

**NEWSLETTER NO.2**  
**May 2025**



**refinee**



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***Dear Readers,***

*welcome to the second edition of the REFINEE newsletter, where we bring you the latest updates, insights and milestones in our joint effort of helping small and medium enterprises in transition to low carbon technology.*

*We will share with you through this newsletter our project progress, key developments and milestones. We will share with you also recent activities we passed through last few months.*

*In this issue, we are pleased to inform you about the conference “Days of Energy Transition of the Istrian Region” held in Labin in April 2025.*

*In the same period, IRENA – Istrian Regional Energy Agency had the honor of hosting the second project meeting.*

*Our project partner ABI Lab from Rome in Italy supports the financing scheme set up in region Friuli Venezia Giulia through a deep analysis of the Italian existing instruments to favor EE investment in industry. They will describe their role in more detail through the research they have conducted recently in Italy.*

*This issue of newsletter invites you to fill out a questionnaire for SME's regarding climate mitigation activities. Your inputs are very important for us!*

*We thank all our partners and supporters for their commitment and energy.*

*Thank you for being a part of the REFINEE Project community.*

***Your REFINEE Team***

## **Highlight**

*As the project entered the seventh month of implementation, at the consortium meeting held in Labin, project partners from Italy, Croatia and Slovenia had the opportunity to analyze the activities that have been carried out so far and the next steps. The focus of the meeting was on the following topics:*

- *Status of activities and engagement of project stakeholders*
- *Methodological framework to assess the impact of financing schemes developed by the project*
- *Definition of key indicators to measure the success of project implementation*
- *Communication and dissemination process of project results*
- *Risk management*



*In this phase of the project, the focus is on gathering information from all stakeholders so that we can tailor the products to the needs of those who will use it. Our team members work intensively in every possible way to collect information that is crucial for us to achieve our outputs. One of the tasks is increasing the awareness of the benefits that EE brings to us and what are the threats of not acting.*

## **Energy Efficiency Survey for SMEs**

*CER Sustainable Business Network, our project partner from Slovenia, has prepared a **survey** to understand how **small and medium-sized enterprises plan to invest in energy efficiency**.*

*Why should you participate?*

*The companies that will submit the questionnaire will have the opportunity to learn from the aggregate results about the positioning of their company compared to the overall sample. Moreover, participating in the results' collection will allow the companies to familiarize with the*

topic and, in the future, participate in the project if they wish to do so. You are invited to submit the questionnaire using the following links:

		
Click <a href="#">here</a> for Italian	Click <a href="#">here</a> for Croatian	Click <a href="#">here</a> for Slovenian



*We would appreciate your active collaboration in our mission.*

### **Conference: "Energy Transition Days of the Istrian Region"**

*During our meeting in Labin a conference was organized by the Istrian Regional Energy Agency (IRENA), in cooperation with Istria County and the Energy Institute Hrvoje Požar, and supported by the City of Labin and Labin 2000. The conference gathered experts from several sectors.*

*An energy community is a group of individuals, households, businesses, or organizations that come together to produce, manage, share, and/or consume energy—typically from renewable sources—at a local level, with the goal of increasing sustainability, energy independence, and social and economic benefits for its members and the wider community.*

*The conference was opened by the Deputy of the County of Istria, Tulio Demetlika, pointing out that the County of Istria is leading the way in promoting sustainable models of energy consumption and production, and that energy communities represent a new opportunity to involve citizens in the transition, which must be fair and locally focused.*

*The introductory part of the conference presented IRENA's current EU projects implemented in the county: REFINEE, EnerCmed, HERCULES-CE and NRGCOM, whose common goal is to establish the prerequisites for the development of energy communities through innovative approaches, cooperation and financing models.*

*A video presentation "Energy Communities as a Solution for Energy Exchange" was also shown to introduce the concept of energy sharing to citizens and showed concrete possibilities for application in local environments.*

*The first panel, entitled "Energy Communities - Myth or Reality?", was moderated by Dr. Mihaela Grubišić Šeba (EIHP) and was attended by Andro Bačan (EIHP), Snježana Blagajac (HERA), Marin Bošković (HEP-ODS), Cinzia Zubin (Istria County) and Goran Jurišić (My Energy Community).*

*Snježana Blagajac from HERA explained in detail the current amendments to the Renewable Energy Sources and High-Efficiency Cogeneration Act and highlighted the importance of virtual resource aggregation and clear definition of energy sharing keys. She emphasized that the energy exchange system in communities is already possible, but that additional harmonization with operational, market and technical aspects is needed in order for it to come to life in practice and become fully operational, which will be facilitated by legal regulations that will offer a clear process and facilitate the creation of a vision for each individual community.*

*Goran Jurišić, one of the pioneers of energy communities in Croatia, shared concrete experiences in developing a software solution and a device for real-time energy sharing. Although their community is not yet operational, he pointed out that administrative processes are slowly accelerating, and the start of real energy exchange is expected in early 2026.*

*Andro Bačan from EIHP warned that, although the legislative framework is formally broad, concrete operational support is still lacking, especially in the technical and educational segments. It is necessary first to remove key barriers and ensure education to all involved actors, before financial incentives themselves. Marin Bošković from HEP-ODS pointed out that ECs represent one of the biggest changes in the electricity system in the last decade.*

*At the second panel, "Renewable Energy Communities – an opportunity for local energy sharing?", representatives of the scientific community and local initiatives discussed the real challenges and possibilities of applying the EZG model in the field.*

*The conference concluded with the message that the energy transition is not just a technical issue, but an opportunity to create a more just and sustainable society. Energy communities empower citizens to become producers and distributors of energy, but also to manage it, connect local resources with local needs and create more resilient and energy independent communities.*





## Identification of Italian private financing opportunities for Energy Efficiency in SMEs

Small and Medium Enterprises have an important role in many countries such as Italy. Despite the small size of these companies, they have a significant overall environmental impact, so supporting them in the path of decarbonization and sustainable development represents a strategic lever for the competitiveness of the economic system as a whole. Banks, in this context, play a crucial role by providing the capital necessary to support SMEs in the implementation of processes and solutions that project them towards increasingly sustainable operations and business.

ABI Lab, the Consortium partner in charge to provide the perspective of the Italian banking sector on financing the energy efficiency projects of SMEs, conducted a survey on 15 banks/banking groups representing over 60% in terms of total assets. The results highlighted how significant the share of the credit portfolio used for energy efficiency financing products for SMEs is. Among the main forms of financing adopted for SMEs for energy efficiency interventions, most of the sample indicated loans intended to finance projects that have a clear environmental benefit and loans guaranteed by public administrations. Furthermore, 60% of respondents also highlighted repayable loans based on energy performance. It is also important to note that 73% of the sample of banks provide particular conditions for energy efficiency interventions for financing products, including, for example, the application of improved economic conditions to companies that demonstrate an ESG scoring adequate to certain requirements monitored over time. A particularly relevant aspect is that 60% of banks, while supporting SMEs in their sustainable transition, also provide technical and/or consultancy assistance. This helps raise awareness among SMEs about the potential benefits of energy efficiency measures.



### Regional-based FINancing schemes to pool private investments in tailored Energy Efficiency plans for SMEs of strategic value chains

#### DESCRIPTION

REFINEE will improve the energy efficiency of SMEs in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Istria, helping companies to invest in sustainable solutions and reduce their environmental impact by promoting the transition towards a greener and more resilient economy

#### PROJECT DURATION

1 st October 2024 - 30 th September 2027



#### PROJECT BUDGET

1.572.328,63 €  
(with co-financing of the LIFE-CET program of 95%)



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