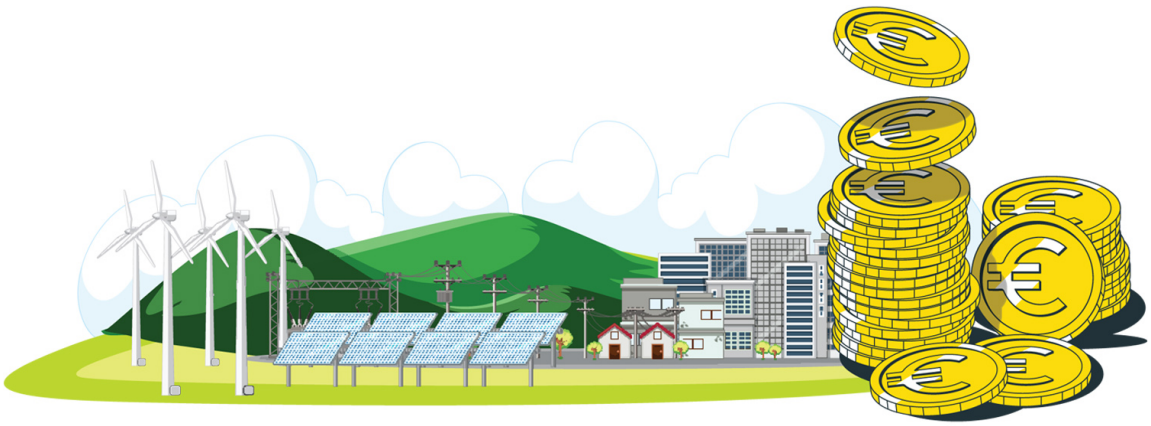
NEWSLETTER NO.6
September 2026



refinee | Co-funded by the European Union

Introduction

Welcome to the sixth edition of the REFINEE newsletter, your primary source of updates on the green transition for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As autumn approaches, our project is entering an exceptionally dynamic and critical phase.

This month, our focus is squarely on strengthening regional cooperation, ensuring project excellence, and expanding our collaborative network. In this edition, we introduce our main highlight: the official announcement of our upcoming high-level project events in Pula, Croatia, which will bring together European experts, regional authorities, and business stakeholders. We also look ahead to the crucial upcoming milestones that will shape the final stages of our joint initiative.

Your REFINEE Team

Highlights: Official Announcement of the REFINEE Events in Pula

We are thrilled to officially announce that Pula, Croatia, will host the next major milestone events of the REFINEE project this autumn. The historic coastal city will become the regional hub for sustainable energy finance, welcoming partners and stakeholders for back-to-back strategic gatherings.

Pula will set the stage for the 5th Consortium Meeting alongside the 2nd Multi-Stakeholder International Workshop and Focus Group. These events in Pula represent a decisive step forward in transforming theoretical financial models into actionable, regional green investments for SMEs, offering a unique space for direct collaboration between public and private sectors.

We warmly invite all stakeholders, partners, and interested participants to join us either in person or online by registering through the official REFINEE Event Registration Link.

The Pula Workshop – How to Enable Industrial Energy Communities?

The core theme of the 2nd Multi-Stakeholder International Workshop, taking place in Pula on October 27th, 2026, will be: "How to enable Industrial Energy Communities?" As Europe pushes for decentralized green energy, Industrial Energy Communities (IECs) are emerging as a game-changer. They allow businesses within industrial and business zones to collectively produce, share, and optimize renewable electricity.

However, widespread adoption is currently stalled by regulatory barriers, grid limitations, and complex financial structuring. This high-level workshop will bring together European policymakers, regional authorities, and industry pioneers to address these hurdles directly. Participants will explore practical solutions, share best practices from across the EU, and outline the necessary frameworks to turn the concept of industrial energy sharing into a widespread reality. The event in Pula will feature keynote presentations from top experts, including policy officers from the European Commission (DG ENER) broadcasting live from Brussels and industry specialists like Dr. Carlo Chittaro from Bluenergy Assistance S.r.l. Together with regional leaders from the Istrian Regional Energy Agency (IRENA), they will share actionable insights on industrial energy sharing, public-private funding models, and green transitions in heritage zones.

Deep Dive Focus Group – Tailoring Solutions for Istria's Business Zones

Following the main workshop on October 27th, the Focus Group session in Pula will translate these high-level solutions into immediate, local actions for the Istria region. While the international workshop establishes the broader "how-to" framework, this interactive session will focus heavily on the real-world application within local business zones.

Financial institutions, energy experts, regional development agencies, and local business owners will collaborate in a round-table format to map out the specific technical and legal requirements needed for Istria. By focusing on a general discussion about industrial zones, the focus group aims to drive the green transition forward. Ultimately, this will deliver a clear, actionable roadmap and localized financial schemes that empower local SMEs to legally and efficiently share clean energy.

Steering Progress – The 5th Consortium Meeting

Project partners will officially gather in Pula on the second day, October 28th, 2026, for the 5th REFINEE Consortium Meeting. This internal meeting is crucial for assessing mid-term achievements, aligning technical work packages, and monitoring project quality across all regional pilots.

During the sessions, partners from Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia will closely review the progress of localized financing schemes and ensure that all technical deliverables meet strict quality management standards. With the project entering its final phases, this meeting will serve to fine-tune our cross-border strategy, finalize policy recommendation drafts, and ensure a seamless rollout of the project's core toolkits for sustainable SME development.

Additionally, the project partners will already be focusing on the exploitation strategy during this session. The consortium will begin defining how the project's key results—such as the hybrid financial instruments and energy community frameworks—can be sustained and replicated across other European regions in the future. By initiating these discussions now, REFINEE ensures that its tools will remain impactful for SMEs driving the green transition well beyond the project's official lifespan.

REgional-based FINancing schemes to pool private investments in tailored Energy Efficiency plans for SMEs of strategic value chains

DESCRIPTION

REFINEE will improve the energy efficiency of SMEs in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Istria, helping companies to invest in sustainable solutions and reduce their environmental impact by promoting the transition towards a greener and more resilient economy

PROJECT DURATION 1 st October 2024 - 30 th September 2027

PROJECT BUDGET 1.572.328,63 €
(with co-financing of the LIFE-CET program of 95%)

CONTACT irena@irena-istra.hr www.irena-istra.hr