

NEWCOMERS Scientific Advisory Board

The NEWCOMERS project is proud to present its external **Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)** that provides expert advice on the project as a whole and on individual tasks. The SAB consists of three members with expert knowledge on energy communities, and prominent roles with respect to national and international policy making in this field.

Among them is **Dr. Andrej Gubina**, Head of the Laboratory of Energy Policy and Associated Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Electrical Engineering.

In this interview, he offers his insights into the importance of energy communities for the achievement of energy transitions in Europe.



INTERVIEW WITH
Dr. Andrej Gubina

Consumer motivation is key

VIDEO →



■ ■ ■ The NEWCOMERS project explores various aspects of new clean energy communities' operations. How do you see the status quo of energy communities in Europe?

The position of energy communities has been strengthened with the Clean Energy for All Europeans package, which was passed in May 2019. In the two years allotted to the Member States for the transposition of the directives into the national legislation, we can already observe some early developments, with some states like Belgium, Greece and Slovenia introducing laws supporting the establishment of energy communities, while in others such as Austria, France, and Germany the legislative process has started.

■ ■ ■ What do you see as the potential role of energy communities for the achievement of Europe's energy transition?

Energy communities were designed in the EU to accelerate the deployment of decentralized renewable energy sources but are also associated with an important notion of democratisation of energy

supply. Consumers were rightly designated as 'the final frontier' in the quest for an increased flexible operation of the power system and its operation closer to the limits without the sacrifice of the security of energy supply, so their motivation is key.

With the falling costs of local electricity generation and storage technology in the developed countries we can observe a new trend. Consumers who turned into prosumers do not invest in these technologies for economic reasons only but also choose to cooperate with their neighbours to build more resilient communities and to improve the quality of life for their families.

■ ■ ■ What do you think are the key opportunities and obstacles for the flourishing of European energy communities?

The Clean Energy legislative package defines the terms 'renewable energy communities - REC' and 'citizen ener-

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gy communities - CEC' permitting citizens to become part of the energy system. While RECs focus on the expansion of renewables, CECs are an organisational concept enabling legal entities to engage in a myriad of activities typically covered by many other actors, e.g.

generation, distribution, supply, consumption, aggregation, energy storage, energy efficiency services or charging services for electric vehicles.

Their key role is the provision of various energy services to their members or shareholders to bring about environmental, economic or social community benefits rather than financial profits. They are considered a non-commercial market player, so it is very important that Member States design a framework under which energy communities can be run without discrimination.

■ ■ ■ The NEWCOMERS project focuses on multiple dimensions of energy communities such as technologies used,



We are honoured to have three outstanding scholars on our NEWCOMERS Scientific Advisory Board:

- **Prof. Lucia Reisch**
[Copenhagen Business School](#).
- **Prof. Patrick Devine-Wright**
[University of Exeter](#)
and
- **Prof. Andrej Gubina**
[University of Ljubljana](#).

You can find more information about their respective expertise on the NEWCOMERS website <https://www.newcomersh2020.eu/project-organisation#scientific-advisory-board>

business models applied, enabling regulatory contexts, and social interactions. Which dimensions are most important / innovative in your view?

As electrical engineers, we are trained to design technical systems, optimize them and run them efficiently. But only later we learn that in addition to technical details, economics and regulatory aspects are just as important. Social aspects, on the other hand, remain elusive – but this is the gist of community building and the key to reaping the benefits beyond what is possible through purely technical and economic measures. The NEWCOMERS project has set its sights on this social dimension and provides a much-needed cooperation space for sociologists, economists and engineers to work together on community-building issues.

 The main aim of the EU H2020 COMPILE project you are coordinating is to show the opportunities of energy islands for the decarbonisation of energy supply, community building and the creation of environmental and so-

cioeconomic benefits. How do you see the potential synergies between the COMPILE and NEWCOMERS projects? COMPILE is a demonstration project in which energy community building and operation tools are designed, deployed and used in order to build renewable energy communities. It is focusing on energy islands – the areas of the power system with low security of energy supply – yet the key innovation is in the social dimension.

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The energy communities built in COMPILE range from nascent to mature, from a single multi-owner dwelling to a whole town, and are being fostered by a grid operator, a commercial actor or are set up as a cooperative.

What these different constellations/groupings of actors have in common is that energy communities need a strong social network to operate and prosper. As a consequence, both the COMPILE and NEWCOMERS teams will have the opportunity to share ideas, experiences and learn from each other. Therefore, I am very happy to be able to serve as a member of the Scientific Advisory Board in NEWCOMERS.

The **NEWCOMERS Stakeholder Advisory Board** so far consists of 10 experts and practitioners working in the energy community sector.

The StAB's mission is to ensure the relevance of our research throughout the project and to contribute to the innovation management activities.

NEWCOMERS Stakeholder Advisory Board

consists of, amongst others:

Representatives or members of the case study communities, amongst which

- **Ms. Simone de Jong**, Netherlands
- **Dr. Mary Gillie**, UK
- **Mr. Roman Höller**, Germany
- **Mr. Marcus Larsson**, Sweden
- **Mr. Santino Smedile**, Italy

An energy and climate policy-science expert

- **Dr. Danijel Crnčec**, Slovenia

An expert for group facilitation processes and participatory leadership

- **Ms. Natalija Vrhunc**, Slovenia

An energy market and policies expert

- **Ms. Chiara Ferracioli**

We expect that the StAB will welcome additional members in the next few months.