable energy, especially solar energy or even have relevant knowledge connected to the issues which were tackled by the project implementation. This challenge was bridged in two ways.

One way was based on the fact that the main stakeholder engaged was the local government unit who was also the investment holder. The town administration in cooperation with Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. put a lot of efforts in promoting the whole concept of energy communities as well as in the exploitation of renewable energy. In addition, the establishment of citizen energy group "Green Energy Club Prelog" also positively influenced the participation of general public in the process of deciding on pilot action from which the community will benefit the most - installation of PV power plant on the roof of kindergarten whose service is considered to have a great importance for the citizens of Town of Prelog whose children use their services on a daily basis.



Also, installation of a real PV power plant close to the citizens evoked interest which was bigger than the communication gap of outsiders coming into their town. Another way the communication issues were resolved was in constructing the actual PV plant because in that way locals could see an actual project taking place, reducing their initial skepticism towards new technologies.

Contribution of pilot action to relevant regulatory requirements, sustainable development (including possible environmental effects) and horizontal principles including equal opportunities and non-discrimination in targeted region:

The installation of PV power plant entails a large number of positive effects for local economy and environmental protection.

Photovoltaic systems are reliable and efficient, they do not produce noise, have no moving parts, and do not emit pollutants into the atmosphere. They have a lifespan of over 30 years, require minimal maintenance and can be recycled at the end of their lifespan. The PV power plant will be designed in a way that complies with all relevant technical regulations and laws and guarantees automatic operation in all weather conditions. All installed parts and components must be of the highest quality to ensure safe operation and maximum service life of the power plant with minimal maintenance needs.

The successful implementation of selected pilot action positively influenced the Town administration who initiated the possibility on co-financing the installation of PV power plants for common citizens - inhabitants of Town of Prelog and surrounding settlements in the future. The Town administration plans to co-finance the installation of PV power plants on private homes for everyone who will show the interest - from low-income to high-income households. This will ensure that the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be met.

Pilot action documentation of corresponding activities while planning and implementing the pilot action including pictures and photos and other relevant project deliverables, web-links, etc. proving the implementation of the pilot action:

Project investment documentation:

- 1. Main project for the construction of a PV power plant*
- 2. Public procurement documentation*
- 3. Approvals and permits according to the national regulations*
- 4. Media releases*

- <https://www.studiom.hr/djecji-vrtic-fijolica-dobiva-integriranu-suncanu-elektranu/>*
- <https://www.ekovjesnik.hr/clanak/4981/djecji-vrtic-fijolica-u-prelogu-dobiva-suncanu-elektranu>*
- <https://medjimurski.hr/foto-djecji-vrtic-fijolica-u-prelogu-dobit-ce-suncanu-elektranu-potpisan-ugovor-o-izgradnji/>*
- <https://emedjimurje.net.hr/vijesti/grad-prelog/4213834/prelog-potpisan-ugovor-o-radovima-na-izgradnji-integrirane-suncane-elektrane-dv-fijolica/>*

- 5. Photos of the installed PV power plant*



2.2. Lessons learned while planning and implementing the pilot action

Elaborate the lessons learned while planning and implementing pilot action and description of added value of the implemented pilot action to transnational cooperation and knowledge transfer within the partnership.



While planning the pilot action it can be confirmed that being present on streets and in direct contact with people is still the best way for transferring the information and knowledge to the general population especially on complex issues such as energy production, energy savings, renewable energies, etc. When there is a good will and good cooperation between local authorities and citizens, everything is easier to accomplish and conduct.

It must be pointed out that installation of real PV so close to the citizens gave a certain level of trust and assurance to them that PV power plants are not some youthful green ebullience and dream but a close future which can already be tomorrow.

While planning and implementing the pilot action a certain parameter, which significantly affect the success of the investment should be taken into account.

It has been identified on several occasions that most potential with RES usage in Medjmurje County lies in solar power. Due to this information and inevitable raise of the electric energy prices, it has been concluded that installation of PV systems on buildings meets regional energy transition goals and leads it to become energy sufficient.

2.3. Lessons learned while using the tool Community energy investment guidelines for defining technical, legal and economic aspects of selected pilot action

Describe how the tool was used while planning the pilot action in the region and elaborate the lessons learned while using mentioned tool in aspect of identifying and selecting the implemented pilot action (D.T2.2.2 Community energy investment guidelines - technical, business and legal aspects).

The tool was used in the process of selecting the pilot action to be implemented in Town of Prelog in the frame of ENES-CE project.

The tool is actually very useful for preparing the investor for the pilot investment and was accepted as very useful tool for identifying community relevant energy investments. Before using the tool, all main features of the tool were presented to the wider public including citizens in order to familiarize them with the investment and to show how all of the involved stakeholders will benefit from the same.

Although the tool is considered to be very useful, it is quite complex tool (a lot of background task were done to make the tool so extensive and high quality) where it is necessary to know a lot of input data, especially technical ones, which can be a problem for someone who is not professional enough. Another downside of the tool the strongly oriented towards large investment projects that provide long-term benefits to the community (for large production plants), but require significant financial resources for the implementation.

The main lesson learned is that the tools who are intended for use by various stakeholders with different level of knowledge should be simplified. The complexity of the tool negatively affects the perception of end users in its usefulness.



3. Established citizen energy group in Town of Prelog

3.1. Specification of established citizen energy group

Table 2 - General information on established citizen energy group

Project deliverable	D.T.3.8.2.
Name of citizen energy group	Green Energy Club Prelog
Establishment date of citizen energy group	July 7, 2021
Legal status/form of established citizen energy group and connection to relevant regulatory framework if applicable	Association ²
Number of members	11

Please describe the characteristics of established citizen energy group in Town of Prelog in accordance with the following aspects:

<p>Direct positive and/or negative effects of the establishment of citizen energy group in Town of Prelog:</p> <p><i>By establishing citizen energy group, Town of Prelog and Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. managed to bring together different stakeholders and citizens whose interest is focused on green community projects. The included members are well informed about the whole concept of community energy projects and are very interested in promoting the usage of RES in Town of Prelog and surrounding settlements which made them motivated enough to be part of the association and its further work outside of ENES-CE project.</i></p> <p><i>Since the whole concept of energy communities is rather new to citizens, the implementation of ENES-CE project has certainly stimulated interest in involving citizens in the implementation of energy projects by other local governments as well.</i></p>
<p>Main problems/obstacles/challenges occurred during the establishment and operation of citizen energy group in Town of Prelog and how they were solved by responsible partner:</p> <p><i>The main challenge was to provide a sufficient level of motivation for citizens to participate in the project's workshops and requesting them to have an active role in newly established citizen energy group.</i></p> <p><i>The responsible partners in Croatia overcame this challenge by:</i></p>

² An association is any form of free and voluntary association of several natural or legal entities that are willing to submit to the regulations governing the structure and the actions of such form of association, in order to protect their interests or to advocate the common good, without the intention of making profit. The foundation and operation of associations in the Republic of Croatia are regulated by the Act on Associations (Official Gazette No. 74/14, 70/17 and 98/19).



- *running the strong communication campaign on the Town of Prelog and Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. website and social media channels and targeting the citizens who were motivated enough to join the workshops and actively participate in all discussions*
- *press releases and media coverage:*
 - o <https://www.prelog.hr/ukljucite-se-u-kreiranje-energetske-politike-grada-preloga-radionica-projekta-enes-ce/a6464>
 - o <https://www.medjimurje.info/2022/05/prelog-ukljuci-se-u-sunce/>
 - o <https://www.ekovjesnik.hr/rubrika/obnovljivi-izvori-energije>
 - o <https://emedjimurje.net.hr/vijesti/grad-prelog/4016764/grad-prelog-ukljuci-se-u-ko-kreiranje-energetske-tranzicije-svoga-grada-i-budi-dionositelja-promjena/>
- *providing citizens with enough information and project materials during the workshops and by sharing similar examples from Croatian and EU cities*

Please describe the differences between different stakeholder groups included in the established citizen energy group and elaborate their interest on further dialogue, cooperation and changes in existing relations:

Citizens had different reasons to join the group, but they all share similar traits - all of them are already active in various fields of civil work (members of different associations, employees of public institutions, etc.) and want to reduce the costs of energy bills in order to save money. Furthermore, on one hand some of the citizens wanted to tackle community aspects and build social impact and learn more about energy topics. On the other hand, they see this as a great opportunity to handle more challenging activities such as installations of new power plants or implementation of urban housing construction standards for future development.

All the mentioned perspectives are the results of different experiences stakeholders bring to the table and has been a challenge to find the agreement to meet all the activities. However, they all agreed that the timeline of those activities is important, and they understand that they need to gain reputation and seed money to be able to jump towards bigger projects, especially since all the members are already active in different areas and have little time to accelerate activities towards big projects.

The established citizen energy group consists of individuals different educational background, knowledge, and expertise from the Town of Prelog. All of them have the same goal, and that is to see their town healthier, greener, and resistant to crisis situations and climate change.



Members of the established citizen energy group “Green Energy Club Prelog”

The influence of established citizen energy group on further investments in the local energy infrastructure of Town of Prelog and their cooperation with public authorities:

In order to ensure future work of established citizen energy group, Town of Prelog as well as Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. tend to organize regular meetings with newly established citizen energy group according to the needs of the community energy projects and tackle the future problems which will emerge in the energy and climate change sector (energy refurbishment of public and private buildings, development of local and regional energy and climate strategies, installation of RES on private and public buildings, innovative and/or alternative financing mechanisms etc.) and possibly transform the established association into energy cooperative in order to provide citizens with the opportunity to invest in locally produced RE and energy-related services.

Sustainability of the citizen energy group in the future after the project end and possible actions to be taken in the future in order to maintain the active work of the established citizen energy group/cooperative in the target region:

Since the members of “Green Energy Club Prelog” have committed to actively participate in the future work of the group, they tend to organize regular meetings and discuss their work in finding funding sources for launching community energy projects in order to achieve the set vision of the group. They also plan to support future bottom-up processes for involving citizens in energy planning and the implementation of investments for the reduction of emissions in the community.

3.2. Lessons learned while establishing and working with citizen energy group in Town of Prelog

Elaborate the lessons learned while establishing and working with citizen energy group in Town of Prelog and describe the added value of the established citizen energy group to transnational cooperation and knowledge transfer within the partnership.



It takes time and a lot of effort to mobilize citizens to join the citizen energy group.

Well prepared and implemented the communication campaign with the rights communication messages can make citizens recognize and understand value of being part of the energy group.

Examples of successful practices can help to motivate citizens to become more active in their community.

In the beginning, the members of the group need professional support from other organizations that have gone through the establishment and operation of this type of organization.

Establishing the energy group in the Town of Prelog and results of their work can be replicate in other Croatian cities and regions.

3.3. Lessons learned while using the tools for participatory energy planning in establishment and future operation of established citizen energy group in Town of Prelog

Elaborate the lessons learned while using of mentioned tools in aspect of engaging relevant stakeholders in local energy planning and using relevant communication tools and strategies which will further engage the community, e.g., citizens in local energy planning in targeted region (D.T2.2.1 Co-design workshop methods for engaging participants into local energy planning and D.T2.2.3 Communication methods for local energy plans and creating an atmosphere of acceptance).

In order to motivate the citizens to take part in relevant discussions, it is necessary to develop and use effective techniques of engagement. The usage of effective techniques will allow participants to share their ideas, visions, problems and even concerns in relaxed manner. The tool Co-design workshop methods for engaging participants into local energy planning provides the quality tips on how to organize interactive and collaborative workshops which makes the tool certainly applicable to various topics and various participant profiles. Thus, at least one introduction meeting before the workshops would be beneficial, so participants can get to know each other more closely.

Good communication methods most certainly influence the high level of motivation of citizens to participate in workshops and join the citizen energy group in the future but also for disseminating the project results and activities outside the borders of Medjmurje county, i.e., other regions covered by the ENES-CE project.

Adhering to the guidelines from the Tool 3, Town of Prelog and Medjmurje Energy Agency Ltd. have managed to encourage citizens to get involved in the process of developing SECAP from the very beginning and point out the importance of drafting such documents at the local level. This tool is also considered to be beneficial for setting the ground for future energy community investments and projects with focus green energy and sustainable development beyond ENES-CE project by raising awareness among citizens and other interested stakeholders.



4. Policy recommendations for creating more stimulative energy focused community

Please insert below any comments and/or propose possible policy recommendations for creating a more stimulative energy focused community that you might have in connection to the preparation or implementation of your pilot projects (implementing defined pilot action, establishing citizen energy group) or those that are reflecting the drawn lessons learned while implementing pilot projects in your region.

There is a huge potential of citizens and local communities in Croatia to move forward the transition to renewable energy, as well as the potential of decentralized energy to stimulate local development. This potential remains largely untapped, and development of the renewable energy is mainly in the hands of individual large private and state-owned companies.

Utilization of renewable energy sources through local energy communities could have an immediate and lasting impact on our society: creating new jobs, strengthening local economy, reducing dependency on energy imports, and increasing standards of living for all citizens. Energy cooperatives in Croatia are an example of a suitable model to develop, finance and implement local renewable energy projects, largely in line with the EU provisions on energy communities.

In Croatia, adaptation of the EU concepts of energy communities could support implementation of local projects by:

- encouraging local energy trading or sharing via the public grid between the community members,*
- specifying the options for the attribution of self-generated energy (in addition to currently available prosumer schemes),*
- introducing virtual net metering schemes,*
- promoting the integration of several actors (producers, consumers, and investors) under one umbrella of an energy communities through pilot projects, promotional activities, and tailor-made tenders to accelerate investment, energy generation and energy sharing schemes.*



5. Conclusion

The energy community implies as a group of citizens, organizations and cities who have the same goals to resolve the energy challenges of their local community. Some of them cooperate informally, and others through a specific legal body, such as an association or cooperative. What all citizen energy groups have in common is the democratization of energy for the benefit of citizens and local communities.

The term of energy communities is not tackled enough at national level so a lot of efforts is required in order for them to become fully present and for all interested parties to recognize the benefits of being part of energy communities.

Amendments to the Electricity Market Act have introduced a new form of organization of civil energy initiatives in Croatia - the energy community of citizens. Through energy communities, citizens will, for the first time, can participate directly in the production, consumption, or sharing of electricity. Energy communities brings better energy services, create new jobs, stimulate the circular economy, local economy etc.)

Establishing a citizen energy group in the Town of Prelog is one step closer to the more active role of citizens in the democratization of energy. This example can be replicated in other cities and regions in Croatia, but the support of the town administration and regional energy agencies is very much needed. What needs to be achieved once project implementation is complete is for its members to become more engaged around launching energy projects in the community and to attract additional members who are well informed about the whole concept of community energy projects and are very interested in promoting the usage of RES in Town of Prelog and surrounding settlements in the future.

Finally, in order to ensure future sustainability of established citizen energy association, Town of Prelog as well as Medjimurje Energy Agency Ltd. tend to organize regular meetings according to the needs of launching community energy projects and tackle the future problems which will emerge in the energy and climate change sector (energy refurbishment of public and private buildings, development of local and regional energy and climate strategies, installation of RES on private and public buildings, innovative and/or alternative financing mechanisms etc.) and possibly transform the established association into energy cooperative in order to provide citizens with the opportunity to invest in locally produced RE and energy-related services.

