



Railcoop



MOBILITY



COLLECTIVE

Summary

Railcoop is the first rail cooperative in France, consisting of more than 14,000 shareholders, and was established following the liberalisation of the rail market. Railcoop wants to strengthen access to rail mobility to contribute to the energy transition. It aims at complementing the public service of the national train company SNCF with new lines, especially in rural areas and small cities. A freight service was launched in November 2021 (but as of April 2023, it is no longer running), and a public transportation service is also planned.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

Railcoop is a citizen movement that works as a cooperative using democratic and transparent governance and aims to foster the citizen-led development of sustainable rail mobility services, especially in rural regions that have suffered due to train station closure policies of recent decades.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101022492.

Goals

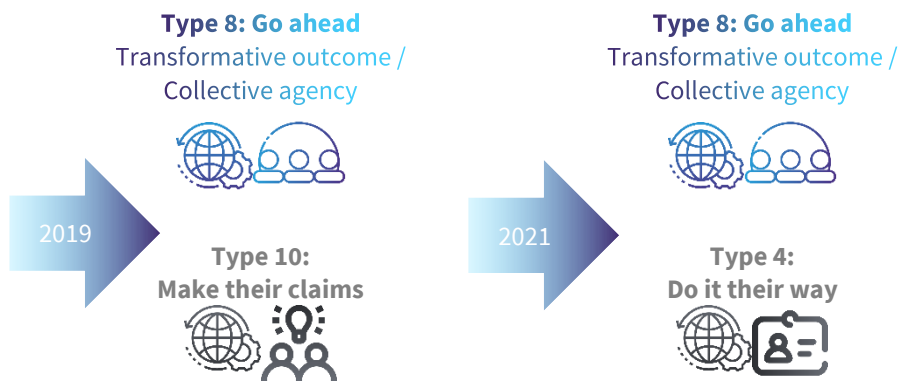


1. Strengthening the use of rail broadly, i.e., beyond the cooperative. Make trains accessible to all and foster a culture shift to make this happen;
2. Creating a new structure of democratic intermediation: making political claims through action. The goal is to promote another mode of democratic expression beyond trade unions or NGOs, which are dependent on company boards or public action;
3. Preserving the democratic internal governance of the organisation despite the vertical organisation of the rail sector.

The story and the typology

Railcoop started out working more like an NGO, with a very transparent culture, openly sharing information with all shareholders. Due to the very fast growth in shareholders as well as the large size of its projects and the highly regulated rail sector in France, Railcoop was forced to transform into a more conventionally functioning company. However, its main vision and objectives have not changed since its inception.

Thus, Railcoop went from a citizen-based agency type of initiative, leaning towards a social movement-type agency at its beginnings, to a more organisationally embedded agency today. However, the democratic governance principles still make Railcoop stand out, corresponding to a citizen-based model. Today, despite the professionalisation required to work within the rail sector, Railcoop's objectives remain to contribute to the energy transition and democratise the transport system.



Case history summary

Et si votre voix
comptait pour une voie ?
Devenez sociétaire !

For the summary
methodology,
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Phase 1: Creation of the case in 2019 and initial operation, 2019 - 2021

Railcoop started out working more like an NGO, thus was a citizen-based collective agency type of initiative (Type 8) with a transformative outcome orientation. It had a transparent culture and openly shared information with all shareholders. The case has witnessed very fast growth in shareholders since its beginning, from 30 to 14,000 shareholders. Thus, its classification as a secondary ideal energy citizenship type, namely Type 10 (transformative social movement), is also relevant due to the successful, general mobilisation for recruiting

shareholders united in their desire and will to promote rail transport.

	Individual			Collective	
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary type: Make their claims

Transformative outcome / Social movements agency

Phase 2: Current status, 2021-

Due to its rapid growth, Railcoop was forced to transform into a more conventionally functioning company, with restricted access for shareholders to sensitive information defined as “business confidential”. As Railcoop’s projects are too big to be handled outside of the parameters of conventional business law, the case had to start functioning more as a regular company (Type 4). However, its democratic governance principles mean that Railcoop still stands out and remains intact as a citizen-based model with a transformative outcome orientation.

	Individual			Collective	
 Reformative	1. Do their bit (in the household)	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	7. Do their share	9. Do the job
 Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary type: Do it their way (within hybrid organisations)

Transformative outcome / Organisationally embedded agency



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The aspects of energy citizenship

Railcoop is supporting a more democratic energy future in two key ways: first, it strives to **offer a service that allows access to sustainable rail mobility services**, especially in rural regions and smaller cities. Second, **the cooperative is governed democratically**, with a general assembly where five 'colleges' each have 20% voting rights. There is one college for each shareholder group (employees, physical persons, legal persons, technical and financial partners, local authorities). Within the colleges, all shareholders have the same voting power (one vote per shareholder).



Membership **allows members to participate in different ways**. First, economic participation through shareholding. Second, democratic participation by being informed, expressing their voice in open deliberations, voting, and participating in the General Assembly. Third, activist participation by voluntarily getting involved to defend and support the development of Railcoop. By joining local and thematic Railcoop groups, **members can participate in the construction of the cooperative** by contributing to the identification of future goals.



Democratic energy future

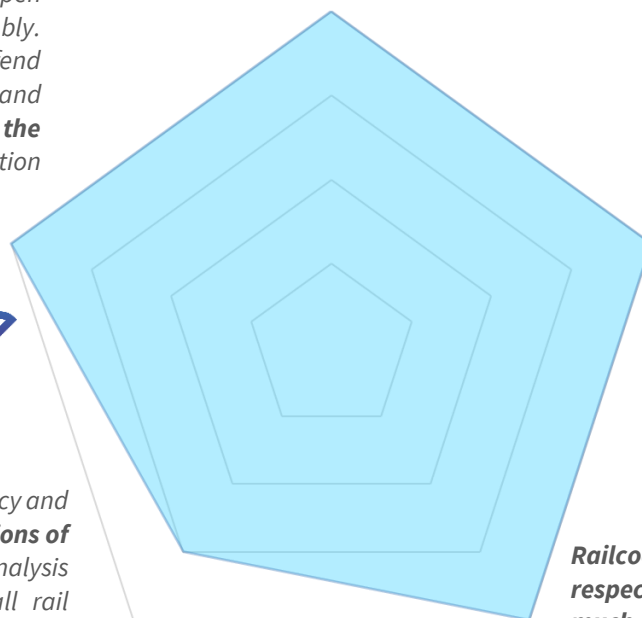
A more democratic energy future is a core concern of the case, and is part of the vision

Citizen control
Citizens exert effective control, and their votes have to be taken into account



The initiative is presented as a response to the climate emergency and has **carried out direct and indirect carbon footprint calculations of their freight and planned passenger train services**. The analysis showed that with Railcoop services included in the overall rail transport network in France, there is a potential for significant emissions reductions (33-59%).

Carbon limit
Explicit recognition of the carbon limit



FOCUS ON DISADVANTAGED GROUPS



FOCUS ON GENDER ISSUES

Railcoop is open to anyone becoming a shareholder and its services aim at matching the cost of car-sharing, hence favouring social inclusion and access to rail mobility for all. It has the **strong feature of inclusiveness since it aims to connect villages and small cities with train services**. There is no particular requirement for becoming involved as a shareholder, beyond the need to be able to buy at least one share worth 100€. By **indirectly increasing access to rail in rural areas, it benefits vulnerable people** like women, elderly, children, so has a potentially strong social impact.



Equity and justice
Involvement is fully open

Railcoop is dedicated to making the ecological transition happen while respecting strong social standards and reducing trains' ecological footprint as much as possible. "In a context of global warming, the train is an essential link in the ongoing ecological transition. Transporting passengers by rail requires less than a twelfth of the energy required to move one person or one ton of goods by road. Developing rail also means, indirectly, protecting biodiversity, curbing the artificialisation of land and therefore preserving our territories. Trains consume less space than roads and are a complementary to soft mobility (bicycles, walking, etc.)."



Environmental sustainability
Environmental sustainability is a core issue and considered in goal setting



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Further information



facebook.com/Railcoop/
instagram.com/railcoop.official/



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References

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 - <https://www.railcoop.fr/le-projet-railcoop/>
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Source of images

<https://www.railcoop.fr/>, <https://www.facebook.com/Railcoop/>



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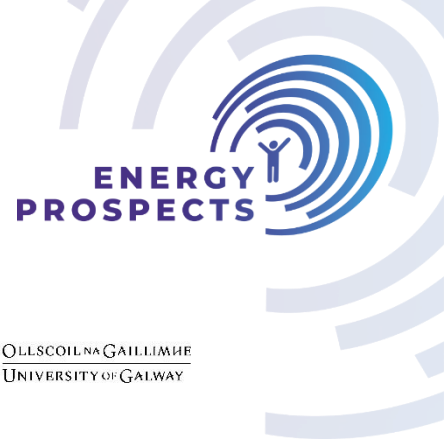
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