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D5.2 – Best practice workshops (R&I and energy transition policymakers)

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Deliverable 5.2 – Best practice workshops (R&I and energy transition policymakers)

TwInSolar

(Improving Research and Innovation to achieve a massive integration of Solar renewables)

Organisation: Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)

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Executive summary

The deliverable gives an overview of the presentations done during the two TwInSolar online workshops and highlights the specific challenges faced by insular and non-interconnected areas. The TwInSolar project organized two best practices sharing workshops in March and April 2025 to explore how islands and outermost regions can accelerate their clean energy transition while driving sustainable territorial development. Both sessions brought together regional representatives, EU policy officers, and energy experts to exchange experiences and highlight opportunities for collaboration and funding.

The first workshop, held on **25 March 2025**, focused on regional experiences and EU-level opportunities. The Canary Islands and Gotland presented concrete initiatives on renewable energy integration and operational approaches to sustainability. At the EU level, contributions from the CPMR and the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research underlined the importance of cohesion policy, Horizon Europe funding, and research collaboration for supporting energy transition in remote regions. The debate highlighted the need for stronger knowledge exchange across territories and better alignment with EU strategies and instruments.

A second workshop, held on **1 April 2025**, built on previous discussions and broadened the scope to the role of clean energy in fostering economic growth and sustainable development. Sardinia shared its energy community model, demonstrating the social benefits of distributed photovoltaic systems, while the Government of the Azores showcased regional strategies for resilience and transition. At the European level, the CPMR and Interreg Europe experts provided insights into policy support, networking opportunities, and project funding mechanisms available to island territories. The debate emphasized how energy transition can act as a catalyst for innovation, local job creation, and territorial cohesion, provided that regions engage in collaborative governance and make an adequate use of EU platforms and services.

Across both workshops, shared conclusions emerged. Islands and Outermost Regions are pioneers and “living labs” of renewable energy solutions, serving as testing grounds for innovative practices. Their progress depends on effective knowledge sharing, the capacity to leverage EU funding, and their ability to connect local initiatives with European strategies. The Clean Energy Transition is not only an environmental and climate necessity but can play as a driver for economic development and social inclusion. Strong partnerships between regional governments, academic institutions, and EU stakeholders is critical to use this momentum and scale up successful energy transition models across islands and the EU.

Introduction



25/03: Fostering a virtuous Research & Innovation dynamic through the energy transition in islands and Outermost regions

01/04: The clean energy transition: a driver for growth and a sustainable territorial development for islands and Outermost regions

Agenda & registration:
www.twinsolar.eu



- **About TwInSolar**

Launched in September 2022, TwInSolar is a 3-year project funded by the Horizon Europe Programme and coordinated by the University of La Reunion. Gathering DTU, Fraunhofer ISE and the CPMR Islands Commission within its partnership, it aims at improving research and innovation to reach a massive integration of solar energy in La Reunion.

To maximise TwInSolar's impact on the long term, the project aims at strengthening the local Research & Innovation quadruple helix and at increasing La Reunion's participation to Horizon Europe.

- **Objectives of the workshops**

As part of TwInSolar and building on a series of seminars organized in La Reunion gathering R&I stakeholders, two online workshops gathered research & innovation policy makers from Outermost Regions and other islands and remote regions to discuss best practices and opportunities in the field of renewable energy, and in particular solar energy, in insular territories. Each workshop was conducted in English, with translation into French, for a duration of 1h30.

A) [Workshop 1 - Fostering a virtuous Research and innovation dynamic through the energy transition in islands and Outermost regions](#)

- **Agenda**

25 of March 2025 – 14.00-15.30 REUNION TIME | 11.00-12.30 BRUSSELS TIME

Duration: 1h30

Moderation: **Claire Helly**, Project and Policy Officer, CPMR Islands Commission

Introduction (15')

- Opening by **Jean-Pierre Chabriat**, Regional Councilor in charge of Research and Energy Transition, Réunion Region (10')
- Introduction by **Mathieu David**, TwinSolar coordinator, Head of Laboratory PIMENT, University of La Reunion (5')

I. Presentation of best practices at regional level (25')

- Presentation by **Daniel Henríquez**, Head of Unit Renewable Energy, Instituto Tecnológico de Canarias (ITC) (10')
- Presentation by **Patrick Dahl**, Head of Operations, Energicentrum Gotland (10')

II. Opportunities and state of play at EU level (25')

- Presentation by **Marcel-Tobias Schreiber**, Policy Officer for Cohesion, CPMR: Competitiveness compass & Cohesion Policy (10')
- Presentation by **Bertrand Noharet**, NCP Horizon Europe, Widening Participation and ERA, French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (10')

III. Debate and key take-aways (20')

Conclusion: Claire Helly (5')

- **Opening by Mr. Jean-Pierre Chabriat, Regional Councillor in charge of research and innovation at the Reunion Regional Council**

Introducing La Reunion's main challenges, **Jean-Pierre Chabriat** highlighted the main issue of **energy resilience**, aiming to shift towards a form of energy sobriety and to ensure a fair and sustainable access for all.

Jean-Pierre Chabriat recalled the specific geographical situation of La Reunion, **a French territory and an Outermost region of Europe**, located near Madagascar and Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean. Reunion island is an **isolated territory in terms of energy supply**. 860 000 inhabitants live on this 2,500 square kilometers' island, which main economic sectors are agriculture and tourism. La Reunion island a **tropical island**, located in a hurricanes area. This question is particularly important in view of the ongoing climate change. Finally, he highlighted the very wide range of biodiversity present on the island.

In energy terms, La Reunion presents a **large energy dependency**. Energy consumption can be divided as follows: 65% for mobility; 23% for the production of electricity; a small percentage for producing heat for industries; and 6% for other sources as agriculture, and industrial services. In this context, the Region defends the political narrative and **objective of reaching 100% of Renewable energy in 2050. Nevertheless, only 30 to 35% of that energy is currently locally produced**. As **Jean-Pierre Chabriat** highlights, regarding the evolution of Reunion's energy dependency rate, the figures haven't really changed much in 20 years, there is a certain degree of dependency which remains, in a context of increasing energy consumption. As stressed by the speaker, this issue is shared in other French overseas territories.

Hence, the introduction of a new objective and a new timeline, for **Reunion Island to be totally independent in its energy production by 2050**. But 2050 is just around the corner; a reliable and resourceful policy is therefore necessary to achieve this objective. However, as pointed out by **Jean-Pierre Chabriat**, the question of energy in Europe is obviously not exactly the same as the challenges La Reunion and other insular territories are facing.

Jean-Pierre Chabriat detailed several ongoing actions to control energy demand and contain the energy consumption, which are being developed by local and regional authorities:

- **Mobility is an important issue**, with 480 000 vehicles in a road network of 3 100 km, which is vulnerable to climate change. Hurricanes represent risks of rockfalls, landslides and submersion of roads. We need to develop electric vehicles, and accessible charging points.
- **A hydrogen plan coupled with offshore wind power will be necessary, within a concerted plan**. Hydrogen development and hydrogen storage are necessary as well, coupled with a deep and surface geothermal plan as well, adding to the mix.

- In terms of housing, an important point of the 2050 roadmap is the **solar plan: “a solar roof for every home”**. This is essential, to develop solar hot water. Smart grids and smart networks need to be developed, with microgrids. There is also room for improvement in predictive terms. Reunion needs to develop autonomous units of accommodation, to be able to improve energy resilience, and climate change resilience, with the objective of rebounding back very fast after a natural disaster.

As stressed by **Jean-Pierre Chabriat**, the main priority for Reunion is to be able to **use solar power at its maximum potential**, within a whole plan that is completely controlled and forecastable, as part of an overall resilience plan, and together with other sources of power.

He underlined the **importance of Research and innovation in this process**, with a need to focus research on these key issues and announced **the creation of a new regional technological center gathering all regional R&D stakeholders**, building a fully operational overarching system to test new solutions. Fostering collaborations between regional companies and SMEs, this initiative will ensure they have full access to all of the latest technologies and solutions for increased resilience and sustainability as we move towards that deadline of 2050. **More fundings will need to be earmarked** for these issues as well. **Ultimately, Reunion Island should become a demonstrator and a case study for other islands facing similar challenges.**

- **Introduction by Mathieu David, TwInSolar coordinator, Head of Laboratory PIMENT, University of La Reunion**

After briefly introducing the project’s partners, **Mathieu David** highlighted the project’s objectives:

- Increasing the R&I capacities of La Reunion in the field of solar energy, as well as its competitiveness and internationalization.
- Exchanging best practices, building partnerships and reinforcing capacities.
- Building on the project’s case study of Terre-Sainte Campus, with a target of 80% self-sufficiency by solar renewables.

To achieve these objectives, **the University of La Reunion is learning from the best players in the field, namely Fraunhofer ISE and the Technical University of Denmark**, which are partners in the TwInSolar project. Throughout the project, Reunionese stakeholders have been sharing their ecosystems and knowledge, to identify pathways to learn from each other. Study visits have been organized in 2022 and 2023, as well as B2B interviews in 2023 in Copenhagen and Baden-Wurttemberg region, with the objectives of understanding how do these ecosystems’ function, and pinpointing what the most remarkable initiatives are. This led to quadruple helix seminars in 2023 and 2024, followed by science-policy workshops which is just starting, to identify which

initiatives that have already been undertaken elsewhere can be **replicated in La Reunion**, and ultimately **improving the Regional R&I system performance**.

Among these key findings, we can quote the integration of start-ups and entrepreneurship, the Open Innovative Entrepreneurship Program, the Greater Copenhagen EU Office, DTU X-Tech a hybrid incubator as well.

- **Presentation by Daniel Henríquez, Head of Unit Renewable Energy, Instituto Tecnológico de Canarias (ITC)**

A Spanish archipelago located around 120 km off the coast of Morocco, **Canary Islands are turning their unique geography into opportunities** for cutting edge research, technology, and collaborative projects by investing in strategic research and development, forging strong public-private partnerships, and embracing forward-thinking policies.

Daniel Henriquez first presents the general context of the archipelago, composed of **six electrical isolated systems**. Currently, only the islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote have an electrical connection, but a connection between Tenerife and La Gomera is in progress and should be in operation before the end of 2026. **The RES penetration is around 20%, with a lot of differences between the islands** (70% RES penetration in El Hierro, and the lower rate in La Gomera).

Canary Islands have established an **R&D framework with the extended smart specialization strategy (RIS3) from 2021 to 2027**, with 5 focus areas: reflect our unique natural environment and economic structure covering tourism, health, blue economy, astrophysics, and emerging industries. A great emphasis is placed on **cross-cutting themes like digitalization and sustainability** to ensure that innovation is both cutting edge and environmentally friendly. **Complementary policies** such as the Blue Economy Strategy and the Circular Economy Action Plan **help to create a comprehensive framework** that drives sustainable development and job creation across multiple sectors.

In terms of funding, the Canary Islands benefit from **various European programs**, most notably **the European Regional Development Fund and Horizon Europe**. The ASIS is the regional agency of the research, development and innovation that provides competitive course with three million euros dedicated to applied research in 2024, for example. Key initiatives also include the Canaria Progreso 2030 to reinforce the innovation via new science law, the Plan of the Canary Islands for Research and Development and the Science Pact and the Digital Agenda. **Additionally, public-private partnerships are crucial**, with universities and research centers (i.e. Institute of Astrophysics in the Canary Islands and ITC, the Technology Institute of the Canary Islands) collaborating closely with the local business and the government institutions in these collaborative ecosystems, ensuring that the research and development actions have a real impact on the energy transition and the overall resilience of Canary islands.

Daniel Henríquez presented concrete initiatives of relevance, in particular related to distributed solar generation:

- **The [AquaSol project](#)**, funded by the Horizon Europe Program. This project seeks to develop an innovative solution for integrated water and solar energy management in island settings by combining advanced solar technologies with improved water desalination systems. This project aims to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and ensure a secure water supply. Aquasol brings together partners from academia, industry, and local governments, enhancing our capacity for collaborative research and supporting sustainable development in Canary Islands.
- **Connect Heat** is a LIFE-funded project, focusing on decarbonizing heating and cooling by involving local stakeholders in the creation of energy communities. It emphasizes community mobilization, empowering citizens to adopt sustainable energy solutions, and decentralized innovation using resources like biomass, solar and geothermal. This project's goal is to develop replicable, scalable models that can serve as references across Europe. It is also establishing a hybrid energy community, with electrical heating and cooling in the south of Gran Canaria to supply services for high demand sectors such as tourism and industry. By fostering collaboration among public authorities, business and local communities, ConnectHeat is driving the transition to a cleaner, more efficient energy system.
- **Microgrid Blue** is an innovative project funded by Interreg Mac, that aims to foster the integration of renewable energy in islands and regions with weak electrical grids. Led by ITC, the project brought together a diverse consortium of partners. Main goals were to deploy intelligent microgrids and hybrid energy systems capable of maximizing renewable penetration while ensuring grid stability. One of the project highlights is the use of battery storage and smart management tools, which boost energy efficiency and resilience during power outage. In La Gomera Islands, for example, it has implemented an advanced system that not only optimizes self-consumption in the community but also provides backup in emergencies. The project foresees an innovative energy management system to operate and optimize production with the dual aim of maximizing self-consumption for the community and increasing any surplus energy sold to the market, in order to maximize the benefits. In addition to La Gomera, the project has also been deployed in a rural village in Senegal. It is the first intelligent microgrid capable of supplying energy in parallel with the national grid in a rural area. The system also supports an "island mode", to keep the lights during frequent outages caused by the grid instability. This project shows that by integrating modern renewable technologies and battery storage, we reduce the dependence on imported energy, while we offer critical resilience services. Moreover, this pilot helps define the technical and regulatory frameworks needed for a broader implementation in Senegal.

- Finally, **REFLECT Africa (Renewables Energies for Africa)** is an ongoing project funded by Horizon 2020. It tackles the energy challenges in Africa by turning agricultural and agri-food waste into valuable bioenergy resources through biomass gasification. The project gathers 29 partners from 16 different countries in Europe and Africa, and sets up large-scale demonstrations in Morocco, Ghana, and South Africa. A microgrid with gasification and PV plant have notably been installed in the north of Ghana. By converting residues from peanut cells to sugar cane baggage, for example, into clean energy and biochar, this project fosters the reduction of emissions while enhancing soil fertility for local farmers.

Daniel Henriquez concluded his intervention by highlighting that Canary Islands provide a fertile ground for research and innovation initiative, which supports the energy transition of regional strategy. The different projects presented demonstrate how collaboration between public and private sectors research institutions and local communities can drive sustainable solutions. Canary Islands and the ITC will continue to capitalize on European funding opportunities, foster cross-regional cooperation, and develop cutting-edge technologies that can serve as models for other island territories.

- **Presentation by Patrick Dahl, Head of Operations, EnergiCentrum Gotland**

EnergiCentrum Gotland is a public unit run by the municipality or the region of Gotland which function is to support the general public and the companies of Gotland in their energy transition, with the goal to have a renewable energy system by 2040. Patrick Dahl began his presentation by introducing Gotland, the largest island in Sweden with 61,000 inhabitants, in the center of the Baltic Sea, which unfortunately also implies geopolitical concerns. Accordingly, he stressed that preparedness and security is becoming also a very important part of the work with the energy transition today. Gotland is an island connected by cable to the mainland. These cables are old and are being replaced by 2030. Parallel cables allow islanders to simultaneously run exports as well and are currently exporting just as much as they are importing. Gotland benefits from onshore wind power on the island, which covers half of the current consumption. However, a great increase in demand is expected in the next few years, reiterating the need for more renewable energy production. The island has two large consumers: a cement plant, which by 2030 is going to establish a big CCS plant, carbon capture and storage, which is very energy demanding. In addition, like many islands, Gotland counts with a ferry traffic, which is going to purchase soon the first ferry that will be able to run on hydrogen. All this contributes to a foreseen energy demand on the island being drastically increased in the coming 15 to 20 years.

Raising the question of capacity-based tariffs, Patrick Dahl explained that in Sweden the grid is underutilized, with so far not enough considerations of the potential of flexibility and storage for the future. Hence, the EnergiCentrum joined hands with the local DSO to ensure that future tariffs are being more intelligent and provide the right signals to consumers to act in a way that

supports the grid, which in the end also supports themselves. There has been a regulatory sandbox for DSO tariffs in Sweden since 2016, which has been exploring how tariffs can be structured to utilize the grid in a smarter way and to increase flexibility into the system. With that as a base, the target of this project is to make grid utilization more efficient. Patrick Dahl stresses, however, that there is a risk, especially now that the grid is being upgraded, that they are constructing a grid that is way too expensive. What they have seen is that some behaviours make sense at national level but may not reflect the needs of the grid locally. To address this issue, the project aims to ensure that the consumers of the grid act in accordance with what is needed locally, where they are situated. The spot prices do cause local problems. They may make sense on a national level or an overriding level to follow where prices are most beneficial, but it may not be the best way. In addition, the flexibility of resources is increasing. As the speaker explains, domestic and companies' resources may be balanced. In summary, the old-fashioned way simply adds grid capacity to the cost in the end of the consumers. What the project demonstrates is that the cost can actually be reduced by utilizing these resources in the smartest way possible.

The project is using a high-resolution capacity-based approach, to try to analyze the behaviors of the grid and to determine what kind of signals can be produced. The area considered represents 1,700 customers and 150 secondaries. The measurements are location and time specific, throughout a 12-month test with 10 pilots. The whole purpose being that consumers will actually pay for the strain they cause where they are and when it happens and not paying by default for something that they may not even be utilizing.

The speaker also highlighted their different cooperations in the framework of this project and concluded by explaining that they do not consider market maturity from the consumer point of view; they do not see that each customer will have the level of interest to do this on their own. However, they foresee that this could be done by grid companies, to better manage resources in the future. The first part of the project was finalized in January, and more pilots will be implemented in the next few months. Concluding his presentation, Patrick Dahl invited the audience to have a look at the dedicated report for this first phase, for more information.

- **Presentation by Marcel-Tobias Schreiber, Policy Officer for Cohesion, CPMR**

Marcel-Tobias Schreiber presented an update concerning the future of Cohesion Policy and budget, with a focus on research and innovation, as well as on energy. Analysing the European Commission's announcements and previous policies, he highlighted some key points of attention with regards to the future of the EU budget.

Please note that the EU budget was not yet published at the time of the workshop.

- **the Competitiveness Compass describes the Competitiveness Fund as STEP, under a common regulation:** As detailed by Marcel-Tobias Schreiber, the recently published competitiveness compass, a fund is described following what STEP already does, but the key difference here is that this would be a direct management fund.

- **Support larger companies under specific conditions:** until now, only SMEs could be supported under cohesion policy. This is now possible but only in regions that are either less developed regions or that are in the member state that has a GDP per capita under the EU average. This comes with 100% co-financing, and 30% pre-financing (if STEP specific objectives are included in regional or national program before the end of March 2025). However, as the speaker explained, the issue here is that many regions can use STEP to support larger companies, which means just a form of state aid to larger companies that contribute to the step objectives of developing digital, clean and biotechnologies. Many of those regions that can support larger companies do not have the preconditions needed to successfully use the money. What is foreseen is that some regions just won't do any STEP objectives, although they can, or the difference between regions that can successfully use STEP for larger companies and those that do not, will increase. Both of those are risks that could potentially undermine the final goal of Cohesion policy, which is territorial, social and economic cohesion. This is something which should be kept in mind thinking about the future of the competitiveness fund as well.
- **The overall situation in the EU right now is a very tight budgetary situation.** The Next Generation EU debt needs to be repaid, without any new own resources, at least for now, that could co-finance this, meaning the debt repayment will have to come out of the regular EU budget. However, this payment represents more than 10% of the EU budget and it is not expected that Member States be willing to contribute any more money in the next programming period than they already do. In addition, new political priorities are emerging, including defense and competitiveness. The current EU budget cannot do it all. What this means for cohesion is that all funds in the future EU budget will need to contribute to competitiveness in one way or the other.
- **The smart specialization strategy conditionality that we have had in the past through two programming cycles might disappear.** It has not been mentioned in any documents related to competitiveness nor the future of Horizon. And now it's the rumors in Brussels start circulating that the conditionality might disappear altogether. This does not mean that S3 will disappear, and it will not be prohibited. But the conditionality that every region needs to have one, follow one, implement one might be going away. So, this is something important to consider. But to wrap up on a more positive note, green energy is a crucial element for competitiveness for the new commission. And the key KPI that the commission has put out there, is add 100 gigawatts of renewable power capacity annually, up to 2030.

- **Presentation by Bertrand Noharet, NCP Horizon Europe, Widening Participation and ERA, French Ministry of Higher Education and Research**

Bertrand Noharet first presented the opportunities available within the current program. He is part of the MESR team in France, organized by the Higher education Ministry. The mission of Horizon Europe NCP is to find pertinent information on the present opportunities for financing and to accompany people who are, or organizations are requesting funding. He also shared his contact details with the participants and invited them to consult his [LinkedIn page](#) for more information.

The Widera is the cross-cutting pillar in the program, collaborating with Horizon's three main pillars, and the two overarching objectives. The objective is to widen participation in Europe and reinforcing the European research space. Bertrand Noharet presented the different pillars and destinations, also detailing the countries and territories concerned, where the level of participation is lower. These are countries where the infrastructure and the ecosystem for innovation are perhaps less developed than in other countries. Depending on the destination, the aim is also to improve access to excellent initiatives, attracting and mobilizing the best talents (i.e. to attract post-doctoral students to ERA fellowships).

He presented the specificities of these calls concerning widening:

- They are bottom-up initiatives. There are no prescribed predefined themes that the calls are based on, any theme can be considered.
- These are also calls where the widening territories are the only eligible to be coordinated. So, these calls can be destined only to widen the widening territories.
- These calls also don't aim to finance just only research, but they're more sort of structural calls to develop an ecosystem. And within that framework, according to the type of instrument that is chosen, several research teams can be financed.
- There is a whole range of instruments that enable stakeholders to be able to integrate projects that are already underway, such as the case with facility and twinning, which we've already heard talk about today. But there are also other initiatives and other instruments that either through twinning or through networks, various stakeholders can come together and participate in projects.

Bertrand Noharet then presented the COST programme, outside of Widening but related to it. COST is an association which finances networks of researchers and brings together research communities around a particular theme, working as a bottom-up call, with open-ended themes. At least seven participating partners are required, with the possibility to involve other countries outside of the widening framework as well. This particular program is open until October the 21st. These are interdisciplinary projects on inclusive themes. They're both inclusive in terms of the stakeholders and the territories concerned and they promote inclusion and equality between

the participants, and they favor the inclusion of young researchers. It's also possible to sort of come on board already in a project, already when it's underway, if it's a subject that interests you and for which you can contribute. In addition, COST promotes small-scale studies that have a particular impact in certain regions. COST recently organized an info day, and the video is available already.

- **Questions from the audience**

Question from the University of La Reunion to Energicentrum Gotland: “I would like to know how you managed to select for the operation that you were in the east of the island of Gotland, and you took some of the people to test a tariff system that was a bit different. What did you do? Did you really give them that or is it still virtual? Is it just a recording of what they would have done? How did you manage to get these people involved in your approach and who in your consortium was able to actually do that? “

Since the speaker had to leave earlier, the question was forwarded to him.

Question from the University of La Reunion to ITC (Canary Islands): “I think that your island system must be very similar to that that we have in the La Réunion. We have one DSO, TSO, which is an operator with a single network, and the prices are fixed ahead of time. And it's very often difficult to know what they're going to do because they have their own strategies which aren't necessarily in phase with our schedules. So how do you work with your local utility in the Canary Islands? And also, we have a regulation for the prices of electricity. And their policy is usually not very compatible with research and innovation action that try to improve autonomy. And it's very difficult to involve them in our research and innovation project. And I want to know if it's also the case for you. How did you manage to convince them to participate in the project, because it's a real issue in La Réunion?”

⇒ **Answer from ITC (Canary Islands):** “Regarding the DSO sometimes we involve them in some research projects okay but sometimes not. It's difficult to involve them, but any case they are very interesting because the DSO only manages some aspects of the distribution grid because we have also the DSO called the system operators for one side, and the other side will have the DSO only for the maintenance and exploitation of the distribution grid. So, they are the ones responsible in maintaining the quality in their grid. It has been interesting, for example, to involve them in some projects about microgrids, which are a set of distributed generation with a common energy management system. The location is just a location where we can supply services to the DSO and for them it's very important. The emergency supply is there in case of any rolling of the line. So, they must move very fast with the diesel engines and so supply electricity to the customers. Only in cases of emergency, the diesel will have the responsibility to do it. So microgrids are very interesting in this type of system because we can supply this type of service and research for islands. So, in case of cuts or congestion, the microgrids with centralized storage

system can supply this type of service. So, we involve them sometimes in the projects and other times we only have an agreement with them in order to test some of the services we can supply.”

Follow-up question from the University of La Reunion to ITC (Canary Islands): “For instance, when you imagine to develop a solution based on a microgrid, and you want to know if you extend this solution to the whole grid of Canary Islands, so putting this solution in different places of the grid, do you have access to the data needed to assess the impact for the whole supply of the island?”

⇒ **Answer from ITC (Canary Islands):** “In that case, we analyzed in 2020 with the support from the regional government of the Canary Islands, all the lines, all the distribution grid of the island of La Gomera, for instance. So, with the information supplied with the DSO. So, of course, sometimes the demand for each substation or transformer must be estimated. But in other cases, we have direct access to the transformer, to the data loads. So, we have monitored several transformers of the DSO and we have the information. For example, in the specific case of La Gomera, the project we presented before, the system is a centralized PV battery system. This PV battery system is associated with an area of a locality. It's at the end of the line of the island. So, we can supply electricity to the customers behind two transformers. We are the system connected in medium voltage grid. So, we receive in real time the information of the load in the area, and with this information, with different statistical algorithms, we try to maximize self-consumption. In case of excess electricity, we optimize it to maximize the revenues also of the system. Of course, it depends also on the national regulation for self-consumption in order to distribute electricity between the customers. So, we have created an energy community and with the according regulations of course we cannot send signal prices to the customers. I don't know how to say dynamic sharing factors between all the customers inside. And we can send some information to the customers like we have a set of electricity. For instance, please switch on your washing machines. However, we don't send direct signal like the Gotland's project I saw before, because it depends too much on the capacity of the people. It's very difficult because there's a lot of old people there. It's not easy. Social engagement is difficult, finally. But this is the way we are working on that.”

B) [Workshop 2 – The clean energy transition: a driver for growth and a sustainable territorial development for islands and Outermost regions](#)

- **Agenda**

1st of April 2025 – 14.00-16.00 REUNION TIME | 12.00-14.00 BRUSSELS TIME

Duration: 2h00

Moderation: **Claire Helly**, Project and Policy Officer, CPMR

Introduction (15')

- Opening by **Jean-Pierre Chabriat**, Councilor in charge of Research and Energy Transition, Réunion Region (10')
- Introduction by **Claire Helly** on the context of the workshop, including the presentation of first workshop conclusions (5')

I. Presentation of best practices & opportunities at EU level (30')

- **Omar Caboni**, Project Manager, Caloforte Municipality, San Pietro (Sardinia): “Enhancing the social benefits of distributed PV: the ongoing experience of Carloforte Energy Community”. (10')
- **Joana Ferreira Rita**, Regional Director for Energy, Government of the Azores (10')

10mn for Q&A with the audience

II. Opportunities and state of play at EU level (30')

- **Guglielmo Migliori**, Senior Policy Officer for Energy, CPMR (10')
- **Thorsten Kohlisch**, Project Manager and **Katharina Krell**, Thematic Expert – Greener Europe and Connected Europe, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform (10')

10mn for Q&A with the audience

III. Debate and key-take aways (30')

Conclusion (5'): **Mathieu David**, TwinSolar coordinator, Head of Laboratory PIMENT, University of La Reunion

- **Introduction**

“The clean energy transition: a driver for growth and a sustainable territorial development for islands and Outermost regions” is an online series of workshops organised by the CPMR Islands Commission as part of TwInSolar, and building on a series of seminars organized in La Reunion gathering R&I stakeholders. Two online workshops gathered research & innovation policy makers from Outermost Regions and other islands and remote regions to discuss best practices and opportunities in the field of renewable energy, and in particular solar energy, in insular territories. This second workshop began with a brief overview of the day's agenda which includes the introduction, context from the TwInSolar project, presentations of best practices from Sardinia, a Q&A session, discussions on EU-level opportunities with representatives from the CPMR and Interreg Europe, followed by a debate and concluding remarks. All presentations shown during the workshop are available on the TwInSolar website: <https://twinsolar.eu/en/online-workshops/>

- **Opening by Jean-Pierre Chabriat, Councilor in charge of Research and Energy Transition, Réunion Region**

Jean-Pierre Chabriat, Councilor in charge of Research and Energy Transition, Réunion Region introduces the topic of energy transition as a critical developmental challenge for island regions, especially those not interconnected with wider grids. They emphasize the goal of moving from energy dependence to full decarbonization and autonomy by 2050-2060. This transition is framed as a comprehensive development project linking economic and territorial growth with clean and autonomous energy solutions.

Expanding on the development framework, he highlighted the integration of decarbonized mobility, specifically electric vehicles fuelled by hydrogen energy on La Reunion. He underlined the need for local energy production, particularly through offshore wind energy, to sustainably generate the large amounts of hydrogen required for transportation. The plan is described as a holistic approach that supports both regional energy needs and economic development. Then, the discussion focused on the infrastructure and economic opportunities associated with hydrogen mobility, including the establishment of ports for wind turbine construction and maintenance, as well as the installation and upkeep of electrolyzers and the electrical grid. The speaker pointed out the environmental advantage of hydrogen over battery recycling challenges in heavy mobility and stresses the importance of creating local clean energy production to support this sustainable mobility transition.

Jean-Pierre Chabriat discussed the potential of renewable energy development on the island, focusing on photovoltaic solar energy. They highlight existing infrastructure, including 240,000 solar water heaters and about 10,000 rooftop installations annually. This expansion could create a sustainable photovoltaic system with a power capacity close to one gigawatt, covering 30 to

40% of the island's electrical energy consumption and driving local economic activity through production, maintenance, and repairs.

To conclude, an upcoming cooperation project, called Remote, involving the La Reunion region and other outermost regions, was underlined. It will aim to address energy autonomy challenges. The initiative will develop coordinated local roadmaps and share best practices across regions within European frameworks. This collaboration is expected to advance green energy development and economic growth over the next 10 to 15 years.

- **Introduction by Claire Helly, Project & Policy Officer at the CPMR Islands Commission**

Claire Helly, Project & Policy Officer at the CPMR Islands Commission introduced the TwInSolar project, expressed gratitude for ongoing support and set the scene regarding Islands and Energy transition context:

- The **Clean Energy Transition** can be considered as a response from the European Union to two key imperatives: the climate crisis and strategic concerns stemming from Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This situation has accelerated the EU's green deal efforts, which include two major initiatives, 'Fit for 55' and 'Repower EU.' These initiatives set ambitious 2030 targets aiming for at least a 55% reduction in CO2 emissions and increasing renewable energy sources to at least 42.5% within the EU.
- **Islands face specific constraints** including underdeveloped grids requiring significant investment, limited land and marine use competition, small market sizes that challenge investor attraction, and a lack of specialized renewable energy workforce. Legal frameworks at EU and national levels are often inadequate for island realities. Despite these challenges, islands possess unique opportunities for the clean energy transition due to abundant renewable resources like solar, maritime, and wind energy, as well as strong community involvement.
- Islands' smaller size and engaged communities make them ideal for **testing innovative clean energy approaches, presenting opportunities to reduce carbon emissions, increase energy autonomy, and enhance resilience**. The green transition fosters green jobs, innovation, economic diversification, lower energy prices, and addresses energy poverty and social inclusion. This transition is part of a holistic and sustainable territorial vision beyond just installing solar panels, including sustainable projects like greener transportation and tourism.
- **Islands face unique territorial challenges** such as climate change vulnerability and regional concerns like those in the Baltic Sea. The importance of EU funding mechanisms such as Horizon Europe and public-private partnerships in fostering innovation and

investment was emphasized. Sharing best practices and innovative approaches through exchanges is critical to build knowledge and advance island energy projects.

- **Multi-level governance and territorially sensitive policies are essential** for islands and outermost regions, aligning with the mission of the CPMR and its Islands Commission. Engagement with participants from various island and non-island regions such as French Polynesia, Canary Islands, Brittany, and networks was encouraged to foster diverse input and collaboration moving forward.

Presentation of best practices & opportunities at EU level

- **Presentation by Omar Caboni, Project Manager, Caloforte Municipality, San Pietro (Sardinia)**

The presentation began with an introduction to the energy community project on the island of Kesh in Croatia and Sardinia. **Omar Caboni**, Project Manager, Caloforte Municipality, San Pietro (Sardinia), shared the ongoing energy management experience in San Pedro:

- Their energy management project started in 2019 as part of the European **REACT project**, which created a pilot energy community involving 30 homes equipped with photovoltaic (PV) systems. The project aimed to raise awareness of energy use amid significant seasonal population changes on the island, which range from 6,000 to 60,000 people.
- **The project financed technologies to support energy independence**, including smart meters across public and private buildings, a 1 MW PV plant, and systems to store energy at the household level. The aim was to balance fluctuating energy demand and promote self-produced renewable energy use. The community used hourly data to monitor energy consumption and production, incorporating high-efficiency heat pumps and domestic battery storage. This enabled participants to evaluate energy costs and optimize the use of self-produced renewable energy. Data visualization showed portions of energy purchased from the grid, stored in batteries, and directly used from renewable sources. The project fostered awareness and encouraged maximizing renewable self-consumption while minimizing grid energy purchases.
- **Top-performing homes demonstrated nearly complete autonomy** by buying less than 1% of energy from the grid. The project introduced a paradigm shift towards energy management based on a virtual power plant concept, recognizing roles as consumers and prosumers. The island, connected to the mainland by submarine cable, allows precise balancing of production and demand. Community engagement grew from 80 to 500 members through multiple public meetings, indicating strong local interest in renewable energy participation. The energy community manages numerous small-scale energy resources including household PV systems and a 1 MW PV plant, with plans to add wind



turbines to cover about half of the island's energy demand. Strategies also include managing electric vehicle loads and controllable appliances like heat pumps.

- **The project integrates production and consumption data into a centralized management platform**, facilitating energy balancing and active citizen participation in how and when they manage their energy needs. Each household is equipped with monitoring systems linked through an IoT platform, providing residents detailed insight into their energy flows and economic impacts, enabling better informed decisions on energy use. The platform also helps residents capitalize on Italy's shared energy incentive schemes, enhancing the community's economic benefits from renewable energy generation and consumption. Currently, the energy community comprises 500 members, with ongoing development to formalize standards and operational modes. The project aims to expand membership and attract investment to generate significant cash flows that support energy awareness, lower costs, and address energy poverty.
- Future plans include doubling the community size and securing around six million euros in investments to improve energy access for all inhabitants, enabling them to afford electricity and promote smart island development. The initiative aims to tackle energy poverty and ensure equitable electricity access for the island's residents, continuing progress toward becoming a smart energy island while fostering broad community participation.
- **Presentation by Joana Ferreira Rita, Regional Director for Energy, Government of the Azores**

Joana Ferreira Rita, Regional Director for Energy, Government of the Azores, introduced the energy context of the Azores, a Portuguese archipelago of nine isolated islands highly dependent on fossil fuels, with nearly 90% reliance on external sources.

- The main energy consumers are electricity production (37%) and land transportation (32%). The islands have integrated **34% renewables into their electricity mix as of 2024**, including wind, hydro, and notably geothermal energy, which accounts for 20% of electricity consumption—the only region in Portugal to utilize geothermal power.
- **The Azores have developed an energy strategy** targeting 2030, focused on clean, reliable, and competitive energy. Key objectives include reinforcing security of supply, reducing energy costs, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions. The strategy is guided by principles of energy efficiency, electrification, and decarbonization, aligned with European directives. The plan sets ambitious goals such as a 50% reduction in fossil-gas use compared to 2010, a 25% increase in energy efficiency in land transport, and reaching 70% renewable electricity by 2030, which would result in a 30% reduction in primary energy consumption and a 40% cut in greenhouse emissions. Several ongoing incentive

schemes support these targets, including financial incentives for acquiring renewable energy production and storage equipment, and promoting electric mobility through incentives for electric vehicles and public charging points.

- **The Azores participate actively in European projects to promote energy efficiency and electric mobility** and conduct awareness campaigns and training across the islands to engage all sectors of society. A key financial incentive funds photovoltaic solar systems for self-consumption, supported by a 19-million-euro budget from the recovery and resilience plan. It covers 100% of eligible expenses up to 1,500 euros per kilowatt installed and offers upfront support via a three-phase process: submission of investment intention, post-installation invoice and proof, followed by final receipt verification. This structure aims to ensure inclusivity by enabling beneficiaries without initial financial capacity to participate. Eligibility applies to individuals and legal entities, excluding public administration, with specific limits for businesses. The incentive's phased approach allows beneficiaries to get approval before purchasing equipment, facilitating access regardless of upfront funds. This strategy combats energy poverty effectively. The program successfully met its target of installing 11.2 megawatts by March, prompting early closure of applications and a request to the European Commission to increase the budget due to high demand.
- Additionally, **a storage system incentive was launched** in July with an 85% subsidy up to 4,000 euros, funded by the same plan, aiming to further reduce energy bills and boost renewable energy use among households and companies.
- **Joana Ferreira Rita** emphasized that these financial incentives aim to reduce energy costs, combat energy poverty, increase renewable energy usage, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions, **fully supporting the Azores' energy strategy**.

Q&A

During the Q&A, an audience member asked about the potential role of crowdfunding in the Azores' energy transition, considering the current 100% subsidies that limit private financing, and if there are plans for cascading use of geothermal energy for heating, cooling, or agriculture. **Joana Ferreira Rita** responded that while crowdfunding has not been used yet, it might be a viable option in case European Commission funding is not increased. She also mentioned the possibility of cross-funding via energy communities, though experience is limited. Regarding geothermal energy, the region currently uses it only for electricity generation, but there is potential for cascade use, such as heating or cooling in agriculture and industry, particularly dairy farms. This area has not been explored locally but could gain priority as the European Union increasingly supports geothermal projects. **Joana Ferreira Rita** underlined ongoing collaboration with regional authorities on related projects and expressed openness to further discussions and future initiatives in this field.

The session then transitioned to the second part of the workshop, focusing on an overview of EU-level sustainable energy policies, emphasizing its strategic importance in the current EU mandate and forthcoming legislation.

Opportunities and state of play at EU level

- **Presentation by Guglielmo Migliori, Senior Policy Officer for Energy, CPMR**

Guglielmo Migliori, Senior Policy Officer for Energy, CPMR, introduced an overview on EU energy policy focusing on its impact on European peripheral, maritime, island, and outermost regions. He highlighted the current energy transition phase marked by geopolitical fragmentation, energy insecurity, climate urgencies, and clean technology competition.

- **Regions are not only observers but active co-drivers** in the EU's clean and competitive future, underpinned by climate neutrality goals for 2050 and a reduction of dependency on Russian fossil fuels. The EU's energy policy framework includes key legislative packages such as the Fit for 55 Package, the RepowerEU plan, and the Energy Union strategy, alongside updated renewable energy directives and emission trading expansions. Priority areas include accelerating renewable development, modernizing infrastructure, consumer protection, affordability, and diversifying energy sources to enhance strategic autonomy.
- **The Clean Industrial Deal**, launched recently, serves as a strategic business plan to balance decarbonization, innovation, and competitiveness, supported by the Action Plan for Affordable Energy and other upcoming legislative initiatives. The Clean Industrial Deal is structured around six strategic pillars:
 - 1) Affordable energy focusing on lowering costs and expanding grids.
 - 2) Boosting demand for low-carbon products through reforms, decarbonization accelerators, and voluntary product labelling.
 - 3) Financing the transition with a mobilization of 100 billion euros via public-private funds and new tools like the Clean Tech Guarantee Facility.
 - 4) Circularity and materials security, ensuring critical resource supply and circular economy measures.
 - 5) Global action and international partnerships to support clean energy deployment in neighbouring regions.
 - 6) Skills and community focused on upskilling and reskilling local workforces aligned with ongoing initiatives such as the Net Zero Industry Academies.
- Looking forward, the EU expects **several important developments shaping energy policy**: Q2 2025 will see the release of the 2040 climate target and a roadmap to end Russian energy imports, reinforcing regional roles especially for areas with limited renewable

capacity. The Clean Energy Investment Strategy will align capital flows to green objectives. By Q3 2025, the Citizen Energy Package will empower local communities and consumers, highlighting the green transition as a social contract. Broader efforts through 2026 include new bioeconomy strategies, carbon border adjustments, energy security frameworks, and modernization of electricity infrastructure, emphasizing the need for regional coordination.

- **Guglielmo Migliori discussed the opportunities and risks EU energy and industrial agendas present for European regions**, especially peripheral maritime, island, and outermost territories. He emphasizes the importance of integrated planning across energy, industry, skills, and infrastructure, noting some omissions like insufficient focus on ports, transport, and maritime industries. The CPMR highlighted concerns over lack of territorial impact assessments, risk of funding concentration in large hubs, and the need for regional quotas in funding mechanisms like the Innovation Fund and Hydrogen Bank to ensure inclusive implementation. Concerns raised include the incomplete strategic framework due to launching the Clean Industrial Deal before finalizing 2040 intermediary targets, potential uneven access to funding, and overlooking socio-economic and geographic specificities of certain territories. While mobilizing substantial funding (100 billion euros) is positive, practical mechanisms are needed to enable small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in peripheral maritime regions, to benefit from instruments such as corporate power purchasing agreements and the European hydrogen bank.
- **There is also a noted absence of regional dimension in certain policies**, which the CPMR intends to monitor and advocate for. The presentation recognized workforce reskilling and upskilling as crucial for industrial transformation and the green and digital transition, calling for concrete measures to prevent widening skill gaps between central and peripheral maritime regions. It stressed the need for alignment and integration of various skill initiatives with regional consultations to enhance effectiveness.
- **The CPMR underscored that regions and municipalities are essential partners in executing Europe's energy and industrial transitions**, as they are focal points for energy production, clean tech manufacturing, skills development, and direct policy impact. The session concluded by reaffirming the importance of including the perspectives of peripheral maritime regions and islands in the energy transition to ensure inclusive policymaking.
- **Presentation by Katharina Krell, Thematic Expert – Greener Europe and Connected Europe, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform.**

Katharina Krell, Thematic Expert, Interreg Europe programme, introduced how regional energy agencies can use interregional policy learning to advance the energy transition in local contexts. The intervention also highlighted the importance of policy learning and peer reviews.

- **Interreg Europe focuses on improving regional development policies through experience exchange and good practice transfer among local and regional authorities** within the EU and partner countries. The program now includes seven new partner states, signalling political commitment to cohesion policy priorities such as smarter, greener, and more connected Europe. Besides project funding, the program offers a policy learning platform as a second pillar. This platform is not just an online database; it supports the use of project results throughout the programming period. Over 90% of European regions and thousands of partners are engaged, particularly in green initiatives, enabling widespread policy learning and knowledge sharing. The policy learning platform capitalizes on project results by making good practices accessible to all local and regional policymakers, whether or not they are directly involved in Interreg projects. The platform offers services validated by experts to enhance regional visibility and organizes thematic events on key topics like European funding, green infrastructure, and digital strategies.
- **Katarina Krell** introduced a **practical example from Madeira**, showcasing an energy self-sufficient hotel that meets its thermal and electrical needs via solar technologies, while also benefiting nearby buildings. This example illustrates how renewable energy can integrate with local grids without causing stress and supports sector coupling by powering electric mobility to decarbonize transport. The discussion moved to peer reviews, a form of expert support offered by the policy learning platform. Peer reviews provide personalized advice by facilitating exchanges among like-minded regional policymakers rather than prescribing solutions. The process involved preparing a simple application, background information, and moderated sessions where regional stakeholders and external peers share experiences, including successes and failures. A key phase of peer reviews is co-creating targeted policy recommendations addressing specific territorial challenges. Over two days, participants discussed strategic questions and produce actionable policy guidance. Follow-up activities ensured these recommendations translate into local plans, as demonstrated with a regional council addressing early school dropout following their peer review.
- Then, **Katarina Krell** shared the **example of Cyprus's energy agency**, which led a peer learning journey on developing skills and strategies for energy transition across clustered small villages. The agency also focused on empowering citizens through energy communities rather than relying on large companies. This involved organizing peer reviews with experienced European regions to build local stakeholder engagement and regulatory frameworks. Following peer review insights, Cyprus arranged a study visit to southern Germany to learn from established energy communities. This experience built trust and understanding, leading to the Cypriot government launching a support program for energy communities. The program included feasibility studies and legal setup with a dedicated budget to promote smaller renewable projects owned by citizens, illustrating successful policy learning platform impact. The peer review process facilitated stakeholder collaboration in Cyprus, helping design the regulatory framework and

keeping key actors engaged. The emphasis of the platform's support is on moderating and facilitating these policy learning journeys rather than direct project management, enhancing regional cooperation and capacity building. Additional formats like online matchmaking services complement peer reviews, offering flexible tailored support. The session concluded by encouraging participants to consider how the program's support can address their regional energy transition challenges, emphasizing that peer reviews are always open and accessible independently of Interreg funding calls. An interactive segment invited workshop participants to identify major challenges to energy transition in their regions. Responses highlighted limited space, funding access, technical issues, and social acceptance. Discussions noted differing goals among actors can hinder progress, reinforcing the value of community engagement and tailored policy support through platforms like Interreg Europe.

- To conclude, the presentation discussed the **support expected from the EU to address challenges, highlighting financial aid, stakeholder connections, legal backing, stronger policies, access to expertise, and tailored regional policies**. Emphasis was placed on territorial proofing of EU policies to align with local specificities. Key themes included technical and financial support, best practice exchanges, and recognizing the unique needs of different territories.
- **Conclusions by Mathieu David, TwinSolar coordinator, Head of Laboratory PIMENT, University of La Reunion**

Mathieu David, TwinSolar coordinator, Head of Laboratory PIMENT, University of La Reunion, gave a concluding overview, thanking speakers and attendees. He emphasized the two main objectives of the TwinSolar project: **enhancing energy autonomy of territories** and **fostering better integration within the European research area**. He highlighted the importance of aligning European, national, and local policies and ensuring stakeholders share common energy transition goals. **Citizen involvement** was identified as crucial for project success, as technical solutions exist but require public engagement to demonstrate added value both economically and environmentally. **Citizen engagement was reinforced as a fundamental aspect** observed across best practices shared during the workshops. Upcoming events were announced including a final conference to showcase TwinSolar project results. The session concluded with thanks extended to participants, speakers and interpreters for their contributions to the workshops. Organizers encouraged ongoing communication and collaboration for future events, expressing appreciation for the engagement shown throughout the project and workshops.