



Socially just energy communities

FAQs for interested parties and members

1 What is an energy community?

Energy communities facilitate the exchange of energy among their members, involving both producers and consumers. The classification of energy communities varies based on size and participant types, distinguishing between:

- Community generation plants
- Renewable energy communities
- Citizen energy communities.

2 What is a jointly owned generation plant (Gemeinschaftliche Erzeugungsanlage, GEA)?

A community generation plant represents the most compact form of community energy generation. It operates within a confined local space, typically within a single house. This shared generation system allows residents to access electricity generated from the rooftop photovoltaic system, employing it for communal areas such as corridors, common rooms, and the cellar. Because only the internal building infrastructure is utilized, there are no associated grid costs.

3. What is a renewable energy community (Erneuerbaren-Energiegemeinschaft, EEG)?

A renewable energy community facilitates the local

- production,
- consumption,
- storage,
- and sale

of renewable energy. By utilizing only a portion of the electricity grid, participants can achieve savings ranging from 30 to 60 percent of grid costs.

4 What is a citizen energy community (Bürger*innen-Energie-Gemeinschaft, BEG)?

In contrast to renewable energy communities, citizens' energy communities are not confined to a specific geographic area. This implies that they utilize all sections of the grid, consequently incurring all grid fees.

5 How is an energy community organised?

A renewable energy community can take shape as an association, dedicated to offering its members ecological, economic, or social community benefits. The association's formation contract outlines the suitable articles for a renewable energy community. Member contracts detail additional modalities.

Renewable energy communities can also be organized by cooperatives, partnerships, corporations, or owners' associations (in compliance with the Austrian Condominium Act). The project partners play a supportive role during the foundation and initial operational phases of these energy communities, maintaining regular communication with the members.

Reference to templates on the coordination centre

6. Are there already energy communities in Austria?

Yes, there are currently more than 700 energy communities in Austria. You can find an overview here: <https://energiegemeinschaften.gv.at/>

7. The energy community is founded via a research project. What does that mean exactly?

The three-year research project (05/2023-04/2026), funded by the FFG (Austrian Research Promotion Agency), seeks to develop operational models for a socially equitable energy community and implement two or more of them in collaboration with (non-profit) property developers, municipalities, supporting organizations, or private individuals.

The project management is entrusted to [4ward Energy Research GmbH](#), responsible for the development and scrutiny of the operating models. Practical expertise and the execution and supervision of energy communities are provided by [Energiezukunft Niederösterreich](#), [FH Technikum Wien](#) and [Caritas Stadtteilarbeit](#) collaboratively plan measures for member involvement, delving into the pivotal question of what constitutes "socially just."

Throughout the foundation and initial operational phases, the project partners actively support energy communities and maintain regular dialogue with the members.

8. What does that mean: socially just?

The tariff structure within an energy community is adaptable, allowing prices to be structured in a socially equitable and solidarity-driven fashion. The project team lays the groundwork by developing a scientifically and socio-politically robust framework, serving as a basis for discussion among the (future) members. Subsequently, the team guides the (future) members through the collaborative process of establishing tariffs, particularly for households identified as energy poor or at risk of energy poverty.

9. What do I gain by becoming part of a renewable energy community?

By joining a renewable energy community, you actively contribute to the energy transition, support local development, and champion environmental protection. You are assured that the energy exclusively originates from renewable sources and local production. This strengthens the region and contributes to climate targets.

Moreover, you enjoy a sense of co-determination and cost savings. In a renewable energy community, participants collectively determine the price for the energy generated, consistently offering rates lower than those on the conventional electricity market. Additionally, participants benefit from reduced grid costs and the exemption from taxes and levies.

10. How does participation work?

If you are interested in participating, you can pre-register with us here without any obligation by following this link to Egon (<https://energiegemeinschaften.ezn.at/sozialeg#vormerken>). Here's how the process works:

Step 1: Fill out the form to express your non-binding interest. You can change your mind at any time.

Step 2: We will assess the number of interested individuals and their locations. If enough people from your neighborhood have registered, you will receive a message from us.

Step 3: If you are still interested in the energy community, we will start the membership process together with you.

Step 4: You are a member of the energy community, gaining access to environmentally friendly and affordable electricity from the community.

11. Do I have to convert anything?

No need to make any changes on your end. The sole prerequisite for participation is the presence of a smart meter installed by your grid operator. There are no extra costs for you. If you do not yet have a smart meter, we will notify the grid operator, and they will install it within three months.

12. How do I know if I can participate?

To ascertain your eligibility and identify the suitable energy community, we utilize your meter point number. The meter point number essentially represents your address on the electricity grid. This unique identifier begins with AT and consists of 33 digits. You can locate your meter point number on your annual statement or in your grid access contract. If you cannot find it, you can inquire with your grid operator.

When expressing your interest via the web portal, kindly enter your meter point number. We will then assess the feasibility of your participation and get back to you with the relevant details.

13. What costs will I incur?

Joining one of the socially just energy communities incurs no membership costs. The expenses associated with the energy service provider EZN are distributed among all members, and you will receive an individualized invoice for your electricity costs through the portal.

The cost per kWh for the electricity you consume is lower compared to the conventional energy market. You benefit from reduced grid costs and either no or lower taxes. The specific electricity tariffs are collaboratively determined within the project.

14. Do I have to deregister from my current energy supplier?

No, there is no need for you to deregister. Everyone always maintains a residual power supplier. This supplier ensures you have a continuous energy supply in situations where the energy community's system is temporarily unable to provide electricity—such as when no solar energy can be generated.

15. Can I leave the energy community at any time?

Yes, you can leave an energy community at any time. The specific steps and procedures for leaving are outlined in the founding documents of the energy community.

16. How many electricity bills will I receive?

Until now, you have been receiving a single bill from your energy supplier (e.g., Wien Energie or EVN). As a member of an energy community, you will now receive an additional bill alongside your existing one. However, it's important to note that your overall costs will be reduced.

17. How often will I receive an electricity bill from the energy community?

You will receive a monthly statement from the energy community.

18. Who do I pay?

The energy community issues invoices for its members based on the quantities of energy consumed and fed into the grid.

19. What happens to the tariff in the energy community if electricity prices rise again so rapidly?

The tariff is contractually fixed for a specified period, ensuring that it remains unchanged even if electricity prices increase at other energy supply companies.

20. Who sets the tariffs in the energy community?

All members have the opportunity to collectively determine the tariffs. It is crucial to consider the size of the energy community and the amount of electricity generated by its members. The research project team provides support throughout this process. Regardless, participants stand to benefit from reduced grid costs and the exclusion of taxes and levies.

21. Who decides how much electricity I receive from the energy community?

The electricity is distributed among all members, and you can only receive electricity from the energy community when it is actively generated within the community, such as during periods when the sun is shining.

22. Can my friends/parents/relatives/acquaintances who live elsewhere also participate?

Yes. Feel free to inform your relatives and friends. They can also pre-register without any obligation via the web portal [<https://energiegemeinschaften.ezn.at/sozialleg#vormerken>]. Whether everyone ends up in the same energy community depends on their respective locations.

23. What is an energy service provider?

An energy service provider assumes various responsibilities on behalf of the renewable energy community. These include technical and economic conceptual design, meter data processing for billing purposes, member administration, and the calculation of optimizations for future expansion stages. In this project, EZN is entrusted with handling these tasks.

24. What responsibility do I assume by participating in an energy community?

You bear no risk, and you have the freedom to exit the community at any time. Additionally, if you wish, you can actively engage in the association's activities.

25. Can I use my own generation plant to participate in an energy community?

Yes. You can feed electricity from your generation plant into the community, but it must be energy sourced from renewable sources. Please provide us with your meter point, and we will reach out to you to discuss the details.

