



HERCULES-CE PROJECT

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Pilot action report for the establishment of the REC by
Hradecký Venkov

**Experience, Conclusions and Recommendations from
the Hradecký venkov Pilot Activity**

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Delivery Date: 17. 7. 2026



Experience, Conclusions and Recommendations from the Hradecký venkov Pilot Activity

The following text supplements the Action Plan prepared by project partner Hradecký venkov and provides a more detailed summary of the key findings, experience and challenges encountered during the preparation and establishment of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative. It describes the specific conditions of a small rural territory, the importance of cooperation with the expert partner ENVIROS, s.r.o., the contribution of the HERCULES-CE project, and recommendations that can be applied when establishing and developing other energy communities. The document serves as supplementary material to the Action Plan and may be used in the preparation of the joint HERCULES-CE Action Plan and in transferring the experience to other European regions.

Baseline Framework of the Pilot Activity

The Hradecký venkov pilot activity focused on preparing and establishing a new energy community in a territory comprising 63 predominantly small rural municipalities and several small towns. Its main outcome is the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative, which was officially registered as a separate legal entity on 11 May 2026, creating the organisational and legal basis for future electricity sharing from local renewable energy sources.

The establishment of the cooperative completed a preparatory phase that included mapping electricity generation and consumption, identifying suitable municipal and public buildings, discussions with municipalities and microregions, preparing the Articles of Association and the membership model, and verifying the technical and economic conditions for energy sharing. This work also included the use of the REC Manager tool and cooperation between Hradecký venkov o.p.s. and the Czech expert partner ENVIROS, s.r.o.

The pilot activity confirmed that the formal establishment of an energy community is only the first step. Its actual operation depends on the availability of suitable renewable energy sources, reliable energy data, the readiness of municipalities and their municipal councils, the trust of prospective members, and the long-term provision of expert and coordination support.

The following conclusions and recommendations therefore cover not only the results achieved, but above all the practical experience, obstacles and lessons learned during the preparation and establishment of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative. They are intended to provide useful input for the joint HERCULES-CE Action Plan while sharing the experience with other rural territories and energy communities.



Conclusions and Recommendations of Project Partner Hradecký venkov

Specific Conditions of a Rural Territory

The experience of Hradecký venkov shows that establishing an energy community in a rural territory involves different conditions from similar initiatives in larger cities, industrial areas or territories with a high concentration of renewable energy sources.

The Hradecký venkov territory comprises 63 predominantly small municipalities and several small towns. Individual municipalities have limited staffing, professional and financial capacities, and their energy infrastructure is developing gradually. Although a growing number of municipalities are installing photovoltaic systems on municipal buildings, the number of suitable generation sources and the amount of surplus electricity available for sharing remain limited.

Many municipal photovoltaic systems have only recently been commissioned. Municipalities therefore first need to verify their actual generation, consumption and operating patterns. In addition, many of these installations were acquired with grant support whose conditions may require a high proportion of self-consumption or otherwise restrict the immediate inclusion of the generated electricity in sharing arrangements. Consequently, municipalities generally do not yet have significant, long-term verified surpluses that could readily be offered to other members of the energy community.

This situation confirms that actual generation and consumption data must be used before sharing groups are created, and that the installed capacity of photovoltaic systems must not automatically be treated as the amount of energy available for community sharing. Analyses carried out within the project also showed that photovoltaic generation is most effectively combined with consumption points that have stable daytime demand, such as schools, municipal offices or wastewater treatment plants. In the future, energy storage and demand-side management could further increase the use of locally generated energy.

An Energy Community Is a Long-Term Process of Building Trust

One of the project's main findings is that the formal establishment of a legal entity is only the first step. A genuine energy community emerges only when its members accept specific responsibilities, include their generation or consumption points in the joint system, and begin operating under jointly agreed rules.

For municipalities, membership in an energy cooperative and the potential joint development of energy assets represent a new form of cooperation. Mayors and other active municipal representatives are often the first to obtain information and are prepared to discuss community energy opportunities. However, the final decision usually requires consideration by the municipal council. This is where further questions arise regarding economic benefits, municipal responsibility, asset ownership, long-term commitments, the conditions for leaving the cooperative, and the distribution of costs and revenues.



The experience of preparing the Articles of Association also showed that any significant change to the legal or operational arrangements may require renewed discussion by the governing bodies of the individual municipalities. This process is time-consuming and must be taken into account from the outset in the timetable for preparing an energy community. In the case of Hradecký venkov, the need to clarify the Articles of Association from a legal perspective resulted in renewed municipal discussions and an adjustment to the formal process for establishing the cooperative.

Long-term, repeated and clear communication is therefore essential for a rural energy community. A single information event is generally not sufficient. Municipalities need specific supporting documents, model resolutions, explanations of members' rights and obligations, individual consultations, and the opportunity to return to the topic in line with the meeting schedules of their municipal councils.

At the current stage, many municipalities are primarily serious prospective members. They are following further developments, requesting information and waiting for the first experience from actual electricity sharing. The first operating results from their own territory – the amount of electricity actually shared, the economic benefits, the administrative burden and the experience of participating municipalities – will be more persuasive for other municipal councils than general examples from other regions or countries.

This leads to an important recommendation for other emerging energy communities: **start with a limited but functional pilot operation, evaluate its results transparently, and expand the system gradually only on the basis of local experience.**

The Crucial Importance of the HERCULES-CE Project

Participation in the HERCULES-CE project was decisive for the establishment of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative. The project provided not only an expert and methodological framework, but also the staffing and financial capacity required for the long-term coordination of the entire process.

Project funding made it possible to finance staff, expert services, analytical work, the organisation of meetings, document preparation and other steps without which establishing an energy community in such an extensive rural territory would have been very difficult. The preparatory work included forming a working group, holding repeated discussions with municipalities, collecting energy data, identifying suitable buildings, preparing the Articles of Association, designing the membership and governance model, and developing the basic technical and economic arrangements for energy sharing.

Ongoing transnational cooperation also provided significant added value. Hradecký venkov was able to consult its approach with partners from other countries, compare different legal, organisational and operational models, and draw on the experience of energy communities at different stages of development. International experience was not used merely as general



inspiration; it was progressively translated into specific decisions concerning the legal form, the Articles of Association, the membership model, communication with municipalities and the future operation of the cooperative.

A significant project result is that **on 11 May 2026, the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative was officially registered in the Commercial Register as a separate legal entity.** This completed the initial formal phase and created an institutional framework for launching electricity sharing and further developing community energy in the territory.

The HERCULES-CE project therefore delivered more than a strategy or a theoretical proposal. It enabled the establishment of a specific local institution that can continue its activities after the project ends, admit new members, operate energy sharing and gradually prepare further joint energy activities.

Cooperation between Hradecký venkov and ENVIROS

The importance of cooperation between Hradecký venkov o.p.s. and ENVIROS, s.r.o., the Czech expert partner in the HERCULES-CE project, should be highlighted separately.

The division of roles between the two partners proved highly effective. Hradecký venkov contributed its knowledge of the territory, long-standing relationships with municipalities, ability to coordinate local stakeholders, organise joint meetings, obtain energy data and verify proposed solutions under the real conditions of small rural municipalities. ENVIROS contributed specialist technical, energy, economic and analytical expertise. The project application had already envisaged ENVIROS acting as the technical partner and Hradecký venkov as the local implementation partner, with their activities complementing one another.

ENVIROS provided expert support particularly in:

- processing and evaluating energy generation and consumption data;
- identifying suitable generation and consumption points;
- assessing generation and consumption profiles;
- preparing energy balances;
- modelling the potential scale of electricity sharing;
- preparing the cooperative's economic and operational model;
- assessing the economic benefits for producers, consumers and the cooperative itself;
- working with the REC Manager tool;
- setting future allocation, pricing and operational principles;
- consulting on the next steps of the pilot operation.



The cooperation made it possible to connect European methodological approaches and expert energy analyses with the actual needs of the rural territory. The proposals were not developed in isolation, but were continuously assessed against the available data, the potential of municipal buildings, the readiness of municipalities and the Czech legal and operational environment. This produced a model that is not merely theoretical but can be progressively applied in practice.

This experience is transferable to other territories as well: an emerging energy community requires both **a strong local coordinator trusted by the municipalities and a qualified expert partner** capable of processing energy data, verifying the economic assumptions and designing a technically and legally feasible model. Neither of these components can replace the other in the long term.

Recommendations for Other Emerging Energy Communities

Based on the experience of Hradecký venkov, several recommendations can be formulated, particularly for rural territories and smaller municipalities:

1. **Sufficient time must be devoted to preparation.** Establishing an energy community involves legal, technical, economic, administrative and community-based processes. The timetable must allow for municipal decision-making procedures and repeated discussion by municipal councils.
2. **The energy actually available must be verified first.** The installed capacity of generation sources is not the same as the amount of energy available for sharing. Self-consumption, the timing of generation and demand, grant conditions, and the technical and contractual limitations of individual points must all be examined.
3. **The first sharing group should be simple and manageable.** A smaller number of well-prepared generation and consumption points is more suitable for a pilot than a large group with unverified data and unclear roles.
4. **Local results are a key tool for attracting additional members.** The initial operating and economic data should be evaluated transparently and presented clearly to municipalities, municipal councillors, businesses and the public.
5. **Communication must be long-term and based on trust.** Prospective members need to understand not only the potential benefits, but also the obligations, costs, risks and limitations. Unrealistic expectations of immediate savings should not be created.
6. **Local coordination must be linked to expert capacity.** Municipalities generally do not have sufficient staff or specialist knowledge to process data, prepare an economic model, establish contractual relationships and develop operational rules on their own.
7. **An energy community must also have a plan for the period after the project ends.** The financing of administration, staff responsibilities, records of members and energy



points, monitoring of results and the mechanism for further expansion must be addressed during the preparatory phase.

8. **Transnational cooperation delivers the greatest value when it is translated into local practice.** International models cannot simply be adopted; they must be adapted to national legislation, the local energy mix and the readiness of individual members.

Future Direction of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative

The process was not completed by establishing the cooperative. Hradecký venkov o.p.s. and the governing bodies of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative must now jointly translate the prepared model into actual operation.

The next steps are set out in the follow-up Action Plan. In the short term, the priority will be to recruit new members, prepare generation and consumption points and launch the first electricity-sharing arrangements. In the medium term, sharing groups will be expanded and optimised, the operational and economic model will be stabilised, and energy advisory services will be developed, including support for energy-vulnerable households. In the long term, the cooperative should create the conditions for preparing joint investments in renewable energy sources, energy storage, demand-side management and clean mobility.

The strength and significance of the Hradecký venkov Energy Cooperative will be demonstrated through its practical activities and the benefits it delivers to its members. Its development must therefore be gradual, based on actual data, transparent decision-making and respect for the capacities of small municipalities. At the same time, the establishment of the cooperative is an important starting point: the rural territory now has its own institution through which municipalities, businesses, public organisations and citizens can cooperate in the long term on the local energy transition.

The main conclusion from the experience of Hradecký venkov is that an energy community is not created merely by developing a technical model or registering a new legal entity. It emerges through the gradual connection of people, local institutions, energy data, expert knowledge and trust. The HERCULES-CE project created the conditions for this process to begin in Hradecký venkov. The follow-up Action Plan sets out the path for transforming it over the coming years into a stable, open and sustainable energy community.