EMPOWER

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Emissions domains addressed by the Pilot Activity

- Consumption of non-electricity energy for thermal uses in buildings & facilities
- Consumption of electricity generated for buildings, facilities & infrastructure

Key Terms

Energy communities | Energy sharing | Municipal rooftops | Citizen participation | Administrative barriers | Public procurement | Legal frameworks | Replicable toolkit | Inter-municipal collaboration

Levers of Change

Democracy and participation | Financing and funding | Governance and policy | Learning and capabilities | Social innovation | Technology/infrastructure

Description of the Pilot Activity

EMPOWER addresses a critical gap in Brussels' energy transition: while energy sharing and energy communities offer significant potential for decarbonisation and citizen engagement, municipalities face substantial barriers to participation — administrative complexity, public procurement rules, unclear business models, and challenges in making rooftops available. The project brings together three Brussels municipalities (City of Brussels, Schaerbeek, Ixelles) with cooperative Brupower and expert organisation Energie Commune to identify barriers, develop solutions through pilot cases, and create a replicable toolkit enabling other Brussels municipalities to establish energy communities.

Year One Highlights

Year 1 was built around two parallel tracks: understanding the barriers municipalities face when engaging with energy communities, and launching three pilot cases in contrasting contexts to test what implementation actually looks like.

A comprehensive barriers analysis identified administrative complexity, public procurement rules, rooftop availability, unclear business models, and PV financing as the primary obstacles to energy community deployment. A key finding illustrated that legal and administrative barriers matter more than financing for most municipalities. Three pilots were launched across Brussels: CACI Querelle (City of Brussels), working in a dense, economically vulnerable neighbourhood with 424 social housing units and no existing PV installations; the Sainte-Marie la Sagesse School Contract in Schaerbeek, connecting a Catholic school with surrounding social housing and public spaces; and the Kerit Project in Ixelles, where 120 PV panels were installed on a church roof in June 2025 and a new energy community entity obtained regulatory authorisation to share surplus production with vulnerable households. Legal consultancy produced a practical guide for municipalities on their options for participating in energy communities, with model legal documents under development.

Innovation Highlights

The "situational tree" decision-support tool — currently in development — will guide municipalities through the steps and choices involved in different energy community pathways, with model documents, checklists, and legal argumentation frameworks tailored to each route. The inter-municipal structure, with three Brussels municipalities working jointly on a shared challenge, is described as rare at this scale and creates the foundation for toolkit development that no single municipality could achieve alone.

Key Insight

Energy communities imply a partial loss of municipal control over projects — addressing this cultural shift is as essential as solving the technical and legal barriers.

Twinning with Fyli (Greece)

Fyli visited Brussels in June 2025, with sessions covering energy communities across EU policy, regional legal, and local technical levels. Brussels visits Fyli in November 2025.

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