

LICHT – a methodology for mobilising energy communities

Introduction

Europe's energy system is currently dominated by a small number of large utilities and will shift from one based on fossil and nuclear fuels to renewable energy, from centralised to decentralised production, and from a system that wastes energy to a system that uses energy in an efficient way.

If we really want the transition to succeed, we need to mobilise local actors including citizens, communities and local authorities and engage them in tomorrow's energy system. The potential for people to actively engage in the energy transition is significant. By 2050, at least half of EU citizens could be producing their own renewable electricity either individually by putting solar PV panels on top of their home or by joining an energy community and doing things in a collective way¹.

REScoop.eu has successfully developed a methodology for mobilising citizens which helps them take action at the local level and take up an active role in energy transition projects including renewable energy, energy savings, sustainable heating and mobility. Through the LICHT approach, we engage with communities and use engagement techniques to facilitate citizen groups. Once these groups have been set up, we teach them how to select, evaluate, execute and communicate about energy transition projects. The support trajectory helps build local capacity for the energy transition and follows the principle of 'training the trainer'. As a result, these people gradually become energy transition experts, take on new projects and help new groups grow their cooperative business.

The LICHT methodology consists of 7 sessions for every LICHT group, including an inspiration session at the beginning and a final event where the different groups are brought together to exchange experiences and discuss further collaboration between the established groups.

The LICHT methodology has only been implemented in Belgium so far, but it can easily be transposed to different parts of Europe. The model of how citizens can use energy communities to control their energy future is one of cooperation. We often call it "the strawberry model for growth": A single strawberry plant cannot cover an entire field, but give it and its runners some time, and the field will be full. This is why we are keen to share our knowledge. An important prerequisite for a successful implementation is the cooperation with locals, as they know the local context, speak the language, and can operate as regional contact point much better than a Brussels-based ever could. Our contribution to this objective is to train local citizens and support them to become community leaders who set up their programme with back-up support from REScoop.eu.

¹ <https://www.cedelft.eu/publicatie/the-potential-of-energy-citizens-in-the-european-union/1845>

The LICHT approach

Following the training with REScoop.eu, community leaders will be able to implement the following proven approach in their own communities:

Session 1: Inspirational session

- Community leader presents the possibilities and opportunities for citizens and local authorities to engage in the energy transition.

Session 2: Intake & action plan

- Needs analysis + ambition level
- Clarification of expectations and coordination
- (Retro) planning • Timing & agreements.

Session 3: Creating public support

- How to facilitate the functioning of new or existing citizen groups?
- How to reach and mobilize other citizens?

Session 4: Screening of energy projects in the region

- Discussion of the methodology + parameters to assess project proposals for technical and financial feasibility
- Explanation assignment in preparation for session 5.

Session 5: Development of energy transition projects

- Suggestions for adjustment and optimisation of project proposal
- Screening location, writing and personalizing proposal, discussing proposal
- Reference text for the tender.

Session 6: Valorisation/consolidation

- How to further embed citizen participation in the municipalities activities around the local energy transition?

Session 7: Final event

- Networking opportunities & exchange
- EIB funding opportunity if 30Mio euro threshold can be reached.

What has happened so far

At the end of 2019 some LICHT groups already finished all their sessions and decided to move on:

- **Noordlicht:** the LICHT group of the Northwestern side of Brussels (municipalities of Zemst, Vilvoorde, Zaventem, Steenokkerzeel, Londerzeel, ...), founded a REScoop: Noordlicht cv. More information: www.noordlicht.be.
- **HagelandStroomt:** in collaboration with Ecopower, the LICHT group of the city of Scherpenheuvel-Zichem realised a first PV project on a municipal roof and installed a charging point for an electrical car of the city that can be used by the citizens in the

evening and the weekend. More information: www.hagelandstroomt.be/wat-doen-we/pilootproject.

- **Licht Leuven:** the LICHT group decided to join a young REScoop from the neighbouring municipality Herent, called EcoOB, and focused on the realisation of 11 rooftop PV projects on municipal roofs in the city of Leuven in collaboration with Ecopower. More information: www.ecoob.be/projecten.php.
- **Druifkracht:** the LICHT group in the south of Leuven decided to set up a REScoop for their region (Overijse, Huldenberg, Hoeilaart, Tervuren) and collaborates with Ecopower on small hydro, wind and PV projects. More information: www.druifkracht.be/projecten/.

The other Licht groups are not that far. However, they are still following the LICHT trajectory.

- Diest: the LICHT group of Diest is focusing on small hydro and PV.
- Tienen: the LICHT group of Tienen is interested in the deployment of district heating in their region.
- Zoutleeuw, Linter, Geetbets, Kortenaeken: for this LICHT group there might be a possibility for being involved in the development of a windfarm of 3 wind turbines
- Wezenbeek-Oppem, Kraainem: being located close to Brussels, this LICHT group is a special case as it is a bilingual group.
- Rotselaar, Haacht: this LICHT group just started.