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PRESS RELEASE

Local solar communities – a win-win solution

GEN-I presented the energy concept of local solar communities to interested representatives of municipalities and public organisations at an expert conference in Bled today. The company shared the valuable experience gained after the launch of the first such community in Ajdovščina, focusing on the main advantages of local solar communities: energy self-sufficiency, sustainable development and cost reduction.

Bled, 20 June – At a time when the energy market is being shaken by a number of changes, both economic and regulatory, local solar communities bring a whole new solution to managing electricity costs. Although solar power plants can contribute significantly to more predictable cost management, many people unfortunately lack the conditions to set up their own source of electricity from the sun. This is where local solar communities come in, through which municipalities can reap the full benefits of solar power plants for the operation of municipal buildings, local organisations, as well as for the surrounding population.

At today's conference, the experience of building the first local solar community was jointly presented by the representatives of GEN-I, GEN-I Sonce and the Municipality of Ajdovščina. The choice of speakers is not a coincidence, as the GEN-I Group and Municipality of Ajdovščina are pioneers in the development of solar communities in Slovenia. In late 2020, the first community solar power plant was set up in the village of Budanje, on the roof of the local primary school, to provide self-sustainable energy for locals living in seven residential houses. Based on the positive experience of this pilot project, this spring they built a real local solar community, combining solar power plants with a total area of 5,432 m^2 on as many as five buildings owned by the Municipality of Ajdovščina. In each year of operation, these solar power plants will generate 873,000 kWh of electricity, which is 510 tonnes of CO_2 saved per year. This will contribute to even greater green energy production and to the sustainable development of the municipality.

Using the example of the successfully established local Solar Community Ajdovščina, the experts shared with the audience practical experience and tips on how to use a local solar community to:

- **reduce energy costs** through more efficient management and use of solar energy;
- **reduce dependence on energy market fluctuations**;
- **enable a green breakthrough** and become a model for sustainable development;
- provide **a turnkey set-up of a local solar community**, encompassing everything from financing, installation, registration to management.

"Local Solar Communities represent a world where every individual and every business has access to clean, renewable energy. A local, self-sustaining community makes it possible to do just that. Whether it's a municipality, institution, large company or small household, everyone can participate and reap the benefits of locally generated energy. Municipal rooftops gain added value by becoming a source of energy that is always cheaper than that bought on the market. And since the electricity is shared within a narrower geographical area, network charges are also lower. At the same time, those who do not have adequate surfaces of their own, who have not been granted consent to set up their own power plant, or who find the investment too costly, can also become involved in the community. So everyone in the community wins," explains **Sandi Kavalič, Member of the GEN-I Management Board**, with regard to the main advantages of local solar communities.

The GEN-I Group can play an active role in the establishment of a local solar community with a comprehensive package of skills and services, from the construction of the panels to the organisation of the operation and the supervision of all systems throughout the lifetime of the plants. The fact that they have the right experience is underlined by the **President of the GEN-I Management Board, Maks Helbl**:

"Our subsidiary GEN-I Sonce is the largest provider of solar power plants in Slovenia. We have accumulated a wealth of experience over the years, and all our solutions are backed up by quality components from renowned manufacturers, processes certified to the highest standards and controls that allow for no compromise."
It is important to forecast electricity production and consumption as accurately as possible before building power plants. Thanks to the many diverse customers connected to the same community, it is possible, with the right planning, to optimise the solar community in terms of scale and power output so that the discrepancies between production and consumption are kept to a minimum. In this way, the energy from the plant can be distributed to several customers, where it is optimised, while at the same time the final customer does not experience excessive peaks or troughs.

Last but not least, local energy communities also help to **achieve the objectives of the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)** and are a real driving force of sustainable development. Local energy production is essential to promote renewable energy, spread energy democracy and reduce energy poverty.

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