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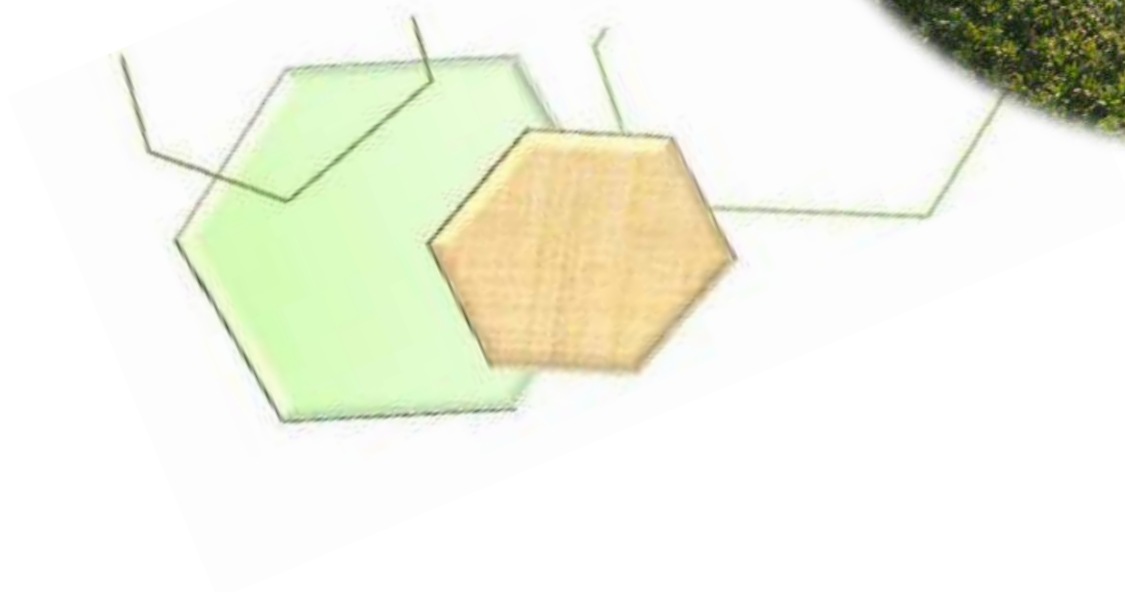
EAGER - Easing Agrophotovoltaics for Europe

Newsletter № 1

September 2024

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What is EAGER

[The EAGER project](#) is a European project funded by the INTERREG Europe Programme that facilitates the adoption of agro-photovoltaic systems across partner regions. By fostering a shared understanding of this technology, identifying best practices, and enhancing policy instruments, this project is paving the way for a greener future.

The expansion of renewable energies aims at meeting the energy demand of the EU while replacing fossil fuels, but it requires large areas of land. At the same time, food security is threatened by the impacts of climate change and a growing world population. **Agrophotovoltaics (APV) can mitigate the conflicting interests between agriculture and open space photovoltaic systems** for viable land, as it allows to produce energy and food at the same time on the same place through a combination of farming and solar generation with a total **land use efficiency of up to 186%**. This is why the EAGER project aims at improving policies **to ease APV in Europe**. It will enable the definition and set-up of favourable policy framework conditions for implementing APV as a praxis-oriented concept for achieving Greener Europe.

In the following pages, you will find interesting materials describing the overall context and objectives of the project as well as information on the latest developments and current events.

We shall keep you informed about our progress and key outcomes through the project website, thematic events, and newsletters.

Project at a glance

By generating a common understanding of APV concept and contexts, identifying, analysing and transferring good practices, changing behaviour among policy actors of the participating regions towards supporting and expanding APV in their regions, **9 policy instruments** will be improved by 2027. The 14 partners and 3 associated policy responsible authorities are committed to high quality and efficient exchange of experience and policy improvement, acknowledging that the topic of APV is multi-layered and complex. It considers the policy fields of energy, agriculture, spatial development and land use, with impacts on economic development, and has the potential to contribute to sustainability and energy security. Its novelty in the regions encourages out of the box thinking and an innovative interpretation of good practices in the broadest sense.

A few numbers



2,440,007 €
budget



01 Apr 2024-
30 Jun 2028



14 partners

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NEWS FROM THE CONSORTIUM

Kick-off Meeting of project EAGER

From 24th to 26th April, the Kick-off Meeting for [project EAGER](#) brought together the consortium from 9 countries, totaling 14 partners at the Technology Centre for Energy (TZE) in Ruhstorf an der Rott, Germany. The event was organized in a hybrid mode, allowing a wider audience to join the exciting event.



Date: 24th-26th April 2024

Location: Ruhstorf an der Rott, Germany

The meeting started with partner organisations presenting themselves, followed by an overview of the project's work plan by the Lead Partner TZE. During the workshop held on 25th April, the partners engaged in discussions centered around the methodology of the joint study, good practices, and organized future study visits. Additionally, a review of project communication was carried out by the Regional Energy Agency of Pazardzhik (REAP), and the Lead Partner provided insights into project management and reporting activities, which fostered constructive exchanges on administrative issues.

26th April, the second day started with an opening speech by the Mayor of Ruhstorf an der Rott, who extended a warm welcome to all the partners and stakeholders. The event continued with a wider presentation of the [EAGER project](#),

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that provided deeper insights into its objectives and scope. Each participating region then shared their policy instrument – presenting its main features and potential for improvement.

The Kick-off Meeting concluded with a renewed sense of commitment and enthusiasm among partners, giving the starting kick for a successful implementation of project EAGER.

NEWS FROM BULGARIA

First Stakeholders Meeting in Bulgaria of EAGER project

On the 28th of August, 2024, the First Bulgarian Stakeholders Meeting within the frame of [EAGER project](#) “[Easing AGrophotovoltaics for EuRope](#)” took place in Strelcha, Bulgaria. The event was organized by the [Regional Energy Agency of Pazardzhik \(REAP\)](#) and the [Municipality of Strelcha](#), partners in the [EAGER project](#), co-funded by the Interreg Europe Programme 2021-2027.



Date: 28th August 2024

Location: Strelcha, Bulgaria

Experts from [REAP](#) presented the project's main objectives and the upcoming activities and clarified what the agro-photovoltaic (APV)

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system means. It combines solar energy production with crop cultivation, thus producing both energy and food. APVs offer investment opportunities in this field to encourage local communities in the transition to renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture.

The [REAP](#) team explained that the main goal of the [EAGER project](#) is to facilitate the adoption of agro-photovoltaic systems across partner regions by fostering a shared understanding of this technology, identifying best practices, and enhancing policy instruments, this project will pave the way for a greener future.

During the meeting, an [Integrated Development Plan of Strelcha Municipality](#) was reviewed by the municipal team participating in EAGER. This plan is a strategic document of the municipality, developed with the strong involvement of local stakeholders, citizens and representatives of the local businesses. It is used to identify the current problems, needs and development potentials of the municipalities and settlements.

The following examples of agro-photovoltaics were presented:

- Agriculture - the dependence on solar radiation that connects the operation of photovoltaic systems with the processes that take place in agriculture;
- Livestock farming - in addition to agricultural production, the dual use of land can also include solar grazing;
- Honey bee hives - these can also be placed in the solar park together with grazing livestock.

The event concluded with a public discussion on the topic of APV, in which various stakeholders took part.

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NEWS FROM GERMANY

First EAGER Stakeholder Meeting in Germany

The first stakeholder group meeting was part of the Interreg Europe Project EAGER, which aims to accelerate the adoption of agri-photovoltaics (APV) in Europe and optimize the political framework governing this technology. The topics discussed during the meeting are intended to be disseminated throughout the region.



Date: 12th September 2024

Location: Ruhstorf an der Rott, Germany

The core of the stakeholder meeting focused on providing an overview of the project's current status along with the resulting next steps. Project Manager Agnes Frank began with a brief introduction to the project, emphasizing the importance of international learning and exchanging best practices among various project regions in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, and Ukraine. This exchange is particularly crucial for improving governance processes related to APV across national borders.

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Methodical Support for Policy Improvement

In the first presentation, Ben Färber from TZE discussed methodical support aimed at enhancing policies related to APV. He presented a detailed site analysis for Lower Bavaria, identifying opportunities, challenges, and possibilities for implementing APV. The findings from this analysis are intended to assist in determining the optimal locations for APV installations in the region. Following this, Fabian Eckbauer from Markt Ruhstorf provided insights into the practical implementation of APV projects, discussing the planning process, the creation of land use plans, and the significance of standards and procedures, as well as how the EAGER project specifically addresses policy improvements.

Good Practice Examples and Next Steps

Positive examples play a crucial role for both the project and policymakers in achieving their goals on a broader scale. Robert Hahn from TZE elaborated on good practice examples, presenting the criteria for selecting appropriate examples within the project, and showcased case studies from the Passau district. This led to discussions on other companies or initiatives that could be engaged as part of the project, fostering exchanges on relevant topics and challenges.

The preliminary analyses conducted as part of the EAGER project indicate significant potential for expanding APV in Lower Bavaria and broadly across Europe. However, numerous challenges have also been identified that must be considered. The project team is now collaborating with stakeholders to develop specific recommendations for policy and practice, aiming to disseminate these recommendations through their extensive network. The initial point of contact will be the "Integrated Rural Development ILE at Rott &

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Inn" cooperation, which consists of ten municipalities from the southern Passau district.

NEWS FROM ITALY

First Stakeholder Meeting in Imola, Italy

On 18 July 2024, the first Stakeholder Meeting within the [EAGER Project](#) took place, in presence, at Via Boccaccio no. 27, at the offices of the Nuovo Circondario Imolese, as well as remotely, through the online platform.



Date: 18th July 2024

Location: Imola, Italy

Mr. Marino Cavallo presented the EAGER project to all present, focusing on the fact that funding and subsidies from Europe are most useful when they are targeted and made known to stakeholders from the outset.

He then elaborated on the APV project topic, focusing on the combination of soil and photovoltaics and pointing out that the new legislation makes the combination possible.

He then proceeded with the presentation of the project partners and pointed out that the NCI is to develop one of the policy instruments and

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this will also serve to give more input to the Imola District Strategic Plan.

He finally specified that, starting from today's date, NCI's objective is to improve the ability to promote and motivate stakeholders for an ongoing collaboration on the development of project activities.

Immediately afterwards, the speeches began, and it can be said that all the speakers agreed that there is a need to increase information and training on APV projects in order to bring the topic to the attention of farmers, especially among the small farmers considered, above all to inform them of the potential of APV and also to inform them correctly on the procedures and installation costs, which are currently rather high and should be parametrised with their needs.

Some argued that, at present, there is a lack of concreteness on information and training and procedures, and pointed out that

1. There needs to be a willingness on the part of farmers to move towards APVs, which needs to be stimulated and
2. It is difficult to set up plants because of the authorisation limits, which are always too long.

Mr. Alessandro Scala of Coldiretti, a farmers' federation, says the associations are not against the APV but we must find solutions that respect agricultural production. Incentives only go to the few, especially the big companies. So, there is a need for information and training activities.

Andrea Arcangeli also maintains that the APV should not be an opportunity for speculation but an opportunity that requires information and training. Therefore the financial world, the banks, must also be sensitised to help small

farmers support investments in the installation of APV systems.

The participants in the NCI meeting focused their attention on pillars. NCI's position is to safeguard the land and possibly do some real photovoltaics. Then it is necessary to set a limit of what can be realised. In any case, a cultural discourse must be made explaining things exactly as they are from an economic, environmental and agricultural point of view. There is the problem of investment as argued by Arcangeli and above all that it is necessary to study financial channels to help small farmers and not just the big ones.

ConfAgricoltura Bologna hopes that the APV issue can be put in a positive light also in the light of the Eager project, which poses to support the territory in raising awareness.

Mr. Marino Cavallo closed the event by highlighting new opportunities and things to be done:

- involving public bodies with mayors and administrators
- identifying more and more incentives
- training credits
- financial aspects
- communicate good practices to make all stakeholders understand the importance of APV projects.

NEWS FROM SPAIN

First Stakeholder Meeting in Palencia, Spain

On September 24th, 2024, the First Spanish Stakeholders Meeting within the framework of the EAGER project took place in Palencia, Spain. The event was organized by ITAGRA CT and the

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Palencia Provincial Council, both partners in the EAGER project, co-funded by the Interreg Europe Programme 2021-2027.

During this meeting, a member of the ITAGRA CT team presented a summary of the EAGER project to the public. The presentation began by introducing the project partners and highlighting the participation of 14 institutions from 7 European countries. Following that, the concept of agrophotovoltaics (APV) was explained, along with the reasons why this project presents a promising opportunity to address the conflicting interests between agriculture and photovoltaic plants on arable land. The presentation also covered the objectives of the EAGER project and its methodology, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder participation throughout the project's 4-year duration.



Date: 24th September 2024

Location: Palencia, Spain

Additionally, the most relevant aspects of the Regional Study on the Province of Palencia were presented. The study demonstrated that Palencia has great potential for developing APV systems due to its favorable natural conditions (such as solar irradiance, stable weather, and vast land area), its strong farming traditions,

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and its well-developed power grid infrastructure, among other factors.

The discussion also touched on the Policy Instrument, as the Palencia Provincial Council is currently working on the "Agenda Rural Palentina (ARP)," a local strategy aligned with the 2030 Agenda goals. This ARP includes green energy initiatives, where APV could play a role.

Furthermore, two Good Practices identified so far were presented. One is "Fungisolar," an innovative project that involves growing mushrooms between the rows of photovoltaic panels at an electricity generation plant. The other is "CIFP San Gabriel," Spain's first agrivoltaic project, which involves installing solar panels on elevated structures above a vineyard to provide shade for the plants. Both examples were shared with the stakeholders to demonstrate that APV installations are feasible in the region.

Finally, the stakeholders shared their perspectives on APV. While recognizing the complexity of the subject, some stakeholders offered ideas on how this technology could be implemented in the region.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

First Study Visit in Lithuania, 9-10 October, 2024

The first Study Visit within the EAGER project will be organized on 9th and 10th of October, 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Agro-photovoltaic (APV) system presents a solution to the pressing need for increased solar energy capacity while resolving competition over land use. With the EU aiming for significant

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renewable energy expansion, APV can bridge land optimization difficulties by combining solar energy production with crop cultivation, therefore producing energy and food at the same time, while offering investment opportunities for partners in this area and fostering collaboration with local communities in their transition to renewable energy.

The EAGER project facilitates the adoption of APV across partner regions. By fostering a shared understanding of this technology, identifying best practices, and enhancing policy instruments, this project is paving the way for greener future.

If you want to join this study visit on APV topics, please contact the event organizer, the Lithuanian Innovation Centre at the following Email address: lic@lic.lt to register and for logistics support.

Preliminary Agenda of the event can be found [HERE](#).



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EAGER Partnerships and Communication Channels

The project includes a well-balanced mixture of partners coming from several main sectors: public authorities (local, regional and national), research institutions, regional development agencies, agriculture representatives, NGOs and energy agencies. Together we represent varied views across a range of stakeholders and interests providing competent knowledge and experience in the field of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and policy design. The partnership is characterized by a strong transnational character, covering nine nations within the Interreg Europe Program area, thus ensuring a good geographical and cultural coverage and relevant attention to the issues and needs of a wide range of institutional settings and establishments from European Countries.

University of Applied Sciences Landshut (TZE) - Lead partner , Germany		https://www.haw-landshut.de
Public Institution Lithuanian Innovation Centre (LIC), Lithuania		https://www.lic.lt
Rzeszow Regional Development Agency (RARR), Poland		https://rarr.rzeszow.pl
Agricultural and Agrifood Technological Center (ITAGRA), Spain		https://www.itagra.com
Palencia Provincial Council (PALENCIA), Spain		https://www.diputaciondepalencia.es
National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (NPA), Lithuania		https://nma.lrv.lt

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Nuovo Circondario Imolese
(NCI), Italy



<https://www.nuovocircondarioimolese.it>

Regional Energy Agency of
Pazardjik (REAP), Bulgaria



<https://reap-bg.eu>

Municipality of Strelcha
(STRELCHA), Bulgaria



<https://strelcha.bg>

Catholic University of Leuven
(KU Leuven), Belgium



<https://www.kuleuven.be>

Municipality of Ruhstorf an
der Rott (RUHSTORF),
Germany



<https://www.ruhstorf.de>

Provincial Development
Agency (POM) Flemish
Brabant, Belgium



<https://pomvlaamsbrabant.be>

Municipality of Bačka Palanka
(MBP), Serbia



<https://backapalanka.rs>

Institution "Zakarpattia
Regional Development
Agency" (ZRDA), Ukraine



<https://zakarpattia.agency>

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EDITORIAL

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