



Tandems Quarterly

December 2023

Editorial 'Trusting the drivers of Energy Transition' | 2

Personalised road to climate neutrality. The PAC 2.0. | 3

The vital importance of the intangible element of citizen energy: collaboration | 3

Uplifting energy communities | 4

How Municipalities Can Make a Difference in Energy Communities? | 4

News and Events | 5

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE ACHTERHOEK?

Justin Pagden

You would not expect it, maybe, but when it comes to the energy transition, there are some very innovative things going on in the Achterhoek region of the Netherlands. It's not the transition from fossil to renewable energy that is remarkable in itself. It's the way it is taking shape that is remarkable. What catches the eye are the collaborations between municipalities and local energy communities, the business models and ownership structures, and the supportive infrastructure.

For most people, a solar park is just a solar park, and a windmill is just a windmill. But for the Achterhoek, what matters most, is who owns these solar parks and windmills and how they benefit the people in the Achterhoek. Now that is nothing new, energy cooperatives are plenty in the Netherlands. But these cooperatives have not yet delivered on their promise. Quite frankly, they have mainly become investment vehicles for affluent citizens. But why?

Up until quite recently, energy produced by cooperatives had to be sold on the wholesale market through a supplier, no real alternative was available. But for the 'Achterhoekers', this made no sense. Why sell it as a cooperative on the wholesale market at market price and make a profit? And buy it back as a consumer from a supplier who also wants to make a profit? Why not supply it directly from the cooperative to the end consumer, at a cost price? Well, many reasons actually, but the main one is: that energy suppliers are not interested in this model and do not facilitate it. So, in the Achterhoek, they decided they would have to do it themselves.

First, the eight municipalities in the region founded their own energy company, [Agem Gemeentelijke Energie](#). Now, they don't have to buy energy through a European Tendering procedure but can buy it directly from the wholesale market. Or, even better, develop their assets, like [Braamt](#), and supply it to themselves, at a cost price. Now, they only have to buy on the market when their production doesn't meet demand. Or sell, whenever there is a surplus. And guess what, the cost price of supplying your sustainable energy to yourself is lower than the market price and much more stable. So now everyone is getting on board to implement this cost-price model in more energy communities and further develop the supporting structures that are needed to make it work.

During the 3rd consortium meeting of the Live Tandems project, this time in the Netherlands, partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, and Austria visited the first project where the cost price model was implemented in a Citizen Energy Community. The [BioZon project](#) in Zelhem supplies energy directly to its household members at a cost price of only 5,5 ct per kWh, therefore not being exposed to high market prices.

What is happening in the Achterhoek is a great inspiration for energy communities in the Netherlands and other European member states. But just copying whatever is happening is no option. That is why the Live Tandems project is designed in such a way that the valuable aspects of the different participating projects can be extracted and transposed to another context therefore lifting the whole European citizen energy community to another level.



Justin Pagden
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Articles

Personalised road to climate neutrality.

During the TANDEM's third consortium meeting in Doetinchem, we had the pleasure of an online inspiration session with Dmitris Tsekeris, an Energy Scenarios project manager at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe. He introduced our consortium to the 'Paris Agreement Compatible Pathway for EU Climate Neutrality' (PAC).

More specifically he focused on its upcoming second version, which strongly intertwines with the activities of TANDEM's. In this article we give you an insight into the session through summary, reflections and analysis. [Continue reading by clicking here...](#)



The vital importance of the intangible element of citizen energy: collaboration.

The implementation of energy communities, which, through their use of renewable energy, are fighting climate change, is challenging. It requires local policies, technological availability, space and funds.

Nevertheless it also requires one element, which drives it all, and that is community readiness and willingness for collaboration. In this article we will dwell into the importance of collaboration in energy communities (EC's), and what it looks like in the field. [Click here to find out more...](#)





Uplifting energy communities

In this article we want to introduce our recent inspiration, which is UP-STAIRS by Horizon 2020. This project accelerates the creation of energy communities and collective action. It is done by setting up one-stop shops in five pilot regions across the EU.

The TANDEMS consortium talked to UP-STAIRS representative Ivanka Pandelieva-Dimova, who is the project manager at the Sofia Energy Centre. [To find out more click here...](#)



How Municipalities Can Make a Difference in Energy Communities?

In one of our previous articles in this newsletter, we touched on the topic of the importance of collaboration in energy transition. In this segment, we want to dive even deeper and zoom into the collaboration between energy communities and municipalities.

Municipalities play a crucial role in supporting energy communities by providing guidance, resources, and infrastructure to foster sustainable energy initiatives. That is why in this article we ask ourselves exactly how municipalities can become vital actors in the energy transition.

[Click here to read more...](#)



From November 8-10, **our consortium met in Doetinchem**, a Dutch city located in the Achterhoek, one of TANDEM'S pilot regions. During the consortium meeting, the partners dived into meetings, workshops, discussions, site visits, and round tables. It was an enticing experience to reflect on the past year of the project and revisit all achievements, challenges, and new opportunities.

Two of the most memorable experiences included the **site visit to Agem's pilot project BioZon** in Zelhem and inspiration sessions with external advisors, who gave us a glimpse into new technologies, how clean energy transition works on a bigger scale, and most importantly, what the social impact of energy communities is. **Reaching social impact and assessing its effectiveness** is a challenging aspect of setting up or leading an energy community. Through creating a well-connected and established network and using the expertise of local organizations, the effects of a clean energy transition can be palpable.

As our previous consortium meetings, this one too, reminded us of the vital importance of never forgetting our joint visionary aim of a clean energy transition. During project work dealing with small tasks and getting lost in the deliverables of the everyday can be daunting. Keeping in mind the aim of it all, which is a fair energy transition and a sustainable future, can help us overcome any difficulties and challenges.



News/ Events. Highlights

October 2023

ZuidtrAnt presents the [R-E-FLEX](#) project at the FODEconomie Energy Transition Fund day tabled by the [REScoop.Vlaanderen](#) members.



November 2023

AGEM organises in-depth knowledge session on financial advice and sustainability for financial advisors.



November 2023

TANDEMS third consortium meeting in Doetinchem organised, by AGEM. [Read more about it here.](#)



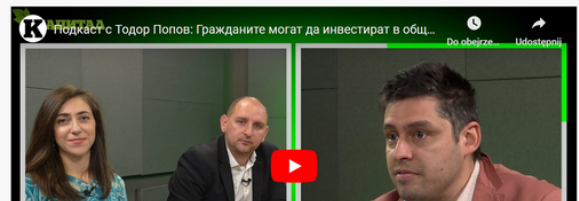
November 2023

Municipality of Gabrovo/Todor Popov

The project for the (first of its kind) public-private energy community in Gabrovo has officially started. Until 15th December, participants from the city are invited; from then on, if money are not raised, the project opens for anyone in Bulgaria.

Podcast with Todor Popov: Citizens can invest in a municipal solar park in Gabrovo

The amount of participation is from BGN 500 to BGN 5,000, so that more people can join the first energy community in Bulgaria



November 2023

VITO launches its interactive pitch competition VITO4STARTERS for cleantech entrepreneurs or start-ups with a strong project or idea committed to sustainability. You can [learn more about it here.](#)

News/ Events. Highlights

November 2023

VITO/EnergyVille organises a cultural knowledge exchange of green and sustainable developments with UNIDO and a South African Delegation.

The exchange included workshops on latest developments in energy innovations, info sessions on energy transition in South Africa, exploring water treatment facilities in Leuven and discussing the global water and energy strategy.



November 2023

Klimaan organizes multiple information sessions for citizens about investments and developments in the clean energy transition. Topics included: Energy Villages, Solar Panels, and Shared cars in Zemst as well as advice on solar panel investments.

December 2023

Gabrovo Municipality is hosting a workshop on the SHEERenov+ Project, financed under the European Union Environment and Climate Program "LIFE"/ sub-programme "Transition to Clean Energy". The main focus is: 'The role of municipalities and models for providing integrated services for building renovation.' [Read more about it here.](#)



December 2023

AGEM presents the BioZon Pilot project at TUDelft GOP2P Conference. AGEM was a part of the second day presentations on the topic of 'Making Local Energy Markets a Reality', focused on the challenge of moving from pilots to a widespread implementation of Local Energy Markets



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Co-Funded by the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's LIFE Programme under grant agreement No 101077514