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Answer given by Mr Jørgensen
on behalf of the European Commission
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The Commission considers that rural areas are a fertile ground for the development of energy communities. The EU framework calls for enabling frameworks for energy communities¹, including tools to facilitate access to finance and information. How to tailor the implementation is however at the discretion of the Member States, in accordance with national specificities and policy preferences.

The Commission has promoted the development of rural energy communities through the Rural Energy Communities Advisory Hub² providing direct technical assistance to 28 rural energy communities. With the newly established Citizen Energy Advisory Hub, the Commission will continue to support rural communities³. In parallel, the Energy Communities Facility⁴ provides grant support for energy communities to develop business plans.

As announced in the Affordable Energy Action Plan⁵, the Commission will furthermore adopt a Citizens Energy Package to further enhance the participation of citizens in the energy transition.

Qualitative evidence suggests that energy communities can indeed help to curb depopulation in rural areas⁶ and to ensure that benefits stay local⁷. In line with the objectives of the Long-term Vision for the EU's rural areas⁸, the Commission is supporting the set up of energy communities in rural areas through the Citizen Energy Advisory Hub, the Energy Communities Facility, the LEADER and Smart villages approaches and wider Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), if selected in local development strategies⁹, as well as LIFE Clean Energy Transition (CET) programme. For example, JALON¹⁰ LIFE project, aims to empower inhabitants of rural areas by creating a regional energy community model and addressing the needs of the rural population.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/2001/oj/eng>; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/944/oj/eng>.

² https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20240320084824/https://rural-energy-community-hub.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

³ https://citizens-energy.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

⁴ <https://energycommunitiesfacility.eu/>.

⁵ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/strategy/affordable-energy_en.

⁶ See for example: <https://www.ews-schoenau.de/>.

⁷ See for example: <https://energie-partagee.org/etude-retombees-eco/>.

⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:6c924246-da52-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

⁹ https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/networking/leader_en#:~:text=Welcome%20to%20the%20section%20of%20the%20EU%20CAP,for%20you%20to%20find%20relevant%20information%20about%20LEADER%2FCLLD.

¹⁰ See for example: <https://jalon-ce.eu/about/>.