

RENEW project concludes in Malta: Citizens driving Europe's energy transition from grassroots level

The second and final international meeting of RENEW (Reinforcing the European Network on Energies and reneWables) successfully took place in Ta' Kercem, Gozo (Malta), from 24 to 27 March 2026, marking the conclusion of a dynamic and impactful journey of cooperation among European communities.

Following the first event held in Jevišovice (CZ), the Maltese meeting brought together project delegations from Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovenia and Malta, of course. Participants – including local administrators, experts, engineers, civil society representatives and citizens – shared a common enthusiasm for the results achieved and the strong collaboration built throughout the project.

The event focused on the theme:

“Transition to Renewables: a bottom-up approach for an emission-free Europe”, highlighting the crucial role of local communities and citizen-led action in driving the energy transition.

During the conference and workshop sessions, participants exchanged a wide range of best practices and local experiences related to clean energy transition. The discussions clearly emphasized that real change starts at local level, with small communities playing a decisive role in contributing to the implementation and success of European sustainability policies.

The initiatives presented by the partners covered a broad spectrum of topics, including:

- energy efficiency upgrades for municipal buildings;
- development of urban green infrastructure, with a focus on optimizing energy use and integrating renewable sources, particularly in forest environments;
- sustainable urban mobility solutions, including electric buses and green transport powered by renewable energy;
- participatory budgeting and public consultations as tools for inclusive decision-making;
- community gardens and local sustainability initiatives;
- renewable energy solutions such as solar, wind and photovoltaic systems;
- grid upgrades, energy storage, and innovation in energy infrastructure;
- awareness-raising initiatives such as the “Open Industry Weekend”, allowing citizens to better understand energy production and distribution;
- simplified approaches to understanding and implementing local photovoltaic systems.

Special attention was also given to the local context of Malta and Gozo, which emerged as a particularly interesting case study. Thanks to its size, Gozo can act as a living laboratory for energy transition, demonstrating how local generation, storage, and efficiency can contribute to island-scale resilience. Discussions highlighted the need for increased clean energy production, greater system flexibility, and stronger integration of renewable sources, including opportunities for EU funding in sectors such as agriculture.

The programme also included several study visits and field activities, allowing participants to connect theory with practice. Among these, the visit to Magro Bros. Company in Xewkija showcased how traditional industries such as tomato processing can integrate renewable energy investments. Participants also explored innovative solutions like the Ta' Xhajma Solar Flowers, as well as the rich cultural and natural heritage of Gozo, including the Ġgantija Temples, Dwejra Bay, the Salt Pans, the Cittadella in Rabat, and the Ta' Pinu Sanctuary.

These experiences reinforced the idea that sustainability, culture, and community are deeply interconnected, and that the energy transition can be both a technological and a social process.

Throughout the event, contributions from engineers, experts, local authorities, and citizens enriched the discussions, creating a truly inclusive and multidisciplinary dialogue.

At the end of the meeting, all delegations expressed great satisfaction with the project, highlighting not only the knowledge gained but also the strong partnerships and friendships built along the way. RENEW has shown that cooperation across borders and sectors is essential to address common European challenges.

As the project comes to a close, its legacy remains clear: an active and connected network of communities committed to renewable energy, democratic participation, and European values. When citizens are empowered and involved, they can truly become the driving force behind Europe's transition towards a greener, more inclusive, and emission-free future.