

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ENERGY



SUCCESSES FROM
UTRECHT AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF
CONNECTIONS FRO
LOCAL ENERGY



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INTRODUCTION

The growing need to minimize the effects of climate change is felt by people worldwide. Drastic steps must be taken to reduce CO2 emissions. Fossil fuels must be replaced by sustainable, renewable alternatives.

In 2015, 193 world leaders adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an agenda of 17 ambitious goals to work on sustainable development, to be reached by 2030. A part of this is generating sustainable, affordable, energy. To achieve an inclusive energy transition, citizens must be more involved. They are therefore increasingly taking matters into their own hands. They organize themselves in collective associations to generate their own clean energy and to save energy. In this involvement and cooperation you will find the power of community energy.

WECF wants to emphasize the importance of local initiatives in the transition to sustainable energy. A great deal of knowledge and experience on this topic is available in the city of Utrecht (NL), which we have collected in this publication, after studying three existing energy cooperatives. The lessons that can be learned from the experiences of energy cooperatives based in Utrecht, may also be relevant for other countries. For this reason, this information is also made available for local initiatives elsewhere in the world.

The need for this has become clear from the demand of our partners in Georgia. A few energy cooperatives are currently active here, but they are not as successful as the ones in the Netherlands. By publishing this research and sharing this knowledge, we contribute to the realization of various Sustainable Development Goals.



As a result of this research, we make the following six recommendations for energy cooperatives elsewhere:

1. Collaborate and make use of existing support frameworks
2. Lobby to strengthen the position of energy cooperatives
3. Gain and maintain support through communication and transparency
4. Mobilize citizens
5. Stay rooted locally
6. Guarantee diversity & inclusiveness

Despite the fact that the results of the findings are divided into concrete, defined recommendations, these recommendations are strongly intertwined and should therefore be seen in relation to each other.

CONTEXT

The first energy cooperatives in the Netherlands were established in the 1980s. Citizens began to organize themselves in a collective partnership to deal with sustainable energy supply and energy saving. If energy is generated by the cooperative itself, the profits made will flow back into the community. An important aspect of a cooperative association is democratic decision-making, which is done through the general assembly.

For a few years now, the number of energy cooperatives in The Netherlands has been growing rapidly. The decentralized organization of the Netherlands, especially when it comes to sustainability measures, appears to be fertile ground for these citizen initiatives. At first there were mainly only wind cooperatives, now there are also many solar cooperatives and heat cooperatives, but also biogas cooperatives, and project organizations that combine different ways of generating and saving energy. In 2018 there was a growth of 20% compared to 2017, with a total of 484 cooperatives and 70,000 members in the Netherlands. ¹

Some of these cooperatives are located in and around the city of Utrecht. The cooperative called Energie-U is the most important one, with over 500 members and a large network of partnerships. Then there is Rijne Energie, an energy cooperative founded in September 2018 with the support of three other cooperatives, including Energie-U. This cooperative is currently planning to build a wind and solar park in Utrecht. Despite the fact that this cooperative does not yet have any means to generate renewable energy - the municipal procedure for the planned renewable energy park is still ongoing - Rijne Energie already had 200 members within six months of its establishment. The third and last cooperative included in this publication is called Buurtstroom (which can be translated as 'Neighbourhood Electricity'). This cooperative also originated from Energie-U, and supports initiatives for sustainable energy generation at the neighborhood level.

The recent growth of the (numbers of) cooperatives in Utrecht and in the Netherlands must be viewed in relation to the larger social context at the national and international level. At the end of last year, the Draft Climate Agreement was published in the Netherlands. It is expected to be finalized by the government in

¹Local Energy Monitor edition: LEM2018

https://www.hieropgewekt.nl/uploads/inline/2018%20PDF%20Lokale%20Energie%20Monitor%20DEF02_0.pdf

the summer of 2019. The energy transition plays a major role in this.

An important vision described in the Climate Agreement is the aim to make the Netherlands gas-free. Over seven million houses and one million buildings that are currently supplied with natural gas from Groningen must be renovated and made more sustainable in the coming years so that they are suitable for an alternative, renewable form of energy. Another important point in the Climate Agreement is the ambition to ensure that at least 50% of all locally generated solar or wind energy is owned by the local community.²

The energy transition is therefore a topic that a growing number of Dutch people are dealing with, for example by joining an energy cooperative. To find out which factors play a role in the success of the energy cooperatives in Utrecht and what stakeholders think about these organizations themselves, we have formulated the following research question: What are the best practices of energy cooperatives in Utrecht?

METHODOLOGY

To find out about the successes of the cooperatives, desk research was conducted. But more importantly, interviews and discussions were held with various experts who are involved in the cooperatives:

- Ieke Benschop, project leader Energy at Natuur en Milieufederatie Utrecht (NMU)
- Joost Brinkman, secretary of energy cooperative Rijne Energie
- Roy Ellenbroek, fund manager of Energiefonds Utrecht
- Josje Fens, initiator Rijne Energie, adviser local energy saving approach at Hoom
- Lucile de Groot, energy ambassador and member of energy cooperative Energie-U
- Rachel Heijne, city councilor of GroenLinks Utrecht
- Trees Janssens, interim board member of national energy cooperative Energie Samen
- Merian Koekkoek, employee Knowledge & Innovation at Foundation HIER opgewekt (part of Foundation HIER Klimaatbureau)
- Michel Post, energy ambassador and member of Energie-U
- Paul van Seters, chairperson of Energie-U
- Siward Zomer, director of Energie Samen, board member of REScoop.eu
- Renske Zwart, chairperson of energy cooperative Buurtstroom

² Draft Climate Agreement
<https://www.klimaatakkoord.nl/klimaatakkoord/documenten/publicaties/2018/12/21/ontwerp-klimaatakkoord>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Collaborate and make use of existing support frameworks

First of all, a certain amount of knowledge and capital is needed to establish and maintain a cooperative. In the case of the Utrecht cooperatives, this is possible thanks to different partnerships and support at different levels. There are various organizations that help energy cooperatives advance in all challenges that a cooperative faces. From project development, funds and training to advice in the field of administration, member recruitment and creating awareness. Merian Koekkoek explains the importance of this: [‘We as HIER Klimaatbureau, and Nature and Environment Federations at the provincial level, offer support to energy cooperatives. So there are NGOs that facilitate that, and I think this has greatly contributed to the fact that the number of energy cooperatives is growing in the Netherlands.’](#)

Ieke Benschop says that Natuur en Milieufederatie Utrecht has a specific role in supporting the cooperative sector. The NMU not only wants to contribute to the realization of sustainable energy projects, but also focuses on the location choice and how these projects are integrated in the natural landscape. Initiators can use a checklist to ensure that the interests of the natural environment are represented in the planning and implementation of, for example, windturbine projects or solar fields. With these checklists, the NMU wants to ensure that the discussions between initiators, local authorities and nature organizations run smoothly and that "nature-inclusive" projects are established.

In addition to the support of these NGOs, many energy cooperatives also contribute to knowledge sharing and support among themselves. This is largely done by Energie Samen, which is the national umbrella organization and association of energy cooperatives. Energie Samen also provides cooperatives with various tools. [‘We have developed an administration system ourselves called Econobis. This is software specifically for the member administration of energy cooperatives. It also gives the cooperatives insight into the costs and revenues, so that they can ensure that those are distributed fairly among the members,’](#) says Trees Janssens. Thanks to an efficient administration, it is possible for a cooperative to recruit more members and to develop more projects. In addition to this system, Energie Samen also provides cooperatives with tools for project development, funds and knowledge sharing.

Another organization that provides funds is the Utrecht Energy Fund. This fund provides loans to sustainable energy initiatives in the province of Utrecht. Naturally, specific conditions for funds are considered, for example that a project must be profitable in the long term. Although a cooperative does not have to be fully dependent on this kind of supporting framework, it definitely contributes to its position.

The Energie-U board is aware of the importance of all these connections. That is why the cooperative functions as a kind of network organization. The cooperative connects all kinds of neighborhood initiatives. Next to that, Energie-U has formed coalitions with other cooperatives and especially with companies. [‘Our task is not to work in opposition to the private sector and the public sector, but in cooperation with the municipality of Utrecht and with the energy companies, to mobilize citizens of Utrecht to participate in the energy transition,’](#) says Paul van Seters.

2. Lobby to strengthen the position of energy cooperatives

There is a lot of lobbying for energy cooperatives, at both the local and national level in the Netherlands. This can be done by the cooperatives themselves, as Energie-U does. The board members of Energie-U are actively lobbying with different groups in the Utrecht city council. They are not alone in this, but with a coalition of four cooperatives and a few companies, all of which play a role in the possible arrival of a new sustainable energy park. This lobby is important because the local government often plays a major role in the end, by issuing permits, loans or subsidies.

The energy cooperatives in Utrecht do not have to do this all by themselves. They can expect help with this from, for example, the NMU. Ieke Benschop says that she visited the city council for the benefit of Rijnse Energie. The members of the cooperative itself also made an appointment with someone from the municipality. *'And then we exchange information, so that I help them to get into the best possible position.'*

With the energy cooperatives, the NMU also lobbies with the municipality to ensure that striving for 50% local ownership, as stated in the Climate Agreement, is integrated with the principles of municipal policy. This part of the Climate Agreement is also a consequence of lobbying. Legislation and regulations are also being adjusted at the national level to strengthen the position of energy cooperatives. For example, Siward Zomer was part of the negotiations on the Climate Agreement on behalf of Energie Samen. Thanks to Energie Samen, striving for 50% local ownership became part of the Climate Agreement.

In addition, Energie Samen lobbies to the local authorities as a representative of the citizens. The cooperative then sits at the table with the various municipalities, provinces, water authorities and other stakeholders within the various energy regions. The Netherlands is divided into 30 of these regions within the Climate Agreement. Every region is working on a Regional Energy Strategy (RES). *'The RES is an instrument for jointly making choices for the generation of sustainable electricity, the heat transition in the built environment and the required storage and energy infrastructure.'*³ *'This also shows the aforementioned decentralized focus that the Netherlands has on the area of the energy transition.'*

Lobbying can also be done to prevent energy cooperatives from getting into trouble, due to ambiguities in legislation and regulations. Merian Koekkoek says that HIER opgewekt supports cooperatives that have to deal with specific regulations. For example, the organization recently pointed out that some activities of energy cooperatives are not always covered under the current Financial Supervision Act. HIER opgewekt raised this issue and sought clarification and solutions together with the AFM (Authority for the Financial Markets).⁴

In short, lobbying happens for various reasons. Cooperatives lobby to get approval for their plans from the municipality, or for grants or other forms of financing for a project. In addition, lobbying is done by cooperatives and related organizations to revise and adjust legislation and regulations for energy cooperatives.

³ National Programme RES <https://regionale-energiestrategie.nl/home/default.aspx>

⁴ Financial Supervision Act: consultation with the AFM
<https://www.hieropgewekt.nl/nieuws/wet-op-het-financieel-toezicht-overleg-met-afm>

3. Gain and maintain support through communication and transparency

As secretary of Rijnne Energie, Joost Brinkman focuses on ways to create positive awareness of the cooperative and thereby recruit members. First of all, the members of the Rijnne Energie board have deliberately chosen to come out with their plans at a very early stage and to be as open as possible about the plans for the wind and solar park that they envisage. Through small-scale information meetings, local residents are initially involved in the plans, and current and future members get a vote through the well-known general assembly.

Furthermore, Rijnne Energie is now actively engaged in recruiting members via social media, distributing flyers on local markets, and approaching journalists, so that the cooperative is visible through various news channels. The narrative they use for this is focused on the positive developments that the project can contribute to for the community. Rijnne Energie posts various messages on Facebook with quotes or videos from initiators and members explaining why they became members. Via Facebook, the cooperative also keeps interested parties and local residents informed of develop



ments. A recurring argument for the construction of the planned wind turbines from these people is the pursuit of the viability of the planet for future generations. By allowing members to speak and explain their motivations, the cooperative emphasizes its connecting, local role.

At the end of the day, word of mouth is the most effective way to recruit members, according to Brinkman. If you know someone who is involved with a cooperative in one way or another, it supports trust in the organization.

Lucile de Groot, one of the members of Rijnne Energie, is actively contributing to this: 'I also propagate it. I tell everyone: You have to become a member of that association, because they really want to achieve something, they want to do something!'

Another way to gain support is to share success stories. Ieke Benschop says that various excursions have been organized by the NMU to places where a cooperative has successfully installed a wind or solar park, or a roof full of shared solar panels. This way, people will actually see evidence of a successful project, which can increase their confidence in the project or organization. Siward Zomer explains that this also happens at the European level, done by REScoop.eu, the European umbrella organization for energy cooperatives. People within the team or network of REScoop.eu regularly give lectures in different places in Europe to share their experience about the organization and successes of the energy cooperative in which they are active.

Something that did not immediately come to the fore, but which probably plays an important role in gaining support for energy cooperatives, is the price tag. In many

⁵ Facebook page Rijnne Energie
<https://www.facebook.com/RijnneEnergie/>

cases, membership of a Dutch cooperative leads to lower energy costs, whether or not in the longer term. This can be in the form of a return on an investment in a windmill or solar panels, or are lower energy bill as a result of sustainable measures in and around the house, which have been realized with the support of the cooperative. These lower costs might already be a big reason for people to become members.

4. Mobilize citizens

In addition to setting up one or more sustainable energy projects, an energy cooperative can also play an important role in mobilizing citizens. At Energie-U this is done through the network of so-called "energy ambassadors". Energy ambassadors share their own knowledge and expertise in the field of sustainable energy in order to mobilize other people in their environment to take action. This is done on a voluntary basis, sometimes with a small reimbursement.

Energie-U reaches these (potential) energy ambassadors through Rianne Bakker, she is project leader of the energy ambassadors. Bakker keeps track of which people come up with initiatives themselves or have a great deal of knowledge of a certain subject, and connects these people with each other and with the cooperative. This provides a network of local connections. Many of these people are mobilized in this easy and approachable way to do even more and to work as a volunteer for Energie-U.

Michel Post and Lucile de Groot are both active energy ambassadors. Post ended up at Energie-U because of his great interest in the energy transition in all kinds of areas, both the policy side and the technical side. He shares his knowledge through courses and information evenings organized by Energie-U. He teaches people about ways in which they can make their own home more sustainable and what this would involve. Post has also contributed to a manual on solar panels on rental properties. ⁶'I am a tenant myself and I have solar panels on my roof. But the number of people who rent in Utrecht and have their own solar panels can be counted on two fingers!' Energie-U thus ensures that not only homeowners but also tenants are involved in the energy transition. The manual contains various options for mobilizing tenants, for example by talking to their own housing corporation about a solar panel initiative or starting a Buurtstroom project.

Lucile de Groot became active at Energie-U through her social network in the neighborhood where she lived. She was introduced into the world of insulation, heat pumps and solar panels and gradually got more and more social contacts, which she finds a very important aspect of the voluntary work she does. As an energy ambassador, for example, she helps in the "Bespaarbieb" (which can be translated as Energy Saving Library). Every Saturday there are two energy ambassadors present in the Central Library in Utrecht, surrounded by show material and brochures, to inform people about ways to make your own home more sustainable and thus save energy and economize on their energy bills.

Paul van Seters explains that as chairperson of Energie-U he very consciously encouraged the cooperative to expand this network of energy ambassadors. Over a hundred people from Utrecht are now active as energy ambassadors. 'That means that we actually have ambassadors in every neighborhood and that we can mobilize every neighborhood if we want to get something off the ground, or want to draw attention to something.'

⁶ Sun on rent - A guide for tenants who want solar panels on their roof
<https://www.energie-u.nl/zon-op-huur/>

'An energy cooperative can thus have a connecting function in bringing people with informal initiatives together to encourage even more initiatives and collaborations.

5. Stay rooted locally

The connection people feel with an energy cooperative determines its success. A cooperative must remain locally rooted so that people can identify with it and feel connected to it. As chairperson of Buurtstroom, Renske Zwart sees this need for locality in people. For example, Buurtstroom recently supported people living outside the municipality of Utrecht with their sustainable energy initiative. Subsequently, this group of people set up their own, local cooperative. *'As soon as you cross municipal boundaries, you see that people feel the need to set up their own structures.'*

Paul van Seters is also aware of the need for local solidarity. When he became active as an energy ambassador in 2014, he picked out a few streets surrounding his own street and informally named it the "Rosariumbuurt" (the Rosarium Neighborhood). According to Van Seters, the real bottom-up initiatives take place on the neighborhood level, a district is already too big for people to really identify with it. This is also why different cooperatives have emerged from Energie-U. *'If it were all part of Energie-U, we would already have been such a large umbrella. It would conflict with those objectives, that you want to keep in touch with that bottom-up energy, with initiatives from streets, from neighborhoods.'*

Merian Koekkoek thinks this is an effective strategy. Often, there is still a tendency to merge and centralize organizations. That way, she says, you lose that neighborhood feeling or village feeling, and with that you lose an important part of social contact. But Energie-U cleverly solves this: *'The board of Energie-U are very good at connecting, they actually connect all neighborhood initiatives to themselves. While in other cities different energy cooperatives co-exist, Energie-U has a bit of a network and umbrella function,* says Koekkoek. This of course goes hand in hand with the aim of a cooperative to return profits to the local community. If members can jointly decide what this money is used for, this contributes to the feeling of shared, local ownership.

It is therefore important that the board of an energy cooperative is aware of this tension and tries to find a balance between on the one hand expanding the organization and recruiting members and, on the other hand, staying locally anchored and safeguarding the sense of community. This also makes it so important that the Utrecht energy cooperatives maintain such a close-knit network of collaborations, to transcend the local level and maintain a strong position.

6. Guarantee diversity and inclusiveness

Diversity and inclusiveness are important factors for an energy cooperative, both at the administrative level and in attracting members. For the energy transition to be successful, everyone must be able to participate and feel represented.

Board

The Utrecht-based energy cooperatives are aware of the importance of a diverse board. The current boards often still consist mostly of middle-class, white men of a certain age, with a technical background. For illustrative purposes, the current board members of the three cooperatives now consist of eleven men and only two women. But a diverse board based on, for example, gender, age, ethnicity and education level, makes you more representative of (possible) members, so that people from different backgrounds are more likely to feel connected to the organization. According to Merian Koekkoek this diversity is therefore something that must be actively pursued. [‘I don't think you're going to be able reach a broad group of people, if this does not change. Because then it is really embedded in your organization.’](#)

WECF sees opportunities for cooperatives to contribute to more equal gender ratios in leadership roles. A possible way to achieve this is to set quotas for women. Internationally, examples of successful quotas have ensured that women also play leadership roles and have a say in decision-making⁷ processes. If women do not automatically respond to vacancies for board positions, cooperatives themselves can actively approach women and ask them to participate. Precisely by using local contacts of the members, this should be possible. Despite the fact that the Utrecht-based cooperatives do not have quotas, Renske Zwart reports that they actively active search for female board members.

In addition, diversity is needed in the skills and qualities of individuals within a board and active volunteers of a cooperative. People with a technical background who have a lot of knowledge about energy generation are crucial of course. But the social side of energy must not be forgotten. Board members with strong communication skills are just as important. Josje Fens explains this based on her work at Hoom. Hoom is a national cooperative, and part of Energie Samen. Hoom helps local energy cooperatives to support their members in saving energy. Cooperatives can be provided with a module that focuses on conversational techniques. Fens wants to convince energy cooperatives and individual energy coaches who enter into dialogue with residents who want to make their home more sustainable, that it makes sense to be reflective on this. [‘The way you conduct your conversation can influence your members to take more action.’](#)

Members

Energy cooperatives want to attract a diverse group of members and give everyone the opportunity to contribute to the energy transition. To claim that you are "from and working for the local community" is not legitimate if you only attract a limited group of people, says Josje Fens. 'Your club may be organized very democratically, but if that is really just an elite club, you can of course wonder if it's a legitimate statement to say that you are doing what 'the neighborhood' wants. So I think you should be aware of that .' One of the ways in which Rijn Energie deals with this is a low membership

⁷Energy Cooperatives – Comparative Analysis in Eastern Partnership Countries and Western Balkans

<https://www.wecf.org/comparative-study-on-energy-cooperatives-in-eastern-europe-and-the-western-balkans/>

fee, so that people with a smaller income can also become members of the cooperative. For ten euros you can become a member and take part in the cooperative's plans. Ultimately, investments must be made, which requires larger amounts, but this is not related to the membership and the vote you have as a member.

People and organizations actively lobby for this inclusive energy transition, for example the NMU. . 'We are lobbying for governments to facilitate that people with a lower income can also get a share in a wind turbine for example, and get the return on their bill. They will eventually pay back that loan after a long period. That is the idea now, so the entire energy transition does not become too elitist,' says Ieke Benschop.

Rachel Heijne sees this as the responsibility of local and national governments. In her role as a municipal councilor, Heijne is committed to SDG 7: affordable and sustainable energy for everyone. There are a lot of people who do not naturally join a cooperative or make adjustments to their homes, because they do not have the means to do so. 'We need to make sure that there are measures to ensure that these people can join the energy transition without any extra burdens and housing costs. And the major measures will have to be taken by the government.' ' Heijne regularly engages in conversation with Energie-U about possible collaborations and ways to achieve this. The use of energy coaches is an example of a municipal approach. These energy coaches visit people door-to-door to see which energy measures they can take and how that is financially feasible. In this way, you involve people that are not automatically reached by a municipality when organizing information evenings or sending letters, according to Heijne.

Rachel Heijne does not only focus on involving people with lower incomes, she believes that all areas of diversity must be reflected and a connection must be sought between young and old, and people with different genders and backgrounds. This connecting approach is also being considered within the energy cooperatives. Although there is no ready-made answer to the question of how to reach as many people as possible, awareness of the social context in which you find yourself as a cooperative is a crucial first step.

CONCLUSIONS

So what exactly are the best practices of energy cooperatives in Utrecht? There is no simple and clear answer to that question. A lot of important factors play a role. First of all, initiators and dedicated volunteers are needed, who are motivated to invest time and effort in projects. By cooperating with the local government, relevant companies and other cooperatives and social organizations, the energy cooperatives are able to strengthen their position and increase the number of members, and thus their possibilities for projects. At the same time, it is important that the cooperatives remain aware of the importance of the sense of community of (possible) members, by presenting themselves as a locally rooted organization. Among other things, this is done by actively involving people and giving them a voice and communicating transparently. By embracing bottom-up initiatives,

connecting these with each other and thereby mobilizing even more citizens, people get the feeling that they really belong to a club.

Finally, every cooperative association is different. In rural areas, different factors play a role than in cities, and Energie-U plays a completely different role than Rijne Energie or Buurtstroom. Being aware of and dealing sensitively with the local context is essential for the success of a project and the growth of a cooperative.

INSPIRATION FOR INITIATIVES OUTSIDE THE NETHERLANDS

We are aware that best practices of energy cooperatives in the context of Utrecht and The Netherlands cannot simply be copied to other countries. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the findings from the research in Utrecht can be used as a tool for countries where energy cooperatives are not as successful as here. The recommendations in this publication can be taken as a general starting point and should be combined with awareness of the local context.



We want to emphasize the importance of that context with an example about terminology. In many countries in Eastern Europe, the word "cooperative" has a negative connotation for many people. This has to do with the former Soviet Union, and the negative memories of the use of the word at the time. For this reason, the term energy cooperative is not used as much in these countries, but people speak more about energy communities or citizens' energy. (Hence the alternative title of this report.) The terminology used alone can therefore influence how something is perceived by people and therefore whether an initiative is successful.

Furthermore, there is a strong infrastructure of cooperation and support for energy cooperatives in the Netherlands. If this infrastructure is lacking in a certain country, a cooperative will face many more challenges. In this case, it could be an option for (European) cooperatives to join REScoop.eu, the European umbrella organization for energy cooperatives. In this way a cooperative can receive support and collaborate with this entire network of European energy cooperatives. More information and the conditions for this can be found online.⁸

In addition, policy influencing is of great importance, especially in countries where support and infrastructure are lacking. Only if the voice of citizens themselves is heard, a seed for the growth of cooperatives can be planted. That is why WECF supports local groups with our Women2030 program by strengthening their capacity and promoting local policy influencing.

This way of international cooperation is strongly encouraged by WECF. We therefore encourage civil society organizations and citizens in the Netherlands, possibly in cooperation with us, to share further knowledge and experience on this subject internationally, so that even more people are reached and mobilized to take action. Together we can make a difference and combat climate change.

ABOUT WECF

The research for this publication was carried out by WECF (Women Engage for a Common Future). WECF is a European network of over 150 women's and civil society organizations implementing projects in 50 countries. We strive for fair and sustainable development through projects, capacity building and lobbying and policy work.

We focus in particular on women, because the overarching goal of WECF to achieve 'a healthy living environment and sustainable development for all' can only be achieved by integrating human rights and gender perspectives into policy-making. In order to meet the challenges facing humanity, we need full participation and equal decision-making rights for women and men. This is why women's rights are a condition for sustainable development.⁹

In the Netherlands, WECF contributes to the international mission of the entire organization. But we also want to comply with what we promote internationally at home. That is why we also actively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Netherlands

WORD OF THANKS

We want to thank all informants for their openness and cooperation. By interviewing these experts individually, we gained insights that would not have been possible with just desk research. We would also like to thank the municipality of Utrecht, The Utrecht4GlobalGoals Association and the European Commission for making this research possible.

⁸ REScoop.eu <https://www.rescoop.eu/>

⁹ WECF – What we do <https://www.wecf.org/womens-rights/>

COLOFON

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Title

The power of community energy - Successes from Utrecht and the importance of connections for local energy

Author

Marieke Donders, Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology student, Leiden University, intern WECF Netherlands

Lay-out

Charlotte Aukema, AukemaOntwerp

cover image (center)

courtesy of Westmill Solar Co-operative, member of the European umbrella organization REScoop.eu

cover image (on the top right)

courtesy of Buurtstroom Energie-U Cooperative

image on the back

courtesy of Buurtstroom Energie-U Cooperative

Disclaimer

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WECF Netherlands
Korte Elisabethstraat 6
NL - 3511 JG Utrecht
Tel.: +31 - 30 - 23 10 300
Fax: +31 - 30 - 23 40 878

