

# TANDEM'S QUARTERLY

The Quarterly Newsletter  
from the LIFE TANDEM'S  
Project

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## EDITORIAL: THE GREEN DEAL'S NEW CHAPTER – A SHIFT, NOT AN END

Thomas Stollenwerk

Once the EU's flagship policy for climate neutrality by 2050, the Green Deal is now losing momentum. The 2024 European elections, a new Commission, and global uncertainty under the US administration have shifted priorities. While the Green Deal remains, the focus is tilting towards economic resilience, as seen in the Competitiveness Compass and Clean Industrial Deal.

Ambitious environmental regulations are being reassessed, especially where industries face global competition. Longstanding business concerns about regulatory burdens, farmer protests, and calls from major member states like Germany, France, and Italy for more flexibility have pushed the EU towards a more pragmatic approach. Key measures like corporate sustainability reporting and nature restoration obligations are under review.

Is the Green Deal dead? No—but it's evolving. The emphasis is moving from strict regulation to incentives and industrial transformation. Investment in renewables and clean technology continues, but within a more business-friendly framework.

For projects like TANDEM, this shift presents both challenges and opportunities. Regulatory support may soften, but public backing for the energy transition remains strong: 7 in 10 Europeans still view climate change as a major concern. This highlights a crucial point—real change is also driven from the bottom up.

In today's political climate, the role of citizen-driven energy communities is more vital than ever. The future of the Green Deal won't be decided in Brussels alone—it will be shaped by initiatives from citizens, local governments, and cooperatives.

The challenge now for TANDEM is clear: adapt to this new reality by strengthening grassroots action and proving that a fair, inclusive, and financially attractive energy transition can thrive, even amid shifting political winds.



**Thomas Stollenwerk**  
Oikoplus GmbH

# Project Updates

## Flemish Policy Dialogue on Socially Inclusive Energy Communities

The latest policy report from the Flemish Policy Dialogue on Socially Inclusive Energy Communities is now available! This dialogue brought together stakeholders from different sectors to discuss the challenges and opportunities of building energy communities that are accessible and beneficial to all, especially vulnerable groups.

Organised within the TANDEMS framework, the dialogue focused on creating practical ways to integrate social inclusion into energy transition strategies. Participants explored how community-driven renewable energy initiatives can be combined with social housing policies to ensure that the energy transition leaves no one behind.

The report highlights key insights from the dialogue, including innovative models for fostering collaboration between local governments, citizen cooperatives and social organisations. It also outlines policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the social dimension of energy communities and making clean energy more inclusive.

By sharing these findings, TANDEMS continues to support municipalities and communities across Europe in building more socially inclusive energy systems.

**Read the full report here:**

<https://lifetandems.eu/new-report-available-flemish-policy-dialogue-on-socially-inclusive-energy-communities/>



# Project Updates

## Join Our Policy Session at EUSEW 2025!

### Is Energy Sharing Possible? Empowering Communities for Inclusivity

🕒 Wednesday, 11 June, 11:30–13:00

📍 EUSEW Policy Conference, Brussels

**Registration:** <https://interactive.eusew.eu/register/>

EU regulations often favour large corporate players, leaving citizen-led initiatives struggling to compete. In this session, we will discuss how energy sharing can level the playing field and offer practical solutions to bridge the gap between community energy ambitions and the reality of legal and administrative challenges. We ask: How can energy communities become the driving force behind a fair and inclusive energy transition?

Five LIFE-funded sister projects from 17 countries will come together to share their insights in a dynamic Pecha Kucha-style presentation. The session will be divided into two parts, each focusing on a key theme, allowing speakers and participants to explore together effective solutions for collaborative energy business and cooperation models. Audience interaction will ensure a lively exchange of ideas between stakeholders, policy makers, city governments, NGOs and cooperatives.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to shape the conversation on socially inclusive energy communities. Join us and make your voice heard!



# Learning from Practice: How Local Energy Collaborations Shape the Future

In the TANDEM project, five pilot regions across Europe have taken a deep dive into their local energy journeys – not just to reflect, but to inspire. Through a series of Learning History Workshops, each pilot traced key turning points, lessons learned, and challenges overcome. The goal? To turn experience into collective knowledge that fuels the future of local energy collaborations.

## Learning Together for the Energy Transition – The Learning History Workshops in TANDEM

The EU-funded TANDEM project is all about fostering strong partnerships between municipalities and local energy communities. But what does effective cooperation really look like on the ground? The answer lies in the Learning History Workshops, where key actors from selected pilots came together to reflect on their experiences, share lessons, and develop new ideas. These workshops don't just look back – they create momentum for what's next.

In five European locations – Mechelen, Doetinchem, Gabrovo, Antwerp, and Schoten – diverse stakeholders gathered around the timeline of their project's development. They revisited pivotal moments, discussed obstacles, and identified what made their collaboration work. The result is a set of rich and transferable insights, now feeding into the [TANDEM Open Collaboration Model](#) – a flexible framework for energy cooperation across Europe.



## What is a Learning History Workshop?

Learning History Workshops are structured reflection sessions that help participants map their project's journey. Using tools like timelines and the systemic iceberg, they identify success factors, bottlenecks, and transformative moments. These narratives are not just stories – they are strategic knowledge, shared with the wider TANDEM community through Eye-Opener Sessions and reports.

### Five Pilots – Five Stories of Innovation and Collaboration



## Otterbeek (Mechelen, Belgium)

Tucked into the city of Mechelen, the Otterbeek neighbourhood faced the same challenges many social housing areas do: limited resources, high energy costs, and residents with few options to engage in the energy transition. But here, something bold happened. Solar panels were installed on 70 social housing units – not just to reduce emissions, but to deliver tangible benefits to the residents themselves. With financing from citizens via the Klimaan cooperative, and a 20-year payback model, the project breaks ground in multiple ways: energy sharing, community ownership, and solidarity pricing. It's the first legal energy-sharing project in Flanders, and a blueprint for what's possible when inclusion drives innovation.

### Read more here:

<https://lifetandems.eu/building-trust-in-vulnerable-communities-insights-from-otterbeeks-energy-initiative/>



## AGEM (Achterhoek, Netherlands)

In the rural region of Achterhoek, eight municipalities came together with a radical idea: take control of their own energy future. In 2013, they launched AGEM, a cooperative energy company rooted in local governance and citizen involvement. Over the years, AGEM grew into a multi-service platform for renewable production, energy advice, and project development. Today, it serves thousands of customers, including public buildings, private homes, and businesses. But the real story lies in how AGEM's founding spirit of self-reliance and regional identity helped overcome political resistance, legal uncertainty, and financial risks. It's a masterclass in how local ambition can lead to systemic change.

**Read more here:** <https://lifetandems.eu/making-energy-communities-more-inclusive-lessons-from-agem/>

## Gabrovo (Bulgaria)

In a country where energy communities still lack a clear legal foothold, the city of Gabrovo became a quiet pioneer. Known for its commitment to sustainability, Gabrovo teamed up with the NGO EnEffect to launch a first-of-its-kind public-private solar project. With just 73 members – including the municipality, SMEs, and citizens – the community invested in a rooftop PV installation on a municipal building. Half of the electricity powers local services; the rest is sold to the city under a balancing agreement. What stands out is the ingenuity behind the project's legal design: without national support, the team crafted a workable model based on a "collaboration contract." Gabrovo shows how, even in difficult environments, practical courage and clever partnerships can move the energy transition forward.

**Read more here:** Empowering Communities: Retrofitting Multifamily Buildings in Gabrovo through TANDEMS - Tandems





## Warmte Verzilverd (Mortsel & Edegem, Belgium)

How do you turn industrial waste heat into a community asset? In the Antwerp suburbs of Mortsel and Edegem, a unique partnership did just that. The Warmte Verzilverd project captures residual heat from the Agfa-Gevaert factory and uses it to power a cooperatively owned district heating network. Local energy cooperatives ZuidtrAnt-W and Ecopower, alongside municipal partners and technical experts, designed a system that's 100% fossil-free, citizen-financed, and structured to ensure affordability through fair tariffs. It's a model that took years of negotiations, rejected deals with private companies, and creative workarounds to policy barriers – but today, the heat flows. This project proves that community heat networks are not only feasible – they can thrive.

## Burenwerf (Schoten, Zandhoven, and beyond, Belgium)

Energy renovation often feels overwhelming to individual homeowners. Burenwerf flips the script. As a service platform led by Klimaatwerf vzw – a non-profit formed by local cooperatives – Burenwerf offers tailored support for neighbourhood-scale renovation. It blends individual advice with collective action: group purchases for insulation, shared solar, community batteries, even electric car-sharing. With projects running in both urban and rural contexts, Burenwerf is building a library of localised know-how. What makes it special is not just the technical offer, but the intensive community engagement and the patient, step-by-step transformation of entire neighbourhoods. It's slow, steady climate action – and it works.

### Read more here:

<https://lifetandems.eu/empowering-local-leaders-how-burenwerf-is-pioneering-change-in-energy-communities/>

## What Did We Learn?

Across all five pilots, several cross-cutting insights emerged:

- Trust is key: Long-term partnerships require transparency, shared vision, and reliable communication.
- Structure + flexibility: Balancing ambition with pragmatic adaptation is essential for implementation.
- Focus on inclusion: Social justice must be embedded in energy projects – from design to delivery.
- Experimentation pays off: Innovation often begins where legal or technical certainty ends.
- Scale with care: There's no copy-paste – but principles and processes can be transferred meaningfully.

## What's Next?

The insights from the Learning History Workshops now feed directly into the development of the TANDEMS Open Collaboration Model. They also serve as conversation starters for Eye-Opener Workshops, where pilot teams share lessons with others across Europe. Together, these efforts help to turn pilot successes into a movement for inclusive, local energy transitions.

# We're Not Alone: Building Bridges with Our Sister Projects in the Energy Transition

While the TANDEM project is driving local energy collaborations across Europe, we are far from alone in this journey. In fact, one of the greatest strengths of the LIFE programme is its ability to connect like-minded initiatives - each exploring new ways to build a more inclusive, citizen-led and sustainable energy future.

From innovative one-stop-shops to heat networks and legal reform for energy sharing, TANDEM sister projects are tackling the energy transition from different angles, but with a common mission: to empower local actors and communities to take ownership of their energy future.

## From Collaboration to Collective Voice

We believe these projects must do more than work in parallel — they must work together. That's why last year, we shared a joint stand at the EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW), where we showcased our initiatives side-by-side, sparking new synergies. And this year, we're taking it a step further. [Register now to attend!](#)

## Discover Our Sister Projects

### LIFE LOOP – Breaking barriers, building bridges

LIFE LOOP works across 7 EU countries to create better conditions for energy communities to emerge and thrive. By addressing legal obstacles and building capacity at the local level, LOOP is helping to turn the idea of energy sharing into a practical reality.

[Learn More](#)



### LIFE BECKON – Your community's gateway to renewable energy

This project supports local governments in setting up one-stop-shops that provide renovation and energy transition services to citizens. It makes the energy transition simpler, more accessible, and more inclusive for all. [Explore the platform.](#)



### LIFE COMANAGE – Helping energy communities clear the legal path

Jumping Hurdles identifies the legal, financial, and administrative barriers that slow down energy communities — and works with policymakers to remove them. It's about creating a level playing field for citizen-led energy initiatives. [Find out more](#)

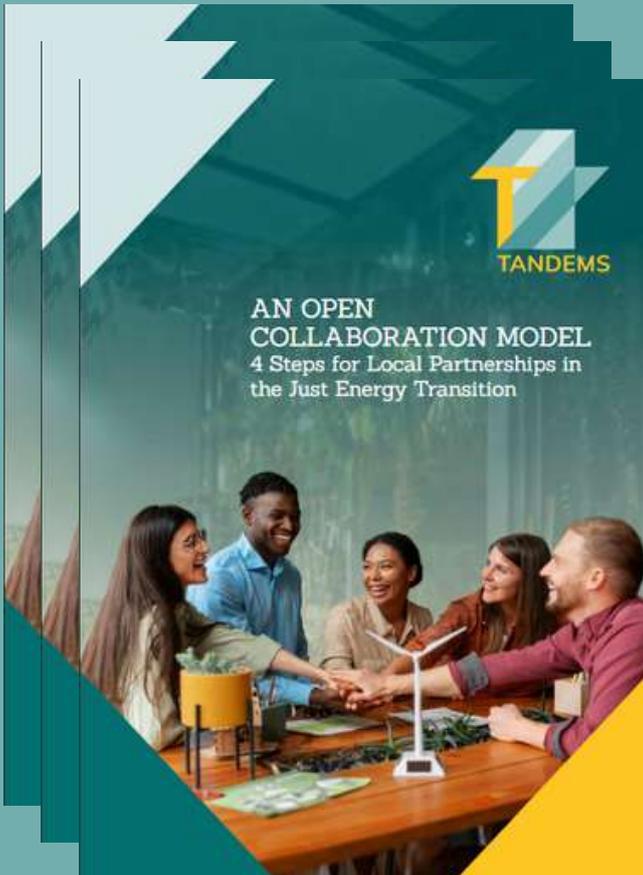


### LIFE ConnectHeat – Decarbonising heating through local networks

ConnectHeat focuses on building integrated local heating and cooling systems that connect people, buildings, and energy sources. The project strengthens municipalities in their role as facilitators of energy communities focused on heating — often overlooked, yet vital for climate action. [Discover the project.](#)



# Empowering Local Initiatives: Open Collaboration Model



The TANDEMS Open Collaboration Model (OCM) is a practical guide designed by TANDEMS partner VITO to assist teams of pioneers in developing, designing, and implementing value networks for local energy initiatives. By focusing on the collaboration between local authorities and energy communities, the OCM aims to create shared, multiple, and collective value for the community.

The OCM guides teams through a four-step process:

1. Discover: Analyze the local context and identify existing strengths, resources, and opportunities.
2. Dream: Envision an ideal future for the energy initiative and define shared values and goals.
3. Design: Develop concrete plans and strategies, including defining roles, allocating resources, and establishing collaboration mechanisms.
4. Deliver: Implement the plans, mobilize resources, and work with partners to achieve tangible results.

By following these steps, teams can create sustainable and impactful energy initiatives that benefit the entire community. The OCM emphasizes the importance of collaboration, shared value creation, and community empowerment.



[Download the Open Collaboration Model Guidelines from the TANDEMS website](#)

**For information and updates  
please visit:**



[www.lifetandems.eu](http://www.lifetandems.eu)



<https://x.com/LifeTandems>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/life-tandems/>



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