



ENERGY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Deliverable executive summary

This document provides an overview of the interim results on community engagement activities, collected and analyzed during the first 12 months of the project. It reflects the early progress, methodologies, and insights gathered across the pilot cases, offering a preliminary understanding of how communities are being engaged in the development of Energy Communities (ECs) and Positive Energy Districts (PEDs). These findings lay the groundwork for more comprehensive analysis, which will be presented in the final deliverable 5.2 scheduled for release at month 24 of the project. That upcoming deliverable will include a full evaluation of community engagement strategies, their effectiveness, and the lessons learned, providing a deeper understanding of their impact across different national and local contexts.

The aim of this report is to summarize the progress of community engagement in the Hungarian pilots of the Energy4All (E4A) project: the Kazán and Megyeri pilots. This report supports the work of Work Package 5 (WP5) of the E4A project. In the case of Kazán, an energy community (EC) already existed at the beginning of the Energy4All (E4A) project. Therefore, the goal of community engagement in this case was to improve and, if possible, scale up the existing EC. In the case of Megyeri, community engagement has not yet started due to delays in signing the contract with the Hungarian financing body and the early stage of the design process. Consequently, the report primarily focuses on the Kazán Energy Community.

After a brief introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 describes the state of the Kazán Energy Community at the beginning of the Energy4All project. The Kazán Energy Community was founded because the organizations inhabiting the Kazán Community Center sought to become more independent from the volatility of energy prices and increase their financial sustainability. This is vital, as the organizations occupying the building have limited income and, as a result, can offer only precarious wages to their workers. This chapter also describes the community decision-making practices of the EC related to building and energy management.

Chapter 3 presents the community engagement activities in the Kazán Energy Community that were implemented in 2024 as part of the E4A project. It briefly outlines the main tasks and results of the first in-person workshop (visioning, stakeholder mapping and analysis, energy behavior mapping and analysis), along with additional activities.

Chapter 4 summarizes the challenges, difficulties, and gaps in community engagement within the Kazán Energy Community. The greatest challenge for the EC is actively involving community members. SEC and ABUD are working on strategies to engage more participants in future activities.

Chapter 5 describes future actions, including the next workshop, scheduled for the first quarter of 2025, which will focus on the socio-technical system surrounding the Kazán Energy Community, as well as a survey to map the energy behavior of the community members in more detail.

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to summarize the progress of community engagement in the Hungarian pilot of the Energy4All (E4A) project: Kazán and Megyeri. By this, it supports the work of Work Package 5 (WP5) of E4A that focuses on energy communities in urban areas in Budapest, mapping and analyzing behavioral and social determinants for uptake and performance.

In the Kazán case, an energy community (EC) has already existed at the beginning of the Energy4All (E4A) project. Therefore, the goal of community engagement in this case is to improve and, if possible, scale up the existing EC. In the Megyeri case, community engagement has not yet started due to delays in signing the contract with the Hungarian financing body and the early stage of the design. However, the representatives of the Megyeri project have been following the community engagement efforts in the Kazán Energy Community and plan to transfer the engagement methods applied there to their own case in the future.

In line with this, the following sections will discuss the Kazán Energy Community. The next chapter provides background information about the EC (brief history, social context, communication channels). Chapter 3 describes the progress of community engagement, Chapter 4 highlights the challenges and barriers to engagement, and Chapter 5 outlines the next steps.

2. The energy community

The work related to the EC began around 2021 when the Solidarity Economy Center (SEC), in collaboration with other organizations, won a grant to help fund the creation of an EC. The need for an EC arose because the Kazán Community House had to purchase gas and electricity at market prices. In Hungary, while households are protected from the volatility of energy prices by state regulations, small and medium-sized businesses do not benefit from these protections. Gaining a better understanding of the building's energy usage, addressing overconsumption, and producing its own energy were essential for the financial sustainability of the community house as a whole. Since the grant SEC received was aimed at local communal renewable energy production, installing a PV system on the rooftop was one of the first steps. Another, similarly important step was to create a system for monitoring gas use and heating habits, which led to the development of a smart heating system that manages the building's overall gas consumption.

2.1 Social context

The social context of the building is primarily characterized by the organizations that inhabit the community house. These include the Gólya cooperative, civil society organizations, a media outlet, a ceramics studio, a community daycare, and a community radio station. Most of the workers here are young or middle-aged, with many coming from humanities backgrounds, though there are also workers without formal diplomas. The wages that the organizations occupying the building can offer to their workers could be considered precarious in some cases.

The broader social context of the community house is situated in a diverse neighborhood in the 8th district of Budapest. Historically, the 8th district has been one of the more disadvantaged areas of the city, although a stronger wave of gentrification can now be observed. Kazán has an initiative called the 'Neighbourhood Programme,' through which they aim to engage more meaningfully with their immediate neighbors. This initiative offers workshops on housing, energy, and other issues, often involving the local municipality.

2.2 Key roles and interactions

The main decision-making platform for building issues – including energy-related matters – is the bi-monthly assembly, which is mandatory for all tenants. Decisions are made through a democratic process during these meetings.

The day-to-day management of the EC is handled by the organization responsible for overall building management – ACRED, the Alliance for Collaborative Real Estate Development. The collaborative building management model is as follows: a working group is formed by members of ACRED.

The tenants who occupy the building can be categorized into three groups:

1. **Founding members of ACRED:** They have voting rights in the bi-monthly assemblies and can delegate members to the management working group.
2. **Tenants who contribute to the building's management:** These tenants help with management tasks and have voting rights in the bi-monthly assemblies.
3. **Tenants who do not contribute to the building's management:** They have the right to comment on decisions made during the bi-monthly assemblies.

Decisions regarding the EC are made within this structure, fully integrated into the collaborative building management model.

Communication is primarily conducted via an email list, which all organizations must be part of. Additionally, decisions are made through the bi-monthly assemblies. ACRED employs a person with the title of "Community Coordinator," who serves as the main point of contact between tenants and building management. Tenants can reach out to this person with issues or questions.

3. Improving the energy community

Since the EC already exists in the case of Kazán, the aim of community engagement is to map the opportunities of improving and upscaling the EC.

3.1 Energy community engagement activities

The core of E4A community engagement in the case of the Kazán Energy Community is a workshop-series. The workshop-series is part of WP2 Micro Analysis: Assessment and Transferability as well as WP5: Energy Communities in urban areas developing behavioral and social determinants for uptake and performance (Budapest/Hungary). The workshops of E4All not only aim to collect qualitative data, but also facilitate collective thinking and brainstorming on possible directions to grow and develop the EC. In 2024, one in-person workshop was implemented from the workshop series.

3.2 Establishing collaboration

The first pilot level workshop was taken place in Budapest in December of 2024, which was organized by ABUD. The event was attended by two representatives from SEC, as well as key members of the Kazán Energy Community, who were selected and invited by SEC based on their role in the EC. Additionally, a member from the City of Budapest's Municipality was present and observed the workshop, representing the Megyeri pilot site. Unfortunately, several invited participants were unable to attend the workshop.

The initial step of the first pilot-level workshop was to define collective vision of the Kazán Energy Community, which forms the foundation for the collaborative work carried out within the E4A project. The facilitator from ABUD wrote down the participants' ideas on a board and discussed them together to get a clearer picture. Based on the discussions the following key words were collected, which summarize the current vision of Kazán Energy Community: autonomy, resilience, networking, expansion.

Since the achievement of these visions requires the support and participation of certain key stakeholders, therefore, the next step was to identify and analyze the individuals and organizations,

who can influence the EC and/or can be affected by the EC. The aim of this task was to explore the possible needs of key stakeholders, what could hinder or motivate them in the collaboration with the EC, and how stakeholders are connected to the community. For more information, see the next subchapter (3.3.)

The last task of the workshop focused on the community members' energy consumption behavior, which could contribute to examine the connection between social interactions and the energy consumption of energy communities, thus providing crucial data for the research of E4All project.

3.3 Stakeholders targeting

The group of stakeholders with the greatest influence and most interest is the inner circle of the EC. These are the community members or organizations primarily concerned with the development of the EC and the part of the building that houses it, as well as future developments (working group of ACRED involving the “founding members of ACRED” and the “tenants who contribute to the building's management”, as discussed in 2.2). The EC members who use the building less over time or do not wish to be involved in the development of the EC beyond the necessary extent are also important and should be informed about the developments (“tenants who do not contribute to the building's management” as discussed in 2.2).

Both external and internal members agree with the vision of EC, so in their case, it is not necessary to develop a cooperation strategy. For these members, the primary task of the E4A project will be to understand energy consumption behavior and identify opportunities for reducing energy consumption.

Also influential are regulators (State), potential financiers (EU, State), and local actors within the building block, which is a utility provider, and the owner of the neighboring building. Additionally, it is important to highlight the future tenants of Kazán, the district government, and other building owners in the building block. Although their power/influence and interest/relevance are lower than that of the former, their involvement could improve the position of the Kazán Energy Community in the local power field.

3.4 Complementing activities

To complement the community engagement in Kazán and share experiences and challenges with other pilots in the E4A project, ABUD organized the first cross-pilot online workshop with the participation of other consortium members, held in December 2024. This workshop was designed for representatives of pilot projects (Austria, Italy, Norway) to enhance their understanding of pilot-

level workshop methodologies. The session aimed to introduce ABUD's approach to the Hungarian pilot workshops, foster a shared learning environment, and encourage participants to share their progress and exchange experiences. Additionally, consortium members had the opportunity to engage in collective sense-making to address challenges, overcome barriers, and promote collaborative problem-solving, ultimately working towards improving the outcomes of the pilot projects.

4. Challenges, difficulties and gaps

One of the greatest challenges for the Kazán Energy Community is the active involvement of community members in the E4A project. At the first workshop, only a few community members attended due to the tight schedule and the general end-of-year rush. This may have impacted on the diversity of input collected during the workshop. For future workshops and other engagement activities (such as surveying), extra effort will be made to actively involve more community members by targeted advertisement by ABUD and SEC.

5. Further directions and actions

As a first step, the summary of the workshop results, along with insights into participants' behaviors, will be shared with them. This will help participants gain a more comprehensive understanding of their roles and actions, further supporting their engagement and development.

The insights gathered at the 1st workshop will shape the upcoming workshop, planned for the first quarter of 2025, and help build a collective knowledge base within the Kazán Energy Community. The workshop will be about the elements of the socio-technological system (e.g. legal, economic, architectural, mechanical, behavioral, etc.) that influence the achievement of the vision of the EC, and their connections and interactions.

Furthermore, over the next few months, surveys will be sent to participants of the Hungarian pilot projects to gather deeper insights into their energy behaviors. This survey is necessary because there was not enough time to explore participants' energy behaviors during the first workshop. The data collected will not only enhance the understanding of participants' habits but also contribute valuable findings to WP5.