What is Community Power?
Community Power is about ordinary people participating in the production, storage and efficient use of the energy they consume every day. It is when citizens – often as part of a cooperative or other joint scheme – invest in energy projects in their communities. These energy projects range from renewable energy production, such as wind and solar, to energy savings projects, such as housing insulation. This makes communities energy independent – breaking their costly dependence on big energy companies, and reducing energy bills for local businesses and consumers. In short, bringing power to the people in every sense of the word.

The Community Power ownership structure is already working in several European countries. In Belgium, an energy cooperative called Ecopower has over 36,000 voting shareholders. Many of them receive energy directly from Ecopower’s wind turbines and solar installations, along with a financial return on their investment of up to 6%[^1].

Thanks to widespread investment from communities and private individuals, Germany has hugely increased its production of renewable energy in the past decade. Nearly a quarter of its electricity supply now comes from renewable resources. This is revolutionizing the energy market: the ‘big four’ energy firms now control less than 7% of renewable energy sources[^2]. In Denmark, over 40% of wind turbines are owned by cooperative groups[^3]. The result: a far more sustainable and ultimately cheaper energy system.

Why do we need it?
To prevent catastrophic climate change, improve our energy independence, and ensure a sustainable and secure energy supply, Europe needs to transform its power sector. To do this, we need to rapidly embrace renewable energy and embark on a widespread program of energy savings. The financial crisis, however, has reduced public investment in renewables and energy savings. Simultaneously, public opposition to renewables projects such as wind farms has grown. Combined with the fact that most big energy companies are wedded to traditional fossil fuel and nuclear energy, the necessary power transformation has stalled.

Community Power deals with these problems in three main ways.

1. Citizens and communities get directly involved and make decisions about their energy future, ensuring that people’s needs and commitments are placed before the needs of large energy companies. This means cheaper and cleaner energy.

2. By mobilizing people it provides a valuable new source of funds for the much-needed investment in renewables, storage and energy savings.

[^1]: http://www.rescoop.eu/rescoop-team/ecopower
3. It gives citizens meaningful control and a financial incentive to develop and get involved in renewables and energy efficiency. This reverses the 'not in my back yard' mentality, and helps ensure strong public support for sustainable energy across Europe.

**What will Friends of the Earth do?**

Friends of the Earth Europe wants to see Community Power spread all over Europe. With citizen participation and ownership, we will not only see a faster growth in renewables, but a more democratic and socially-just energy system. Our Community Power campaign will focus on five main objectives.

1. Identify, and work to overcome, legal and regulatory barriers to Community Power in the EU and member states, to make it easier for citizens and communities across Europe to transform their energy systems.

2. Push for ambitious, binding targets at EU level to make sure renewables and energy savings are taken seriously, giving governments strong reasons to support Community Power.

3. Use government and EU funds to better leverage and support private financial investment.

4. Build national and European coalitions to support and eventually develop Community Power.

5. Grow public support for Community Power, as more and more people see the financial and environmental benefits of getting involved.

In short, we want to create a Europe which is democratically, financially, socially, and legally supportive of Community Power, and build coalitions and movements to make it a reality across Europe.

**Some examples of Community Power**

- **Brighton Energy Cooperative** – British solar energy cooperative (EN)
- **Ecopower** – Flemish electricity cooperative (NL, FR, EN)
- **Enercoop** – French electricity cooperative (FR)
- **EWS** – German electricity and gas cooperative (DE)
- **Goiener** – Spanish solar energy cooperative (ES)
- **Middelgrunden Wind Farm** – Danish community-owned offshore wind farm (EN, DK)