



COMETS 1^o National Workshops
COLLECTIVE ACTION INITIATIVES IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION
BELGIUM
Tuesday 16 june, 2020

The Belgian workshop took place on June 16th 2020 and gathered over 20 participants. The aim of the workshop was to discuss some specific and urgent issues regarding the mechanisms that can facilitate the launch and growth of collective action initiatives in the energy field. The Belgian COMETS-team presented the project and the first results of the survey. The online knowledge platform was demonstrated by Ecolise as an interesting platform for CAIs to network and share information and tools. We also welcomed two qualitative speakers: Dirk Vansintjan, founder of Ecopower and president of RESCOOP, and Gérard Hubaux founder and administrator of the association VENT+.

Dirk Vansintjan presented the RESCOOP EU federation, the scope of their actions, collaborations, as well the projects that the organization is involved in. Well-known representant and advocate for the cooperative movement in renewable energy across Europe, he shared some of the solutions the federation provides to help out coordinate the willingness of their members to engage and diversify their actions in the energy transition. Among the solutions, the Mobility Factory app which enables the members across the EU to join the app and set up e-sharing mobility for their members or the creation of the cooperative Mecise which works as a mutual to help out the initiative financially struggling to start, through the provision of temporary equity. He is hopeful concerning the room for citizens in the energy transition, recalling the aim of the concepts of citizen energy community and renewable energy community in Clean Energy Package: “The EU wanted the citizens to become active players in the energy market, and that these definitions [citizen energy communities, and renewable energy communities] are meant for initiatives where the citizens are at the center, they might collaborate with SMES, and they might collaborate with local authorities, but it is not the main focus of these definitions”. He also pointed out the geographical disparities of the cooperative movement across Europe, less present in the South and East of Europe. Though reluctance is present in the East of Europe because of how the communist regime used the cooperative model to establish their power, he perceives a great potential in the collaboration between farmers, their neighbors together with local municipalities to diffuse renewable energy use. On the Belgium level, he shared his personal experience, through the foundation of his cooperative Ecopower, including the active lobbying he engaged in against the ruling system in place at the in the 1990s, and the resilience of the cooperative model during the 2008 crisis.

Gérard Hubaux presented VENT+. A not for profit association, VENT+'s creation in 2008 emerged from local protests against a private wind park project, and a willingness to engage citizens. The association benefited from the experience of others in citizens dynamics to create its own, and now counts 76 members. Unable to raise funds due to its nature, and its willingness to work for its own, detached from political ties that could arise from benefiting from subsidies, it partners with Cléf, an energy cooperative to take part to projects. They lobbied to impose a motion to include citizens in private wind park projects, which passed. From a regulatory perspective, the Walloon Region was one of the first Region to transpose the concept of citizen energy initiatives and renewable energy community. To our speaker, supported by a representant of Cléf, the difference between the two notions is not clear cut in the current decree, and wonder about the relative weight of the citizens in the notion.