



REScoop.EU

# Charter of REScoop.eu

The European Federation of Citizen Energy Cooperatives

## Charter of REScoop.eu

Revised by the General Assembly of REScoop.eu 2019

Every signatory of this Charter

- complies with the definition of a cooperative: *'it is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, or cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise; (in case of a citizen energy cooperative)*

and/or:

- adheres to the cooperative values: *'of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity', and 'belief in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others'* (in all other cases e.g. a federation of citizen energy cooperatives)

This does not exclude that signatories have assumed a legal entity other than a cooperative society, including but not limited to: an NGO, a foundation, an association, etc.

The signatories of this Charter unite in the following set of

- our principles,
- our challenges,
- our vision,
- our mission, and
- our objectives.

## Our principles

The declaration on cooperative identity was formulated by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 1895, 51 years after the formulation of the principles of the cooperative movement in Rochdale. In 1995, the 100th General Assembly of ICA defined a new declaration on the cooperative identity and principles in Manchester. This statement is the origin of Recommendation 193 (of 03/06/2002) of the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations (ILO) on the promotion of cooperatives. In this, the ILO invites employers' organisations, trade unions and governments to promote cooperative structures in their competence field.

### **The signatories of the REScoop.eu Charter subscribe to the 7 cooperative principles of the International Cooperative Movement:**

#### **Voluntary and Open Membership:**

Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

#### **Democratic Member Control:**

Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organised in a democratic manner.

#### **Members' Economic Participation:**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following 4 purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

**Autonomy and Independence:**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

**Education, Training, and Information:**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

**Cooperation Among Cooperatives:**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

**Concern for Community:**

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

## Challenges we face

In the second decade of the 21st century the levels of consumption and non-sustainable production of energy are endangering our environment and our way of life. We face several impending challenges and even if they are not felt in all European countries, at least one of these challenges was a major drive for the founding members of REScoop.eu in 2013.

### **Environmental challenges:**

Climate Change is endangering ecosystems including human communities: this will lead to climate refugees and conflicts.

### **Economical and geopolitical challenges:**

Non-renewable energy sources will be exhausted in the short to medium term by rising world population numbers and living standards; rising demand for non-renewable energy will increase pressure on prices and geopolitical tensions; Moreover, climate change impels us to leave most of the fossil energy reserves in the ground.

### **Social challenges:**

Technological changes make it easier for average citizens to get involved, but this can create tensions between those who have resources to invest, and those that don't. Energy is becoming expensive and a growing number of individuals are confronted with **energy poverty**\*. When this is not countered by measures and support for people to rationalise their energy use, it leads to social conflicts in European countries.

### **Political challenges:**

In the context of the liberalisation of the energy market, often public authorities at all levels pull back from energy production, distribution and supply. In most European countries, energy policy lacks a clear long-term vision and is opaque. As a result, EU governments fail to reach the stated goals of the European Union's liberalisation policy (competitive markets, fair prices and energy independence) and of the Paris agreements to tackle climate change.

**Challenges for the Commons:**

Moreover, the development of renewable energy sources through market-based policies should not lose sight of the importance and opportunity of a *fair and equal* access to these energy sources; renewable energy sources are **common goods\*** but they are often wrongfully appropriated by manipulation and speculation.

## Our Vision

Given the challenges we are facing today, a global shift from fossil and nuclear energy sources to renewable energy sources is required for the transition to a sustainable future.

Access to energy is a basic right, people depend on its daily use for heating and cooling, light or transport. Therefore, we consider the production and distribution of energy to be **civic responsibilities\*** and as citizens and communities, we choose to take part in it.

REScoop.eu supports citizen energy cooperatives that share our vision and objectives. We promote **a model based on cooperation\***: a decentralised approach to the **energy transition\***, one that gives the means to people across Europe to produce and consume their own energy and to invest together in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other clean energy technologies: **energy democracy\***.

This common vision for the future of energy is based on various aspects:

- reduction of the energy consumption through a more **rational energy use\***;
- **energy efficiency\***;
- transition from fossil/nuclear to renewable energy sources;
- collaboration between different local actors or stakeholders;
- solidarity between the rural areas and cities, as well as between vulnerable and low/income households and those that are well-resourced;
- development and appropriate planning of the use of renewable energy sources to the advantage of citizens and the local economy;
- the need to integrate local renewables through flexibility, and ensuring the efficient functioning of the grid throughout the energy transition; and
- a direct democratic model for the energy market concerning prices, planning and pollution reduction.

## Our Mission

Given the challenges we face and the vision we share, the signatories of this Charter choose to give every citizen and other local actors the chance to play an active role in the production, distribution, supply, and management of energy and related services. Cost and benefits of projects must be shared in time and space: between present and future generations, between people close to the projects and beyond. Therefore, the participation of individuals and communities in the *energy transition*\* is essential for REScoop.eu members.

The starting points are:

- transparent information to the local community and local consultation;
- direct participation in energy projects so that financial participation has a real and direct link with the projects;
- the long-term objective of 100% renewable energy; and
- the values of this Charter.

For this purpose and according to these ethical principles we want to realise and support cooperative projects of citizens.

**A REScoop project meets the following criteria:**

### **Locally anchored:**

The legal entity that realises and exploits the project is fully open to the participation of local residents, the local civil society, the municipality and its executive subsidiaries and ordinary citizens in general: both before, during and after the realisation of the project. This allows them to master the project and the added value. The bond between energy needs, the necessary renewable means of production and the local economic significance becomes clear.



**Non-speculative objectives:**

The project is realised to be exploited and not to be resold. The remuneration of the capital is limited. It gives access to energy at a fair and transparent price. Part of the added value is spent on education and information and on investments in new projects. To the extent possible, also the project developers with whom they co-operate, the co-investors and their contractors respect these rules in the construction and operation of this project.

**Independent:**

The legal entity that realises and operates the project is autonomous and is not governed by governments or by other companies. The mechanism of cooperation and solidarity that is used for the investments and the objectives of the projects, is part of the social and cooperative economy, and places these legal entities outside the public sector (administrative autonomy) and outside the pure private companies.

**Democratic:**

The legal entities that realise and exploit such projects and, to the extent possible, also the project partners (project developers, engineering firms, banks, contractors, etc.), are democratically organised, of the cooperative type or working according to the cooperative principles, transparent and clear. They guarantee the preservation of the objectives of the projects throughout their duration. The elected management of these companies must allow the participants to control the production prices and, ensure transparency on the functioning and finances.

**Ecological:**

The legal entity that realises and operates the project commits itself sustainably and voluntarily in favour of the environment, going from the global issue (climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, ...) to the problems at the local level (use of the soil, the wind, the rivers, local impact, ...). As far as possible, the project developers, co-investors and their contractors (consultants, constructors, installers, ...) also respect this rule.

## **Preservation of open space:**

Study and planning precede the realisation of projects, different project proposals are weighed on their merits: urban development, environmental effects and socio-economic impacts.

## **Our Objectives**

The signatories of the REScoop.eu Charter engage themselves to:

- foster the development of REScoops (cooperatives and other citizens controlled legal entities) as described above;
- identify, accompany and support energy projects of groups of citizens and municipalities;
- contribute to reach the goals set by the European Union and its member states at the COP21 in Paris to tackle Climate Change and keep the raise of temperature below + 1,5°C.
- to help local authorities reach their targets set in their Sustainable Energy Action Plans or Climate Action Plans when they signed the Covenant of Mayors;
- look for the necessary means and manners to execute this Charter.

**This Charter has been adapted by the General Assembly of REScoop.eu, gathered in Zagreb on the 1st of June 2019.**