



Celebrating our Champions: Vote Now for Sophie Loots and the Otterbeek Social Housing Project!

Vienna, 30 April 2025

Two outstanding initiatives closely connected to the EU-funded Life TANDEMS project have been nominated as finalists for the 2025 [European Sustainable Energy Awards](#)! Both Sophie Loots and the Community Energy for Social Housing project in Otterbeek embody what the TANDEMS project stands for: a fair, inclusive, citizen-driven energy transition that leaves no one behind. Sophie Loots has been shortlisted in the “Woman in Energy” category, while the Otterbeek project is competing in the “Local Energy Action” category. Public voting is now open — and your vote can help support these inspiring champions of community energy across Europe!

Sophie Loots: Driving Citizen-Led Energy Transition

Sophie Loots, director of the Flemish energy cooperative **ZuidtrAnt active in 16 municipalities around the city of Antwerp** and a key contributor to [TANDEMS](#) activities, has been shortlisted for the **Woman in Energy Award**.

Through initiatives such as citizen led renovations, collective heat networks, collective solar installations and community engagement campaigns, Sophie brings the energy transition to life at the local level. Combining grassroots empowerment, empathy, and strong advocacy for gender equality in a traditionally male-dominated sector, Sophie and ZuidtrAnt have advised **1000 people** on sustainable energy, developed community-financed renewable energy projects — directly benefiting more than **300 households**.

“Our organisation stands for more than just building an energy community — it's about making lasting connections with people. We actively seek ways to engage with residents, listen to their needs, and involve them in shaping a fair and inclusive energy transition. People first need to realize the power they have when they produce their own energy — and we are here to support that journey.” – Sophie Loots, ZuidtrAnt

Beyond her project work, Sophie is also an active voice in regional and European discussions on citizen-led energy governance. At [TANDEMS](#), we are proud to count Sophie among our active partners. Her tireless work in building inclusive, citizen-led energy structures across Flanders truly exemplifies the spirit of cooperation and fairness we aim to foster.

Otterbeek Social Housing: A Flagship for Inclusive Energy Action

Also nominated — in the **Local Energy Action** category — is the **Community Energy for Social Housing project in Otterbeek (Mechelen, Belgium)**. This initiative, developed by the City of Mechelen together with the citizens' energy cooperative **Klimaan** and strongly supported by the [TANDEMS](#) project, has equipped **200 social housing units** with rooftop solar panels. These installations produce

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around **683,000 kWh of renewable energy per year**, avoiding an estimated **130 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually**.

More than just an infrastructure project, Otterbeek delivers real social impact: by stabilizing energy prices for vulnerable tenants, it ensures that residents pay no more than **90% of the subsidized energy tariffs**, or a maximum of **20 eurocents per kilowatt-hour** — providing affordable access to clean energy for years to come. Through citizen financing, energy sharing, and close collaboration with housing associations, Otterbeek has become a **reference model across Europe** for integrating social inclusion into the energy transition.

"In Otterbeek, we are showing how energy communities can thrive in social housing environments. Through close collaboration between municipalities, housing associations, and residents, we are building a local energy system that empowers people to produce, share, and benefit from renewable energy together." – Bart de Bruyne, City of Mechelen

ZuidtrAnt as well as the municipality of Mechelen and the local energy community Klimaan are partners of the [TANDEMS](#) consortium, and we are delighted to see Sophie Loots and the Otterbeek initiative recognized as EUSEW Award finalists — a clear example of how [TANDEMS](#) partners are making the energy transition **practical, just, affordable, and scalable** at the community level.

Make your voice heard – Vote now!

The winners of the EUSEW Awards 2025 will be determined by public voting. Support Sophie Loots and the Otterbeek Social Housing project by casting your vote: <https://www.eusew.eu/awards/public-vote>

Voting is open until 1 June 2025. The winners will be announced during the official EUSEW Awards Ceremony on 10 June 2025 in Brussels.

The TANDEMS Project

TANDEMS is funded by the European Union's LIFE programme ([LIFE21-CET-ENERCOM-TANDEMS](#)) and aims to accelerate the transition to clean energy by fostering cooperation between municipalities and citizen-led energy communities. Bringing together 11 partners from Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Austria, the project focuses on developing and improving energy sharing models in Antwerp (Belgium), Achterhoek (the Netherlands) and the municipalities of Burgas and Gabrovo (Bulgaria). The goal is to activate 67 community energy initiatives, support the creation of 23 citizen-led projects, and stimulate renewable energy generation of over 10 GWh per year.

Ressources

- For **more information**, visit the official website: www.lifetandems.eu
- For **interview requests** please mail to office@oikoplus.com
- For **photos**, follow this link: <https://oikoplus.faircloud.eu/s/So5KoqP3ifYBzfJ>

