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Statement of originality

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

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About the project

The LIFE-CET ACCE: Access to Capital for Community Energy will develop and scale up innovative and collective financing tools for energy communities. Building on lessons learned from the cooperative movement and implemented projects, the stakeholders are now looking to create successful funding concepts at the European level: Community Energy Financing Schemes (CEFS). The aim is to bring together national and regional funds to support the growth of local projects. ACCE marks another next step in the successful energy cooperative work, the aim is to build on existing learning and meet the need for capital to finance European community energy. ACCE will provide energy communities with access to financing. The principle of a “bicycle high-way” will result in tools and conditions to trigger investments in energy community projects. ACCE envisions different types of financing schemes, such as revolving funds. The mismatch between banking sector and community energy will be successfully coped with.
Executive Summary

WP2 aims to describe the status quo on Community Energy Financing Schemes (CEFS) in Europe and to establish a common understanding of the basic concepts. As such it forms the basis for the rest of the work in the project and for communication with external stakeholders.

Within this context, T2.1 aims to collect and classify the existing CEFS in Europe, with the creation of a database of existing practices and lighthouse examples.

The consortium considers a CEFS to be a financing scheme that funds community-based energy transition projects (sustainable energy, mobility, efficiency...) to overcome financial barriers which the community cannot tackle themselves. The primary purpose of those projects is to provide environmental, economic or social community benefits rather than financial profits.

The goal of this paper is to provide clarity on the elements of the definition of CEFS. This concept, created by the ACCE project, is meant to underline specific financing and funding tools meant to trigger and scale the development of projects carried out by energy communities.

The paper is meant as a guide for the future deployment of the ACCE project. It describes the following activities carried out within T2.1:

1. Questionnaire design: in order to identify the CEFS around Europe, the consortium needed a well-designed questionnaire, that way the answers received would ideally cover all of our information needs. The present report takes us through the stages of its design.

2. Definition of CEFS: one of the first issues encountered by the consortium was the lack of definition for what we were looking for. This report also focuses on the discussion among the partners to reach a consensus on that matter.

3. Identification and classification of CEFS: once enough answers to the questionnaire were collected and a consensus over the definition of CEFS was reached by the consortium, a filtering process started, where some of the answers were discarded mostly because of the lack of useful information, or because they did not fit with the minimum requirements to be a CEFS. The rest were analysed following a previously defined methodology.

4. Database: the result of (3) was the database of CEFS classified in four different dimensions that include the amount of citizen control both in the scheme itself and in the funded projects, the motivation of the investment (whether is public or just financial interest) and the type of financial product offered.
The results obtained will be used to assess the correlation between different factors, such as the stages of projects that are funded and the type of product offered by the CEFS, allowing the design of customised interviews for the deliverable 2.2, the best practice report, with the eventual objective of identifying the success-factors and barriers encountered by the different schemes through their existence.

The questionnaire will be periodically updated and available for anyone during the duration of the project, but also after it has come to an end. This will guarantee that the database continues to be updated with every new CEFS identified.

Finally, the database will eventually feed deliverable 2.4, an online interactive map that will show the geographical location of each CEFS, as well as their basic information (contact, size, number of projects financed, etc.).
1. Introduction

This task's objective was to gather and categorise existing CEFS in order to create a database of current practices and lighthouse examples. This database aims to serve as the standard for the creation of CEFS standard models. Several CEFS, primarily in NL, IE, FR, and UK, have already been recognised by the consortium.

The ACCE consortium launched a questionnaire to gather additional examples across Europe, primarily from the target countries of the project, but also the wider community energy movement. Through a questionnaire, the consortium has collected information on the currently existing financing tools and CEFS by putting out an open call to municipalities, funding agencies, and community energy organisations as identified relevant stakeholders.

This deliverable consists of a report which focuses not only on identifying the existing financial schemes, but also on the definition of the term CEFS itself. For the purposes of this survey, the consortium described CEFS as a financing program scheme that funds community-based energy transition projects (such as sustainable energy, mobility, and efficiency) in order to remove financial obstacles that the community is unable to remove on its own. Instead of making money, the main goal of those projects should be to improve the environment, the economy and/or the community.

This will be followed by qualitative interviews. The database will include basic details about the programs (which organisation finances the fund? Who runs the fund? What is the current legislative framework?). Finally, a report analysing the existing CEFS universe will be included on the project website alongside the inventory.
2. Questionnaire design

The consortium divided the works leading to this deliverable in four different stages: the design of the questionnaire to be sent to the contacts, its sending and posterior answer filtering, the process to define what a CEFS is, and the methodology of analysis used following that definition process.

One of the first difficulties encountered by the consortium was the fact that there was no clear definition yet for what a CEFS should be. However, there was some consensus among the partners on what characteristics should be considered when obtaining information on CEFS that would eventually lead us to a mutual understanding on that definition.

Some of the concepts to be included were easy to measure, such as the overall capitalisation of the scheme, the size (in MW peak) of the funded projects or the project stages financed by the schemes (exploration, development, building of the installation, etc.).

Other concepts were harder to assess because of their qualitative condition, and these were precisely the most important ones to differentiate the schemes linked to community energy from the ones that did not fit in the consortium’s understanding of what a CEFS should be. Among these concepts are citizen control (both in the financing schemes and in the funded projects), the motivation of the investment (public interest vs financial interest) or the existence of knowledge sharing mechanisms linked to the scheme. For detailed information regarding the questions included in the questionnaire please refer to Annex I.

Together with the set of questions, the consortium included a brief explanation on our understanding of what a CEFS should be. To add clarity to that description, the example on the CEFS managed by Energie Partagée in France was included right after.

Once the questionnaire was complete, the consortium decided that each partner would send it to at least 20 people that could have the knowledge to fill it out in a satisfactory way, either because they worked in a CEFS, or they knew of a scheme that could fit in the previously mentioned description given by the consortium.

In less than a month, the questionnaire received more than 90 responses, 45 of which claimed to know a scheme that would fit in the consortium’s description of CEFS. It was then time for the partners to start the processing of the received information.
3. Definition of CEFS

Before starting the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, partners had to first identify a mutual understanding of what is a financial scheme that supports community energy projects.

The European Union introduced the concept of energy communities in its legislation, notably as citizen energy communities and renewable energy communities. Under the second Renewable Energy Directive, Member States have to introduce energy communities in their national law and should allow those entities to produce and sell energy. The Directive requires that Member States facilitate the development of energy communities notably by lowering administrative and financial obstacles and by providing information, technical and financial support.

According to the European Commission, “Energy communities can take any form of legal entity, for instance that of an association, a cooperative, a partnership, a non-profit organisation or a small/medium-sized enterprise. It makes it easier for its citizens, together with other market players, to team up and jointly invest in energy assets. (...) Energy communities organise collective and citizen-driven energy actions that help pave the way for a clean energy transition, while moving citizens to the fore. They contribute to increasing public acceptance of renewable energy projects and make it easier to attract private investments in the clean energy transition. At the same time, they have the potential to provide direct benefits to citizens by increasing energy efficiency, lowering their electricity bills, and creating local job opportunities.”

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4 Article 22 (3), article (4) (a), (g) and (h) and recital 26 of Directive n° 2018/2001/EU of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, OJ L 328, 21.12.2018, p. 82–209.
Early in the discussion with partners, it appeared that the local definition of what constitutes an energy community and the existing financial support available to energy communities and citizen projects were quite different.

Further, in countries such as Belgium, France and the Netherlands, citizen led energy projects emerged before the concept of energy communities was introduced in European law. Citizen led energy projects therefore involve several types of actors and the financial schemes and types of financial products available for those projects vary from one country to another. The financial schemes that support energy projects also differ because they were created based on the initiatives of governments but also citizen groups and cooperatives of each country based on its national regulatory environment and investment culture.

In order to work hand in hand, it was therefore necessary for the project partners to come up with an understanding of what constituted a CEFS by establishing a set of criteria based on their common experience. This methodology allows the partners to gather information from their contacts using the same analytic framework and to create common criteria for the establishment of future financing tools dedicated to energy communities. These criteria are used by the project partners as an analysis framework for common understanding of what can be seen as a community energy financing tool but cannot be seen as a legal definition of community energy financing mechanisms.

3.1. Methodology

To be able to capture the definition of CEFS, we based ourselves on the questionnaire sent out by project partners.

The process of definition of CEFS was attributed to REScoop.eu, in order to allow for a facilitation of the internal discussions in the consortium. We started with documentary research on the key components of financing mechanisms and tools to define the unique components of CEFS. Qualitative interviews were then carried out with partners to define for each of their national contexts both in typology of available financing and the issues of governance related to each project. Our effort was dedicated to identifying the limitation of project financing versus the risk of corporate capture. Those interviews allowed us to identify common denominators between partners based on the national contexts. Following those interviews, we organised a workshop to define the main lines defined below between different countries. This workshop allowed us to define our understanding of the framework of CEFS and informed the analysis of the results of the survey.

3.2. Key components of CEFS

In defining the scope of CEFS, we highlighted 4 main dimensions differentiating Community Energy financing from traditional financing mechanisms. Those 4 dimensions are meant to qualify the unique value proposition of CEFS, but also to highlight the nuances in CEFS. Those nuances will allow
the ACCE project to have flexibility while remaining focused on energy communities and their development.

Figure 1. Main dimensions of Community Energy financing

The four dimensions we identify are:

- **Target** investments refers to the type of projects and investments realized by the CEFS.
- **Institutional** control refers to the organization or partnership managing and governing the CEFS.
- **Sources** refers to the origin of the funds managed by the CEFS.
- **Products** refers to the type of financial products offered by the CEFS.

### 3.3. Definition of CEFS

Each of the four dimensions was explored by partners to determine the nuances in the construction of CEFS, and to determine the limitations compared to traditional financing tools.

For each of those dimensions, we describe below the arguments and the questions discussed by partners, followed by the decision on the definition adopted by the consortium. This decision does not have the vocation to be universal, but rather to express the experience of the partners and the point of view of the cooperative movement in debates relating to the creation of financing schemes and programs dedicated to energy communities.

**Target**

The target refers to the type of projects and investments realized by the CEFS. This is the heart of the mechanism as it is touching on the investment policy of the fund and its indicators for impact. Two of the project partners – EnergieSamen and Énergie Partagée already participated in up and running CEFS in their respective countries. Those two schemes have very different types of targets
based on their national context and the state of maturity of the community energy movement and policy in their respective countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community ownership</th>
<th>Community control</th>
<th>Community benefits</th>
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<td>• What is community ownership?</td>
<td>• What are the tools of control?</td>
<td>• What are the added benefits of project beside financial?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• From what minimum is community ownership validated?</td>
<td>• What are the expression of control? (mechanism of governance)</td>
<td>• What are the goals of community benefits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is community ownership preserved?</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Figure 2. Main concepts to be considered in the Target

The framing of the conversation on targets focused on three main questions:

- Community ownership
- Community control
- Community benefits

Decision of the consortium

The Énergie Partagée Investissement mechanism is focused mostly on driving local value – and supporting the ownership to a “territorial block”, which includes local authorities, citizens, and local SMEs. This drive toward “community value” of the ownership model, prioritizes the potential benefits at the local level rather than the citizen governance. EnergieSamen on the other hand has a strict rule of investment into cooperative projects only. The cooperatives requesting the service of the CEFS must be recognized as part of the community energy movement and citizen led. Other partners often have policies in the middle where co-development is often acceptable as long as the risk of corporate capture is considered by the CEFS.

The consortium agreed that target projects must involve citizens and create positive value at the local level. The goal of the project must be in priority to serve the local actors and benefit communities. The decision was that target projects must, at least, include citizen ownership in a minority of blockage. This would validate in our analysis the community control of target projects. That minority of blockage can be different depending on the country.
Institution

Institutional control refers to the organization or partnership managing and governing the CEFS. This is linked to the process by which investment decisions are taken, and the actors involved in the decision-making process.

There were two components of that conversation between the partners. The first one was the type of actors that were involved in the governance of the fund, and how they create capacity for the institution running the fund to reach to and support community energy projects. The second is the stability of the investment policy and stakeholder dialogue. Due to the unique nature of community energy projects, the predictability of the investment policy of the fund is crucial to ensure participation.

Decision of the consortium

The partners agreed that CEFS must involve a community energy network representative to ensure on one side the capability of the fund to perform the necessary support to projects, and to guarantee the stability and relevance of the investment policy. This involvement is not defined; however, several best practices will be highlighted by the ACCE project.

Sources

It refers to the origin of the funds managed by the CEFS. Our main question was related to the types of funds utilized by CEFS and how those sources would impact the investment policy and tools of the fund. The conversation was focused on two main points: independence of the CEFS and the sanctuary of the projects supported. The sources of the funds could be public – meaning provided by public institutions, or private – invested or donated by private sources. Public sources can come at different levels but are characterized by research of “common good” as the outcome of the financing, often rooted into specific policy goals. The development fund of EnergieSamen is based on those funds. Private sources could be either community-based, which is the case of the tool Énergie Partagée that gathers the investment of private individuals, or professional investors.

The second point relating to the impact on invested projects was discussed along two main limitations: the profit-driven investment made through professional sources often do not correspond to the needs and capabilities of CEFS. The second limitation is the preservation of final ownership in the targeted projects.

For the first point, it was discussed by partners as to keep CEFS dedicated to their primary goal of supporting energy community projects – and therefore to be mindful of the impact of corporate takeovers, both through the fund and in supported projects.
**Decision of the consortium**

The partners agreed that in any format, transparency around the types of funds utilized by the CEFS is key. This transparency should also allow the targeted projects to reject an investment proposal if need be.

The partners are open to any source of funding as long as the counterparts are preserving the community ownership of the projects. The discussion was more centred around the capacity of the CEFS to remain independent and not to promote corporate capture or citizen-washing for private funds.

The partners propose the creation of a code of conduct that would ensure the safety of the CEFSs across Europe, while at the same time provide flexibility for investors.

**Products**

The products refer to the financial products offered by the CEFS. Financial products range from grants to debt and equity. The products provided by the CEFS are important as they need to be in adequation with the actual needs of the community energy projects on the ground.

The discussion around the products has two components. The first one is related to the typology of product and the relative flexibility around the tools offered by the CEFS. The second is the goal achieved, and therefore the tracking and reporting process linked to products offered by the CEFS.

**Decision of the consortium**

Partners feel that all types of financial products are welcome to be delivered by CEFS. The key issue to tackle seems to be pursuing the de-risking of investment for private consumers - and therefore all tools pursuing this agenda might be suitable.

At the same time, many partners highlighted the fact that community benefits: social, environmental, and economical, must be considered, along with the wish to avoid speculative investment.
4. Results

A contact list consisting of 153 people was approached by the consortium. Between the 30th of January and 24th of February 91 responses were received, of which 45 identified a financing instrument. Of these responses two were discarded as the same financing instruments were more thoroughly described in another response. Nine of these were discarded because the described instrument was a single cooperative gathering funding for a single project, rather than a CEFS. In total 34 responses could be considered a CEFS. In Table 1 an overview of the results per country is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Discarded</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Whilst some financing schemes were created in the early 2000s, the majority was created in the last five years. This shows a clear increase in the efforts to finance community energy. At the same time, it asks for caution when analysing the newer CEFS for the best practices report (D2.2), as newer CEFS might have not produced representative results yet.
4.1. Dimensions of CEFS

To consider the dominant CEFS designs, the levels of citizen involvement in the target project and the institutions governing the CEFS are plotted in Figure 2. Approximately three groups can be distinguished:

1. High citizen involvement in both targets and institutions (green: 8 CEFS)
2. Low citizen involvement in both targets and institutions (yellow: 10 CEFS)
3. High citizen involvement in targets, low in institutions (grey: 16 CEFS)

The potential group with low citizen involvement in projects but high involvement in institutions, remains empty. This indicates that the reported CEFS prioritise citizen involvement in the target project.
Another perspective is gained when plotting the financial products used by the CEFS versus the intention behind the money flowing through the scheme, see Figure 3. The most recurring combination is that of grants funding projects driven by public interest, rather than financial one. Whilst in the upper right corner of the graph a wide variety of CEFS design is shown, which includes (partially) private money and debt and equity products.

Figure 4. CEFS dispersion chart for intrinsic dimensions
One of the key questions when designing a CEFS is to decide what project phases will be considered to be financed. Hence each of the four dimensions of a CEFS are compared to four project phases in Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7.

4.2. Project phases

Figure 5. CEFS dispersion chart for extrinsic dimensions
Public money seems to occur in CEFS for all project stages yet is strongly preferred for the early-stage explorations and development phases. This can be explained by the high risks involved in these project phases, and therefore uncertain returns on investment for private money. Following the reversed logic, money focused on financial performance is mostly used for the Realisation and Refinancing project phases, as their risks of failure are significantly smaller.
Grants are clearly preferred for early-stage exploration and development, which again relates to the risk involved in these stages. Additionally, the costs of these phases are lower than the realisation and refinancing phase, making grants more obtainable. In the realisation phase a mix between equity and debt products is normal, yet a slight majority for debt products can be observed.

![Bar chart showing the number of occurrences of citizen control in the target projects of the CEFS]

**Figure 8. Project phases versus target**

Less prominent patterns can be observed when considering citizen control in both target projects and the institutions governing the CEFS. The number of occurrences show a similar pattern to the graph plotting institutions and targets. But each of the levels of participation can happen in any of the project phases.
Figure 9. Project phases versus institution managing the CEFS
5. Conclusions

The main goal for this deliverable was not only to identify and classify the already existing CEFS across Europe, but also for the consortium to assess state of play in the development of community energy financing across our target countries.

The main conclusions drawn from this research is the scarcity, or absence, of financing schemes fully meeting the criteria of CEFS and therefore the specific needs for financing of energy communities across Europe. In order to support the development of energy communities across Europe, the need to suitable financing schemes – and in general enabling framework condition is crucial. This mapping allows use to better understand the gaps in the financing tools available in our target countries. The lack of European solutions also contributes to our effort to develop a pan European financing organisation that will facilitate the creation and operation of CEFS at national level.

This database and its analysis will also serve as a baseline for the rest of the project, allowing the consortium to measure the progress of the project against the results obtained in this first deliverable. Additionally, the database will continuously feed an online interactive map (D2.4), giving anyone that looks at it a present overview of the universe of CEFS across the continent, but also a chronological understanding on the evolution of that universe.

The works leading to this deliverable have also allowed the consortium to align our understanding on what we are looking for, establishing a common point of view over diverse concepts such as the main dimensions to consider when analysing an energy financing scheme, or the minimum criteria to be met by those schemes to be considered a CEFS.

The consortium has also detected interesting examples for best practices in some of the responses to the questionnaire and will contact those people for in-depth interviews in order to deepening in their knowledge. The results of those interviews will serve as the groundings for the best practice report (D2.2).

Finally, this deliverable allows the consortium to identify – from the responses to the questionnaire – the potential mentors that will eventually take part in the expert network (D2.3) and in the training sessions in the national workshops and will eventually serve as a first line of contact for the communities or organisations willing to set up a CEFS in their region.
Annex I: Questionnaire questions

1. Your name
2. Your email
3. Job title
4. Organisation name
5. Type of Organisation (multiple choice: cooperative, private company, public authorities, financial institution, non-profit organization, other)
6. Country
7. Based on the broad description above, does your organization manage a CEFS, or do you work/are in contact with/know of organizations that you would identify as CEFS? [YES] [NO]
   If no, please answer questions 17 and 18.
8. Identification of the CEFS
   a. Name of the CEFS
   b. Contact person or online information (website)
9. Details of the CEFS
   a. Year of creation
   b. Size of the CEFS
      i. What is the overall capitalization of the CEFS?
      ii. How many renewable energy projects has the CEFS invested in?
      iii. How many people work in the CEFS? What professional backgrounds do they have?
10. Origins of the funds
    a. Which entity brings in the funding that supports the CEFS (e.g. private funding, public funding, citizen funding)?
    b. What is the nature of investment proposed by the CEFS (multiple choice: Equity / Bonds / Shareholder loans / Bank loans / Mezzanine loan (non shareholder but without warranty) / Access to Government subsidy / Other?
11. Funding policy
    a. How is the investment policy (i.e., type of organizations and projects supported by the CEFS, size of investment, etc.) determined, (e.g. statutory regulation, government or public policy, privately managed)?
    b. How are citizens involved in the framing of the investment policy?
    c. Is the investment policy stable or potentially subject to change?
12. Governance of the CEFS
   a. What is the legal form taken by the CEFS?
   b. Who manages the fund (i.e., applies the investment policy of the CEFS)?
   c. How are citizens, directly or indirectly, involved in the management of the CEFS?
   d. Were energy communities considered or even involved in setting up the CEFS organization? If so, please explain in what way.

13. What is the economic model of the CEFS
   b. Is there an obligation to pay back invested funds if the project fails?

14. Eligibility criterion
   a. How are the projects identified and then selected? (Please elaborate on your answer to Q11a)
   b. Eligible organizations
      i. What type of organizations are eligible for funding?
      ii. Describe how the citizens are involved, directly or indirectly, in the funded organizations.
   c. Eligible projects
      i. Does the CEFS invest in renewable energy projects only? If not, what other types of projects does it finance?
      ii. What kind of renewable energy project does the fund finance:
         1) Which technologies (multiple choice: solar, wind, hydro, biomass, others)?
         2) What is the size of projects concerned (Size min / Max in Mw for an investment)?
         3) What is the geographical scope of the CEFS (multiple choice: district, regional, national, other)?
      iii. At which stage of renewable energy projects does the CEFS invest (i.e. Early-stage exploration? Development? Building of the installation? Refinancing an already built installation)?

15. Is there a knowledge sharing mechanism involved in the scheme and how does it work?

16. Is the CEFS involved in the creation of a network?

17. Do you identify other types of financing schemes (not CEFS) that could be used to finance community energy projects? Please name the scheme and explain your answer.

18. Do you have any other remarks?
## Annex II: Response analysis

Table 2. CEFS scores in the four dimensions

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<th>Scheme Name</th>
<th>Intrinsic Dimensions</th>
<th>Extrinsic Dimensions</th>
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