



ACTIVITY REPORT

2019



RURENER



2019 marked the end of the mandate of RURENER's Secretariat under Tibor's presidency and elections were held during the General Assembly in September. This activity report is the result of everyone's work which is why we want to start with the presentation of the governing bodies of RURENER.

Board of Directors 2016-2019

Tibor Kőcse, Mayor of the village of Nagypáli – Hungary

Philippe Cortès, CEO of Granges Solaires – France

Vassiliki Kazana, Professor at the International Hellenic University – Greece

Aline Brachet, Consultant for APPIA-CAPACITY – France

Jacky Aignel, Mayor of the municipality Le Mené – France

Kostas Sioulas, Centre for Renewable Energy Sources (CRES) – Greece

Christos Eliades, President of PESAP – Cyprus

Eric Malatray, Director of the Communauté d'agglomération Ouest Rhodanien – France

Frédéric Praillet, in charge of European affairs at the APERe – Belgium

Board of Directors 2019-2022

Panagiotis Paschalidis, Mayor of the municipality of Prespes – Greece

Vincent Turpinat, Mayor of the municipality of Jarnages – France

Philippe Cortès, CEO of Granges Solaires – France

Vassiliki Kazana, Professor at the International Hellenic University – Greece

Aline Brachet, Consultant for APPIA-CAPACITY – France

Stéphane Hartman, Sustainable Development department at the Province of Luxembourg - Belgium

Secretariat of RURENER



Panagiotis Paschalidis, mayor of Prespes (Greece) is the successor of Tibor Kőcse, mayor of Nagypáli (Hungary) as RURENER President.



Vincent Turpinat, mayor of Jarnages (France) became vice-president of RURENER, representing the Creuse department and the broader French Massif central in the network.



Philippe Cortès (France) starts a new mandate as vice-president, ensuring the follow-up of RURENER's projects in particular involving France.



Vassiliki Kazana (Greece) takes back her position as Secretary of the network, including the development of European projects and the growth of RURENER in Eastern Europe.



Aline Brachet (France) also starts a second mandate as Treasurer, relying on her good knowledge of the network and its resources and needs.

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Twelve months have passed by and it feels like 2019 had just began while it is already over. Let's take a look at what we did this year...



The news of 2019!

Welcome of Théo!

At the end of the year, the RURENER family grows with the hiring of Théo to conduct the COLEOPTER project. From now on, RURENER will count at least 1,6 full time equivalent. We are delighted to welcome Théo to the team. With his technical background and strong interest for territorial dialogue and European cooperation, he will be a perfect match with Céline the network's coordinator.



New members

Kispáli, Hungary

Kispáli is a small village of about 200 inhabitants located in the North-West of Hungary. Its landscape is typical of the Zala county with a rich biodiversity and very low population density. Despite its humble size and inspired by the neighboring village of Nagypáli, the village of Kispáli decided to be part of the change towards a more sustainable society. Cooperation is at the heart of the village strategy: being small is not a weakness. Gain visibility, share experiences with other rural territories of Europe, that's what Kispáli is expecting from the RURENER network.

Diputación d'Ávila, Spain

Located in the center of Spain the diputación d'Ávila – or Ávila province – is composed of three parts: the north (flat lands, sedimentary rocks), the center (high mountains of the Sistema central chain, pine and oak forests) and the south (warmer climate, orchards). From one part to the other, the climate varies very much. The territory counts 248 municipalities, most of them being under 300 inhabitants making the Ávila province one of the less populated in Spain. Today, local renewable energy production covers 26% of local consumptions, mainly from wind power (294 wind turbines). Taking part in European projects and being heard at the European level are driving the Ávila province to become a member of the network, almost 10 years after the territory was first introduced to the RURENER project (2008-2011).

Province of Luxembourg, Belgium

The Province of Luxembourg is at the extreme South of Belgium, sharing its borders with Luxembourg and France. Since 2008, the Sustainable Development Department of the Province is in charge of building territorial projects and offer solutions to preserve the quality of life of its citizens, promote the use of local renewable resources and a rational use of energy and resources and to mobilize citizens in the dynamic called "PEP's Lux". The Province aims at becoming a positive energy territory by 2050, which can only be possible if everyone is on board. Past connections with RURENER and the will to find new opportunities to share the Province's initiatives and the learn from others in Europe were the drivers for the Province to become member of the network.

Welcoming new members every year, RURENER is growing steadily which enriches the exchanges of experiences and opens new cooperation and project opportunities. And growth means more work to ensure every member finds its own interest in being part of the network. It is an everyday challenge that is also necessary to build new projects fitting the needs of the members, at the heart of our network.



Other news in 2019

In 2019, Macéo who hosted us until then decided to move out of its offices. It was the opportunity for us to move our headquarters to Epicentre Factory, a co-working center located 5 rue Saint Dominique in Clermont-Ferrand (63000), France. This new headquarter is in line with RURENER's values and offers a shared working space, where exchanges are the spirit and the diversity of coworkers are the soul. We are always stronger together!

Where you saw us in 2019

Events

European Days for the Energy Transition – Dunkirk (France), January 28th-30th

RURENER organized a discussion on local governance and territorial dialogue to conduct the energy transition during the 20th edition of the European Days for the Energy Transition. Around the table were Philippe Cortès, vice-president of RURENER, Stéphane Hartman, director of the Sustainable Department Cell of the Province of Luxembourg in Belgium and Josep Subirana from the municipality of Avià in Catalonia. Three experiences of the challenges and added value of involving local



citizens, experts and non-experts in the definition and conduct of the transition locally. Building on past projects such as the Citizen Climate Assembly or on approaches of public-private partnerships, the panelists shared their vision of an integrated transition with an audience of elected representatives, technicians and experts. An enriching experience, without mentioning the participation in other sessions organized by different entities.

Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development – Milan (Italy), February 14th



A fellow member of the European Countryside Movement, EuroGites, asked RURENER to present the Lands of Study initiative as part of the Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development (STRD) event. A good opportunity for us to share the Lands of Study idea with professionals in the tourism sector and to promote the offer at the European level. It also gave us inspiration for the development of the offer and improvements for the next editions. Once again, it proved how energy is a very transversal challenge. Along with a place in the panel of the conference, a poster was put up presenting the key aspects of the Lands of Study offer.

Smart Eco-social village Conference – Brussels (Belgium), February 21st-22nd

The Smart Eco-Social Village initiative emerges from the European Parliament that asked for a project to explore the potential of villages in Europe to be leaders of the transition, focusing on energy, tourism, digital technologies and much more. The event took place at the European Parliament and, after presenting the project, the floor was given to local representatives so they could share their experience and needs. A discussion followed in which RURENER underlined the importance of a transversal approach to really support rural development. A good opportunity to give a voice to rural territories, from the RURENER network but also far beyond! The Members of the European Parliament who hosted the event also support the making of a European Rural Agenda and were willing to further explore the ways to support rural development better. The upcoming European elections may, however, slow-down the dynamic. More than ever we will have to be present at the European level and through the European Countryside Movement to make sure it does not get forgotten.



Europe Day – Brussels (Belgium), May 9th



As a European network, we had to celebrate Europe Day... And we did! For those who did not know, May 9th is the day of signature of the Schuman declaration (1950), proposing a union around the production of coal and steel, setting the ground to what was to become the European Union. We were at the Schuman roundabout in Brussels along with other European networks and organizations to present our work and share our visions of the Union.

European Sustainable Energy Week – Brussels (Belgium), June 17th-21st

The meeting of the year on energy in Brussels is without a doubt the European Sustainable Energy Week – or EUSEW – that took place at the end of June. This year we shared a stand at the EUSEW Energy Fair with the European Countryside Movement, presenting on the one side the pilot territories of the RURENER network and on the other side how these concrete examples should nurture the upcoming programming period of the European Union. We also had the chance to encounter the advisor who followed the RURENER project back in 2008 who was extremely happy to see that the project did find a way to live on and continue to promote European cooperation for rural territories. As the previous year, the lack of local elected representatives was a bit disappointing even though expected, since the conferences are done in English making it less accessible for non-English speakers (meaning many people, and not just in rural areas).



RURENER General Assembly – Brussels, Natural Park of Gaume (Belgium), September 19th-21st

The annual RURENER event was special this year as we celebrated the end of the “2017 Year of Innovation for Rural Energy” project. The event started at the European Parliament in Brussels before heading to the Natural Park of Gaume for a field study tour and the launch of the first tour in a Land of Study. The General Assembly took place at the end of the event, electing the new board of directors presented at the beginning of this report. As every year, the event is a very important moment for us, a special time when the members of the network can meet and share. A large thank you to all participants, we cannot wait to see you next year!



Territorial Startups – Figeac (France), September 26th

Taking the opportunity of being in the South of the Massif central (France), we gave a hand to Figeacteurs who organized the “Start-up de territoires” event (Territorial startups). RURENER was in charge of moderating a workshop on the development of Figeac EnR, a local startup willing to development solar PV on the territories with the participation of local citizens and public authorities. The workshop questioned the possible development for the startup after a first investment in solar panels, the communication aspects and the visibility of the startup for local people. A very good example that could be transferred to many other startups who made a first investment in renewables but don’t know how to continue, on what economic model to rely, how to be recognized by local entities... A similar workshop may be organized during the General Assembly in 2020.



Signature of ERDF agreement Sudoe programme – Santander (Spain), October 3rd



After the approval of the COLEOPTER project by the Interreg Sudoe programme (see below), we went to Santander to sign the ERDF grant agreement and officialize the beginning of the project that will be structuring for RURENER in the next 3 years. We were very proud to stand there along the other project leaders of this call. A big step for RURENER!

Kick-off meeting of the COLEOPTER project – Cartagena (Spain), October 15th- 16th

On October 15th, the COLEOPTER is officially starting! All the project partners meet in Cartagena, Spain to have the kick-off meeting. It is the occasion to meet one another, reassert the general organization of the project, the tools and deadlines and to discover the city of Cartagena where an outstanding welcoming is expecting us. The kick-off meeting was a real success thanks to the energy of all partners and their strong involvement in the project since the very beginning.

Besides the presentation of the project's work packages, communication tools and financial aspects, we take some time to visit the recreation center of Tallante, one of our four demonstrator buildings. It is such a perfect occasion to take a picture before going back home and getting to work!



Field Study tours

ENER'Gaume

The annual meeting is, as usual, the occasion for a field study tour. This year we inaugurated the Land of Study of the Natural Park of Gaume in the South of Belgium. A very rich programme with many sites to visit and fruitful discussions. We started the tour with the visit of Recybois, a pallet factory using the wood throughout its production chain, from sawdust to pellets. A circular economy model that pays for the company that uses the heat and electricity to power its own buildings and sell the extra to the grid. The next step is to sell the extra directly to the neighboring companies so the energy could be entirely produced and consumed locally. The next stop was the heat network at the swimming pool in Virton powered with pellets produced by Recybois. Our guide shared the mistakes made in the designing of the pool and the savings they could make by optimizing the process. Not only good practices are good to share, mistakes are important lessons for



who wants to build a similar project. Finally, we stopped the Rawez farm, where a miscanthus plant was grown to feed a heater for the farm and catering service. It raised many questions among the participants both on the conditions to grow the plant and the possible risks it can have and on its calorific power to use as heat fuel.

On the next day, we first learned about the project led by the Natural Park of Gaume regarding promotion of local food, support of local renewable energy development and awareness raising. Then we went on a tour to visit the permaculture gardens. The afternoon was dedicated to a workshop on monitoring-evaluation of impact to assess the results of the “2017 Year of Innovation for Rural Energy” project after what we went to Han’s Hall to learn about this original Hall combining a farmer’s market on Fridays, professional insertion trainings, a catering service, room renting and more. An inspiring idea to address social, economic and environmental challenges in rural communities of today. The last day was dedicated to the General Assembly meeting and a workshop on the building or pursuit of cooperation among territories of Europe. Two days and a half from which we go back home full of ideas and... energy!



Let’s cooperate in Creuse



The cooperation project “Let’s sort our energies!” starts at the end of the year 2019, with the meeting of the two territories involved, first in Mende (Lozère department) then in the East of the Creuse department in France. The goal of the project is to reduce waste and to promote the use of local resources. The visit in Creuse is composed of three sites: the Positive Energy village of Bussière Saint Georges, the anaerobic biogas digester on the Paternostre farm and the saving of waste energy in the thermal station of Evaux-les-Bains. At the end of

the day, there is no question that what is now considered “waste” can be an incredible (and profitable!) resource. After this first tour, time to find together solutions for the sustainable development of our rural territories!

Projects

2017, Year of Innovation for Rural Energy

The project ended at the end of October 2019 and concluded a very fruitful period for RURENER. This project allowed us to build expertise, expand the network and develop new tools and approaches for rural territories that are committed or want to commit to the energy transition to ensure a more sustainable future. The project was designed around 4 components, each successfully conducted and rich in lessons to learn:

- Monitoring-evaluation local energy and climate policies’ impacts is a key element to design and adapt local policies but it’s hard to compare from territory to another because of the lack of consistency in the data, even rather “basic” data such as energy production and consumptions

FINISHED

- Cooperation Europe took some time to start due to the time needed to build a partnership and a project. It accelerated in 2019 with the pressure of the end of the European programming period, in particular for the Leader program. Cooperation is not a priority for territories and the right rhythm must be found to make sure the project moves on as scheduled.
- Lands of Study also took some time to start concretely due to the first part dedicated to the analyze of the existed offer and demand of field study tour and then due to the difficulty to find territories meeting the excellence criteria of a Land of Study. Nevertheless, the first tour conducted in the Land of Study of the Natural Park of Gaume was a success and motivated others to follow the same path to be able to host visitors.
- The European influence of RURENER grew thanks to its participation in the European Countryside Movement, strengthening the voice of rural territories at the European level. Our best achievement was the resolution for a European Rural Agenda adopted by the European Parliament at the end of 2018 and the following propositions to detail the agenda that emerged throughout 2019.

ON GOING

COLEOPTER

The COLEOPTER project was approved for funding in June 2019 by the Interreg Sudoe programme and started in October 2019. The Rexel Foundation also decided to support the project and gave its approval in November 2019. The project will be running for three years, until September 2022. Its goal is to develop an integrated approach of energy efficiency in public buildings including the consideration of energy and water uses, the conduct of territorial dialogue to make sure the work done addresses the needs of future users along with the municipality and the use of the Building Information Modeling technology to build the work plans in each of the four demonstrator buildings.

SUBMITTED

ENERGAGE

The ENERGAGE project was submitted in September 2019 for funding by the H2020 programme. The ambition of the project is to exploit existing data on public buildings to help decision-makers in the refurbishment projects. The goal is to develop harmonized and standard tools to enable municipalities to compare one building to another either on the same territory or on different territories. RURENER's role would be to ensure municipalities' needs are well addressed in the building of the tools and to diffuse the tools and results broadly in Europe. In addition, RURENER will work on monitoring of the project to ensure its good quality and mitigate risks.

NEW SUBMISSION 2020

Lands of Study in Massif central

The project is to develop the Lands of Study approach in the Massif central area in the center of France by supporting municipalities developing their energy transition projects in all sectors (transport, tourism, local food...). The project was submitted a first time in the summer 2019 but it could not be considered until the feedback of the regions concerned. The project should be reexamined in the first semester of 2020 for a funding by the French National Fund for Territorial Planning (FNADT) and the Region Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

ON GOING

Let's sort our energies!

The project idea was validated by the programming committees in each territory and a project proposal has been submitted for LEADER funding by the project partners. The project started with the first meeting between territories in Lozère and Creuse in November 2019. The activities of the project will take place in 2020, including a waste and energy reduction in school restaurants and field tours for the elected representatives in two territories of Europe well advanced on the subject of waste reduction and use of local resources (Hungary and Finland).

RURENER indicators

Every year since 2017, RURENER informs monitoring indicators to see the evolutions of the network. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators are measured based on the association's results and a survey conducted every year during the General Assembly.

Quantitative measure

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Indicators				
Number of projects built	1	0	4	2
Number of projects selected for funding	1	0	0	2
Number of members	8 (?)	11	15	17
Membership fees		3 800€	7 800€	9 500€
Number of municipalities			310	795
Number of countries represented	4	5	5	6
Number of participations in EU events	0	1	3	8
Number of communications at EU level	0	2	2	2
Annual budget	23k€	23k€	55k€	47k€
Carbon footprint*	-	30,4t	7,6t	8,8t

*Updated in July 2020

The results this year show that RURENER is growing steadily, with a constant increase in members and diversification of countries represented. The Spanish and Portuguese partners of COLEOPTER will only become members in 2020 and are not counted in this table. The table also highlights that the place of the General Assembly influences a lot the carbon emissions, year 2017 corresponding to the travel to Cyprus. Other measures can be imagined to limit as much as possible the emissions.

Qualitative measure

The qualitative measure relies on the same survey shared every year during the general assembly meeting and now available on the RURENER website (under Networking -> Members' testimonies). As the previous years, the first reason for taking part in the RURENER General Assembly meeting is to take part in the sharing of experiences. Comes next conviviality, to initiate cooperation and to discover local food and culture. It comforts us on the importance of the quality of visits during the field tour and the time spent to know one another better and create non-virtual connections.

To the second question: what did you learn? The answers are very diverse, from the processes in the European Parliament to new project ideas, the possibility to combine economic, environmental and social challenges in our projects or even a new look at energy challenges. This is also reassuring; it shows the different assets that the event conveys.

About the question on what was missing, we got just one answer saying "more RURENER members". Indeed, sparing a few days to come to the General Assembly is not always easy and all the members of the network cannot make it. It pushes us to find new ways to help our members take part in the annual meeting (possibly through the Town twinning programme).

The fourth question is on the added value of being member of RURENER in General, answers are focused on the European anchorage that it provides and the fact to be partner of a network of other rural territories with which we can share challenges but also solutions.

Last but not least, what are the expectations from RURENER in the future? Answers are variable, from very specific and concrete expectations such as being part of the Lands of Study project or more tools to help territories conduct their transition and increasing participation in European projects to more transversal expectations such as be involved in the lobbying activity, open-up rural territories to Europe and look for more territories/projects to develop the network.

It is the first year that the influence of RURENER at the European level is discussed which is encouraging and shows that we must find ways to increase the participation of our members to our advocacy action. Also, and it reflects like in the past years even though it is less present, the growth of the network is of great interest for current RURENER members.

Money, money, money

With an annual budget of 46 713€, a little bit less than in 2018, RURENER is getting ready for the increase in budget in the coming years due to the COLEOPTER project. A bank loan associated with a loan by the French organism France Active that offers zero interest loans have already been negotiated at the end of 2019.

The financial report offers a deeper analysis of the expenses and revenues in 2019.

What's next?

With the hiring of Théo and the beginning of COLEOPTER, RURENER has more human power than ever! For 2020, the goal is to reinforce our network by facilitating the participation in the annual General Assembly meeting and offering more opportunities to our members, from European projects to European events or simply exchanges of experiences through improved communication channels. Our time will be focused on the COLEOPTER project which will allow us to reinforce our knowledge and involvement in the South West of Europe but also with private stakeholders such as the Rexel Foundation that is also supporting the project. Capitalization and dissemination of what is done in COLEOPTER will be one of our priorities. We also want to continue to develop European projects, involving the Eastern countries of Europe.

Last but not least, with the new visibility of the network and the challenges of the upcoming programming period at the EU level, we want to be involved and to involve our rural territories in the making of European policies, in particular related to the European Green Deal and Climate Pact. This involvement will be discussed during the collective times of the general assembly meeting in Prespes, Greece, on social media and in our Newsletter: Energetik Talk.

New challenges arise with the growth of RURENER, but we are ready for it. Every year, we strengthen our experience and the network, encouraging us to always offer more to all of you. 2019 was a very successful year and we are sure that 2020 will continue on the same path. Because now is the time to act, and rural territories and in the place!

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RURENER NETWORK



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