

# **brupower charter**

**Renewable Energy Cooperative  
based in Brussels**

# brupower charter

Every signatory of this Charter

adheres to the cooperative values: 'of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity', and 'belief in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others'

The signatories of this Charter unite in the following set of

our principles,

our challenges,

our vision,

our mission, and

our objectives.

# Our principles

The declaration on cooperative identity was formulated by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 1895, 51 years after the formulation of the principles of the cooperative movement in Rochdale. In 1995, the 100th General Assembly of ICA defined a new declaration on the cooperative identity and principles in Manchester. This statement is the origin of Recommendation 193 (of 03/06/2002) of the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations (ILO) on the promotion of cooperatives. In this, the ILO invites employers' organisations, trade unions and governments to promote cooperative structures in their competence field.

**The signatories of the brupower charter know about and support brupower in adhering to the 7 cooperative principles of the International Cooperative Movement:**

## **Voluntary and Open Membership:**

Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

## **Democratic Member Control:**

Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organised in a democratic manner.

## **Members' Economic Participation:**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following 4 purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

**Autonomy and Independence:**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

**Education, Training, and Information:**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

**Cooperation Among Cooperatives:**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

**Concern for Community:**

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

# Challenges we face

In the second decade of the 21th century the levels of consumption and non-sustainable production of energy are endangering our environment and our way of life. We face several impending challenges and which have been a major drive for the founding members of brupower.

## **Environmental challenges:**

Climate Change is endangering ecosystems including human communities: this will lead to climate refugees and conflicts.

## **Economic and geopolitical challenges:**

Non-renewable energy sources will be exhausted in the short to medium term by rising world population numbers and living standards; rising demand for non-renewable energy will increase pressure on prices and geopolitical tensions; Moreover, climate change impels us to leave most of the fossil energy reserves in the ground.

## **Social challenges:**

Technological changes make it easier for average citizens to get involved, but this can create tensions between those who have resources to invest, and those that don't. Energy is becoming expensive and a growing number of individuals are confronted with **energy poverty**\*. When this is not countered by measures and support for people to rationalise their energy use, it leads to social conflicts in European countries.

## **Political challenges:**

In the context of the liberalisation of the energy market, often public authorities at all levels pull back from energy production, distribution and supply. In most European countries, energy policy lacks a clear long-term vision and is opaque. As a result, EU governments fail to reach the stated goals of the European Union's liberalisation policy (competitive markets, fair prices and energy independence) and of the Paris agreements to tackle climate change.

## Challenges for the Commons:

Moreover, the development of renewable energy sources through market-based policies should not lose sight of the importance and opportunity of a *fair* and *equal* access to these energy sources; renewable energy sources are **common goods**\* but they are often wrongfully appropriated by manipulation and speculation.

# Our Vision

Given the challenges we are facing today, a global shift from fossil and nuclear energy sources to renewable energy sources is required for the transition to a sustainable future.

Access to energy is a basic right, people depend on its daily use for heating and cooling, light or transport. Therefore, we consider the production and distribution of energy to be **civic responsibilities\*** and as citizens and communities, we choose to take part in it.

brupower members share this vision and objectives. We promote **a model based on cooperation\***: a decentralised approach to the **energy transition\***, one that gives the means to people across Europe to produce and consume their own energy and to invest together in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other clean energy technologies: **energy democracy\***.

This common vision for the future of energy is based on various aspects:

reduction of the energy consumption through a more **rational energy use\***:

energy efficiency\*;

transition from fossil/nuclear to renewable energy sources;

collaboration between different local actors or stakeholders;

solidarity between the rural areas and cities, as well as between vulnerable and low/income households and those that are well-resourced;

development and appropriate planning of the use of renewable energy sources to the advantage of citizens and the local economy;

the need to integrate local renewables through flexibility, and ensuring the efficient functioning of the grid throughout the energy transition; and

a direct democratic model for the energy market concerning prices, planning and pollution reduction.



# Our Mission

Given the challenges we face and the vision we share, the signatories of this Charter choose to give every citizen and other local actors the chance to play an active role in the production, distribution, supply, and management of energy and related services. Cost and benefits of projects must be shared in time and space: between present and future generations, between people close to the projects and beyond. Therefore, the participation of individuals and communities in the *energy transition*\* is essential for brupower members.

The starting points are:

transparent information to the local community and local consultation;

direct participation in energy projects so that financial participation has a real and direct link with the projects;

the long-term objective of 100% renewable energy; and

the values of this Charter.

For this purpose and according to these ethical principles we want to realise and support cooperative projects of citizens.

## **A brupower project meets the following criteria:**

### **Locally anchored:**

The project is realized and exploited in such a way that the project is fully open to the participation of local residents, the local civil society, the municipality and its executive subsidiaries and ordinary citizens in general: both before, during and after the realisation of the project. This allows them to master the project and the added value. The bond between energy needs, the necessary renewable means of production and the local economic significance becomes clear.

**Non-speculative objectives:**

The project is realised to be exploited and not to be resold. The remuneration of the capital is limited. It gives access to energy at a fair and transparent price. Part of the added value is spent on education and information and on investments in new projects. To the extent possible, also the project developers with whom they co-operate, the co- investors and their contractors respect these rules in the construction and operation of this project.

**Independent:**

The projects are realized and operate in such a way that they are autonomous and not governed by governments or by other companies. The mechanism of cooperation and solidarity that is used for the investments and the objectives of the projects, is part of the social and cooperative economy, and places these legal entities outside the public sector (administrative autonomy) and outside the pure private companies.

**Democratic:**

The project is realized and exploited in such a way that, to the extent possible, also the project partners (project developers, engineering firms, banks, contractors, etc.), are democratically organised, of the cooperative type or working according to the cooperative principles, transparent and clear. They guarantee the preservation of the objectives of the projects throughout their duration. The elected management of these companies must allow the participants to control the production prices and, ensure transparency on the functioning and finances.

**Ecological:**

The project is realized and operates in such a way that it commits itself sustainably and voluntarily in favour of the environment, going from the global issue (climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, ...) to the problems at the local level (use of the soil, the wind, the rivers, local impact, ...). As far as possible, the project developers, co-investors and their contractors (consultants, constructors, installers, ...) also respect this rule.

## **Preservation of open space:**

Study and planning precede the realisation of projects, different project proposals are weighed on their merits: urban development, environmental effects and socio-economic impacts.

# **Our Objectives**

The signatories of the brupower Charter engage themselves to:

foster the development of brupower as described above;

identify, accompany and support energy projects of groups of citizens and municipalities;

contribute to reach the goals set by the European Union and its member states at the COP21 in Paris to tackle Climate Change and keep the raise of temperature below + 1,5°C.

to help local authorities reach their targets set in their Sustainable Energy Action Plans or Climate Action Plans when they signed the Covenant of Mayors;

look for the necessary means and manners to execute this Charter.

This charter is based on the REScoop.EU charter, the European federation of citizen energy cooperatives.

# Glossary (\*)

- **Cooperative:** "A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (ICA definition of Cooperative).
- **Civic responsibility:** Essential goods are indispensable to a dignified and decent way of life and we consider that having access to an essential good is a basic right. In the context of this charter, access to energy is a basic right and we regard producing and supplying energy as civic responsibilities.
- **Common goods:** A common good is a good that belongs and is accessible to all. We consider most of renewable energy sources to be common goods and consider that their quality and access must be protected.
- **Energy transition:** The energy transition refers to the shift from a system primarily based on fossil and nuclear energy sources to a more diversified energy mix that will, eventually, be solely based on renewable energy sources and a decentralized production of energy. The energy transition implies the development of an approach based on energy efficiency, careful usage and sustainability.
- **Energy Democracy:** the energy transition offers a unique opportunity for citizens and energy cooperatives to take ownership of the decentralised renewable production facilities of the future. We stand for an energy system that gives the means to people across Europe to produce and consume their own energy and to invest together in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other clean energy technologies: we call this energy democracy.
- **Energy Poverty:** is lack of access to modern energy services. It refers to the situation of large numbers of people in developing countries and some people in developed countries whose well-being is negatively affected by very low consumption of energy, use of dirty or polluting fuels, and excessive time spent collecting fuel to meet basic needs. It is inversely related to access to modern energy services, although improving access is only one factor in efforts to reduce energy poverty. Energy poverty is distinct from fuel poverty, which focuses solely on the issue of affordability.
- **Model based on cooperation:** The model based on cooperation referred to in this charter relates to the emergence of an alternative to the traditional private and public sector approaches to energy management, one driven by communities. Its primary objective is not the making of profit but the good of the community and its business model is based on cooperation.
- **Rational energy use:** A rational energy use is based on two key notions: careful usage and efficiency. It refers to a responsible use of energy combined with energy saving habits so that the final energy consumption is

reasonable and does not compromise the future generations' access to energy sources.

- **Renewable Energy Sources (RES):** As opposed to nuclear and fossil sources of energy (referred to as "stock energy"), renewable energy sources are sources of energy that can be replenished naturally on a human time scale (referred to as "flow energy"). As represented in the REScoop logo, the main sources of renewable energy are solar, hydro, wind, biomass and geothermal.
- **Fair Trade:** "The term Fair Trade defines a trading partnership, based on a dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers - especially in developing countries." (Fair Trade Glossary - Fair Trade International, FLO-CERT, WFTO).