

## **ALBATROSS, COLIBRI OR EAGLE? HOW NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION SHAPE THE POTENTIAL OF RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMUNITIES**

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### **Extended Abstract**

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### **Abstract Summary**

National legislations for renewable energy communities (RECs) differ despite the similar European framework set by directives. Researchers have described RECs concepts and policy adoptions. Yet, the mechanisms driving country-specific implementation choices remain insufficiently understood. Therefore, we ask: Why do national legislation and political perspectives on RECs differ between countries operating under similar regulatory frameworks? Using a qualitative inductive approach, we analyse documents of the legislative process involving stakeholders and interest groups in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. In Austria, we find legislators and stakeholders to perceive RECs as “eagles”. They are considered positive development fostering participation in a renewable energy transition. In contrast, RECs are perceived as “albatrosses” in Germany. Their potential contribution to the electricity market is considered to be small. Instead, RECs are seen to increase complexity and add potential for civil litigation between market and private actors. In between the two extremes, RECs in Switzerland are perceived as “colibris”. Contrasts in the regulations and perceptions are substantiated using sets of justifications, which we identified as mechanisms in public consultation processes affecting policies. The combinations of justifications resulting from compromises shape how renewable energy communities and their potential are evaluated and enacted. Our work thus advances the understanding of how diverse REC policies and perceptions are shaped and how they influence the potential of RECs.

### **Presenting Author Biography**

Norman FRM Fauster is a research associate and PhD candidate at the Institute of Responsible Innovation, Sustainability and Energy (RISE-HSG) at the University of St. Gallen. His research combines quantitative and qualitative methods with interdisciplinary perspectives to examine citizen participation in the energy transition. His doctoral work focuses on renewable energy communities, their implementation, and their relevance for

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