



Charter of REScoop.eu

Preamble

The present charter defines the shared ethical values and vision for the future of REScoop.eu, the federation of groups and cooperatives of citizens for renewable energy in Europe.

This charter is meant as a set of guiding principles for future REScoops but does not exclude the establishment of their own principles based on their local values.

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Vision and objectives

Challenges

Today, 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.

- *Environmental 1*: Climate change is endangering ecosystems including human communities: this will lead to climate refugees and conflicts;
- *Economical and geopolitical 2*: The 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;
- *Social 3*: 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 rationalize their energy use, it may also lead to social conflicts in European countries;
- *Political 4*: In the context of the liberalization of the energy market, governments pull back from energy production and sales. In most of the European countries, the 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 liberalization policy (competitive markets, fair prices and energy independence).
Moreover, the development of renewable energy sources should not lose sight of the importance and opportunity of a *fair* and *equal* access to these energy sources; many renewable energy sources are *common goods** but they are often wrongfully appropriated by manipulation and speculation.



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 heat, 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 groups and cooperatives of citizens with environmental, economical, social and political objectives. We promote a model based on *cooperation**: a decentralized 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 sources.

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

- Reducing the levels of energy consumption through a more *rational use of energy**
- Transition from fossil/nuclear to renewable energy sources
- Developing an appropriate planning of renewable energy sources embedded in society
- A direct democratic model for the energy market concerning prices, planning and pollution.

In order to support these solutions, we share a common view on their implementation. Everyone should have the chance to play an active role in the *energy transition**. 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 implementing these solutions is the foundation of our project.



Objectives

REScoop.eu aims to foster social acceptance of renewable energy sources through the development of cooperatives and citizens' initiatives.

REScoop.eu will also contribute to the Climate Change and Energy package of the European Union, which, by 2020, aims to reduce the European Union's greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, to reach 20% of renewable energy and increase energy efficiency by 20%.

Social acceptance of renewable energy production, as achieved by local energy cooperatives (REScoops), is the key to minimizing delays in authorizations as well as encouraging investment. Therefore REScoops can be crucial to help achieve the European Union's 2020 commitments.

Common ethical values of the partners: the ICA principles

In order to achieve our goals, the signatories of this Charter endorse the principles of the cooperative movement as defined by the principles of the International Cooperative Alliance:

Voluntary and Open Membership -- Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, 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 organizations 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 organized 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 purposes:



developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting 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 organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, 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.

Additional ecological, social and ethical common principles

In addition to the ICA principles, the signatories of this charter share common ecological, social and ethical values and commit themselves to promote and endorse those values.

Ecological principles:

- Reduce the impact of climate change by supporting the efficient use of energy and the implementation of renewable energy technologies: the *energy transition**;
- Protect the environment while minimizing the impacts of RES installations
- Ensure the preservation of renewable energy sources, water and soil as well as their quality



Social and ethical principles:

- Support the local economy by stimulating growth and employment (ex: by prioritizing the local economy and avoiding business relocation)
- Restrict the exclusive pursuit of financial profit
- Optimize the energy supply cost and management through local energy autonomy and short distribution loops
- Ensure financial transparency
- Support the active involvement of *prosumers** (producer/consumers) as a priority ahead of technological approaches such as smart meters
- Encourage *Fair Trade** in RES projects
- Ensure the fair access to *common goods**



This Charter has been adopted by the following organizations, founding members of the REScoop.eu, Brussels, 26/08/2013.

Ecopower – represented by Dirk Vansintjan

Enercoop – represented by Julien Noé

De Windvogel – represented by Siward Zomer

Somenergia – represented by Gijsbert Huijink



Glossary (*)

Renewable Energy Sources (RES): As opposed to nuclear and fossil sources of energy (referred to as "stock energy"), renewable energy sources are sources of energy that can be replenished naturally on a human time scale (referred to as "flow energy"). As represented in the REScoop logo, the main sources of renewable energy are solar, hydro, wind, biomass and geothermal.

Cooperative: "A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (ICA definition of Cooperative).

Civic responsibility: Essential goods are indispensable to a dignified and decent way of life and we consider that having access to an essential good is a basic right. In the context of this charter, access to energy is a basic right and we regard producing and supplying energy as civic responsibilities.

Common goods: A common good is a good that belongs and is accessible to all. We consider most of renewable energy sources to be common goods and consider that their quality and access must be protected.

Energy transition: The energy transition refers to the shift from a system primarily based on fossil and nuclear energy sources to a more diversified energy mix that will, eventually, be solely based on renewable energy sources and a decentralized production of energy. The energy transition implies the development of an approach based on energy efficiency, careful usage and sustainability.

Model based on cooperation: The model based on cooperation referred to in this charter relates to the emergence of an alternative to the traditional private and public sector approaches to energy management, one driven by communities. Its primary objective is not the making of profit but the good of the community and its business model is based on cooperation.

Prosumers: Producer/consumers, consumers that are responsible not only for their consumption of



energy but also assume the responsibility for producing it. Prosumers strive to have a rational energy use.

Rational energy use: A rational energy use is based on two key notions: careful usage and efficiency. It refers to a responsible use of energy combined with energy saving habits so that the final energy consumption is reasonable and does not compromise the future generations' access to energy sources.

Fair Trade: "The term Fair Trade defines a trading partnership, based on a dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers - especially in developing countries." (*Fair Trade Glossary* - Fair Trade International, FLO-CERT, WFTO)



Sources

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