ONE STOP SHOP



“Establishing a Renewable Energy Community (REC): Opportunities and Limitations for Local Public Administrations. The Role of AGENA in the Development of RECs in the Province of Teramo”

II Level Specialization Course “Techniques for Drafting Legislative and Administrative Acts”

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Your thesis was developed at the end of the Specialization Course on top of your Master Degree at the University of Teramo, in collaboration with the Senate of the Republic. What was the focus of the internship you carried out at AG.EN.A. S.r.l.? Why did you decide to focus on Renewable Energy Communities?

My decision to focus on Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) stemmed from a desire to explore the defining characteristics of this emerging phenomenon, particularly from a legislative and administrative perspective. RECs represent an innovative structural model for the production, distribution, and consumption of energy from renewable sources, contributing to the development of a more sustainable and decentralized energy system.

This model plays an important role in accelerating decarbonization and the broader energy transition, especially in the context of current climate challenges and the energy crisis that intensified following the deterioration of relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation after the invasion of Ukraine.

During my internship at AG.EN.A., I worked on activities related to several projects focusing on Renewable Energy Communities. The agency is involved in initiatives that take advantage of opportunities provided both by European environmental and climate policies—such as the DISCOVER project—and by national initiatives, including the RENOSS project promoted by the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Energy Security, in which AG.EN.A. participates as a member of RENAEL, the National Network of Local Energy Agencies.

In your work you studied the European regulatory framework—from the “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package to the RED II and RED III Directives, and the REPowerEU Plan—and its implementation in Italy through the Legislative Decree 199/2021. What are the key steps in this regulatory evolution, and what role do RECs play in the energy transition?

Renewable Energy Communities are a concept of European origin, rooted in the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package adopted in 2018. This legislative package, consisting of eight different acts implementing the EU Energy Strategy of 2015, introduced for the first time the concept of renewable energy communities into European law through the adoption of the RED II Directive (Directive EU 2018/2001).

The Directive defines a renewable energy community as an autonomous legal entity whose members consume energy generated by renewable energy installations located within a geographically limited area, determined by the proximity of those installations.

Further momentum was given to RECs through the revision of RED II with the RED III Directive (Directive EU 2023/2413) and through the REPowerEU Plan, presented in 2022 in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. These initiatives aim to reduce the EU’s dependence on Russian fossil fuel imports while accelerating the deployment of renewable energy.

RED III strengthens the role of RECs by recognizing them as prosumers, meaning they can produce, consume, store, and sell renewable energy. Meanwhile, the REPowerEU Plan introduces reforms to simplify authorization procedures for renewable energy installations, identifies priority areas for renewable development (“renewable go-to areas”), and provides financial support mechanisms for renewable energy production and collective self-consumption.

In Italy, RED II was implemented in two stages. The first step came in 2019 with the Milleproroghe Decree (No. 162, Article 42-bis), which introduced a transitional framework for renewable self-consumption. The second step was Legislative Decree No. 199 of 2021, which established a comprehensive regulatory framework for renewable self-consumption and Renewable Energy Communities. Articles 30 to 32 of the decree define three key pillars: the recognition of RECs as autonomous non-profit entities, the technical conditions for energy sharing, and the introduction of incentive mechanisms to support their development.

Within the broader energy transition, RECs can strengthen the energy market by diversifying local sources of supply and improving energy security, while also contributing to the decarbonization pathway leading to climate neutrality by 2050, as set out in the European Green Deal.

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The role of local authorities has a high relevance in your research. How can municipalities concretely contribute to the development of RECs, and what implications arise when a public entity is involved with regards to the choice of legal structure?

The European Union explicitly encourages the participation of local authorities in Renewable Energy Communities. The RED II Directive identifies local authorities, including municipalities, among the potential members of these communities.
Within the emerging model of multi-level governance in the energy sector, municipalities play a particularly important role because they represent the level of government closest to citizens. As such, they are well positioned to address the interests of local communities, in line with the principle of subsidiarity established by Article 118 of the Italian Constitution.
Municipalities can contribute to the development of RECs in several ways: as facilitators, promoters, aggregators, or direct participants.
As facilitators, they can help overcome one of the main barriers to the diffusion of RECs in Italy—the complexity of regulatory and administrative frameworks—by revising building regulations or proposing amendments to planning instruments to encourage renewable energy deployment.
As promoters, municipalities can assess their own energy assets and identify public and private spaces suitable for renewable energy installations. This may include mapping rooftops of public buildings or identifying areas suitable for redevelopment without additional land consumption.
They may also act as third-party producers, making renewable energy plants available to a REC without formally joining it as members. In this case, municipalities can reduce their energy costs through self-consumption, sell surplus electricity through dedicated contracts with the national energy services operator (GSE), and share energy with a community.
Municipalities may also act as aggregators, bringing together potential participants by launching calls for expressions of interest aimed at citizens, businesses, and local stakeholders willing to join a REC as consumers, producers, or prosumers.
Finally, municipalities can directly participate in a REC as consumers, prosumers, or producers, depending on whether they only consume energy, both produce and consume it, or exclusively provide renewable generation assets to the community.
When a public entity participates in a REC, the choice of legal form—such as an association, cooperative, or participatory foundation—must comply with the requirements established by Legislative Decree 199/2021, particularly Article 31. These include legal autonomy, the non-profit nature of the entity, and open and voluntary participation, ensuring transparent governance and equitable distribution of benefits among members.

Could you describe AG.EN.A.'s activities within the DISCOVER and RENOSS projects and explain how the "One Stop Shop" model supports the creation of Renewable Energy Communities?

Within the DISCOVER project, AG.EN.A., together with its partners, is working towards several concrete outcomes. These include the launch of more than 20 community energy projects, the generation of around 3 GWh of renewable energy per year, the mobilisation of over €7.7 million in investments, the training of more than 400 market stakeholders, and outreach activities targeting more than 20,000 citizens.

One of the project's most significant achievements is the establishment of four One Stop Shops in Italy, France, Bulgaria and Croatia. These centres provide integrated support on technical, economic, administrative and procedural aspects related to the creation of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) and collective self-consumption initiatives.
Within DISCOVER, AG.EN.A. has also developed SHARE (Simulator for Holistic Energy–Economic Assessment for Renewable Energy Communities), an advanced tool designed to support the early stages of REC development. The simulator enables preliminary energy, economic and environmental assessments, helping local authorities, citizens and SMEs evaluate the feasibility of projects and make informed decisions.
In parallel, through the RENOSS project, a national network of One Stop Shops has been created among Italian local energy agencies. These physical and digital service centres aim to simplify access to Renewable Energy Communities and collective self-consumption schemes, while also facilitating access to financial incentives and support mechanisms for renewable energy projects.
Thanks to the DISCOVER and RENOSS projects, AG.EN.A. has also established a provincial register of existing energy communities in the Province of Teramo. This register serves as a reference point for citizens, businesses and organisations interested in joining a Renewable Energy Community, helping them overcome the initial barriers often associated with setting up the legal entity and defining statutes and internal regulations.
In practical terms, the AG.EN.A. One Stop Shop model functions as a single access point where citizens, local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders can receive coordinated support throughout the entire process: from information and training to feasibility studies, legal assistance, access to funding and administrative support. In this way, the model helps simplify complex procedures and accelerates the development of Renewable Energy Communities at the local level.



The newly established One Stop Shop at the AGENA's office, Teramo

In conclusion, what are the main challenges currently hindering the spread of Renewable Energy Communities in Italy? What conditions are needed to build an effective enabling framework?

The spread of RECs in Italy is still hindered by several factors. From a regulatory perspective, one of the main issues has been the delay in adopting implementing measures following Legislative Decree No. 199/2021. From a bureaucratic point of view, delays in GSE accreditation procedures continue to slow down the establishment of new communities. Technical complexity, high initial costs, and persistent cultural and informational barriers also remain significant obstacles.
That said, local and regional authorities can play a crucial role in creating an effective enabling framework. Their proximity to local communities, combined with their planning and coordination functions, makes them key actors in turning regulatory objectives into workable local initiatives. They can foster participation, identify suitable public assets, support administrative procedures, and strengthen cooperation among the different actors involved.

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