

ENERGY COMMUNITIES, A SHARED WAY OF GENERATING ENERGY

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The **energy transition** that must necessarily take place must go **beyond the incorporation of renewable energy** to the detriment of fossil fuels. It is not just a question of increasing the percentage of renewables in the energy mix, but also of introducing other models of energy production and management. The energy transition must evolve from a centralized production system to a **system of distributed generation and local consumption**. Beyond the large wind or photovoltaic installations that are owned by large energy companies, little by little other types of smaller installations are being established and in which **citizens acquire all the leading role**.

Years ago, especially before the famous tax on the sun in 2015, the so-called solar farms proliferated in Spain, many of them owned by small investors who, in addition to an opportunity in economic terms, saw a way to contribute to the decarbonisation of our energy system. In 2018 this tax on the sun was eliminated, and at the same time the European Commission regulated the **energy communities** via Directive. This figure, in addition to contemplating the concept of distributed generation, refers to local energy consumption and the incorporation of people in the management of the energy system. Thus, RD 23/2020 defines energy communities as *“legal entities based on **open and voluntary participation**, autonomous and effectively controlled by partners or members who are located in the vicinity of the projects of renewable energies that are owned and developed by said legal entities, whose partners or members are individuals, SMEs or local authorities, including municipalities, and whose primary purpose is to **provide environmental, economic or social benefits** to their partners or members or to the local areas where they operate, rather than for financial gain.”*

Citizens are thus invited to participate in the energy system to, in addition to promoting the energy transition, guarantee the **right of access to energy**. According to the latest data provided by Red Eléctrica Española, the photovoltaic generation park is the one that has increased the most in 2022. It has done so to the point that, for the first time in history, there is more photovoltaic power pouring into the grid than hydroelectric power. Thus, last year 3,400 megawatts of new power were connected to the grid, to which must be added the more than 2,000 that are expected for self-consumption, establishing a new all-time record for installed power in one year. A large part of those 2,000 megawatts of self-consumption will be managed under the figure of an energy community, which **can be of a citizen nature** and more linked to rural environments or residential and/or public buildings in cities; **But they are also linked to industrial estates** where the large warehouses offer a large area for the installation of photovoltaic panels, configuring **energy communities in which companies in the area participate**. In terms of potential and competitiveness of companies, these are the energy communities that can contribute the most to the decarbonization of our energy system.

As can be seen, a favorable panorama for the increase in energy installations under the figure of an energy community, although for this a great deal of **information and awareness** work must still be done, not only towards the public, but also towards the **municipal entities** which, at the local level, are the ones that **should lead** the energy communities to give security and confidence to the members who want to join the initiative.

