

Empowering Communities: Casimiro Monteiro on Building an Inclusive Energy Future in Cascais

From tackling energy poverty to promoting digital inclusion, the Cascais Project Manager shares how WeGenerate is helping residents shape a fair and community-led energy transition.

As Project Manager at Cascais Ambiente, **Casimiro Monteiro** plays a key role in driving Horizon Europe initiatives that connect innovation with local sustainability goals. His work strengthens Cascais's capacity for environmental and territorial assessment, regulatory compliance, and effective teamwork across complex EU-funded projects.

We talked to Casimiro to learn more about the WeGenerate project in Cascais.



Casimiro Monteiro, Cascais Ambiente

In Alcabideche, Cascais is engaging social housing residents to tackle energy poverty and foster participation in the energy transition.

What were the main challenges faced in engaging the local community, particularly vulnerable groups, and how did the team overcome barriers like digital exclusion or low energy literacy?

The biggest challenges we faced were related to digital exclusion, low levels of energy literacy, and, at first, some scepticism towards city-led initiatives. To make sure everyone could participate, we decided to bring the project to people in their own environment. We're organising workshops in Alcabideche, provide residents with individual support, and we will

distribute printed materials tailored to different audiences. These simple but effective actions help us make information accessible, build trust, and ensure that all residents, regardless of their digital skills or prior knowledge, can take part meaningfully in the project.

A social survey of 559 Alcabideche residents was conducted under this project.

What have been the most surprising insights or findings from this survey, and how are these shaping future interventions?

The social survey gave us a clearer picture of how deeply energy concerns are connected to broader issues like housing quality, financial constraints, and overall well-being. One thing that surprised us was how open residents actually

were to collective initiatives, as long as the benefits were explained clearly and shared fairly. These findings are shaping our next steps by reinforcing the importance of trust, transparency, and social support alongside technical solutions.



PV panels across the first five buildings in Alcabideche

Photovoltaic systems have already been installed for Collective Self-Consumption (CSC) in some buildings in Alcabideche. Why was the model of Collective Self-Consumption (CSC) chosen over a full Citizen Energy Community (CEC), and how has this decision impacted the implementation process?

In Portugal, setting up a fully operational Citizen Energy Community is still very challenging. The legal framework is complex, and no municipality has yet managed to establish one successfully. Given this context, we opted for a Collective Self-Consumption (CSC) model. It offered a clearer, more feasible route that could be implemented more quickly and without the same regulatory barriers. This decision allowed us to focus on delivering tangible benefits to residents without being delayed by compliance obstacles.

A Digital Twin platform is being developed to let residents, schools, and technicians explore energy use and rooftop solar potential.

How will this Digital Twin platform be designed to balance technical complexity with user accessibility, especially for residents with limited digital skills?

Our goal with the Digital Twin is to make advanced technology feel approachable. The platform will present complex data through simple visual dashboards and intuitive graphics that anyone can easily understand. To support users with limited digital skills, we're adding short tutorials, multiple language options, and built-in help functions. Most importantly, we'll test prototypes directly with residents during community workshops, allowing the design to be refined based on real user feedback. This approach will ensure that the platform becomes a truly practical and even playful tool for understanding energy use – not another digital barrier.

Looking ahead, how does the Cascais team envision replicating or scaling the WeGeneration model to other neighbourhoods or municipalities?

We see Alcabideche as a starting point, as a pilot that can inspire similar initiatives in other neighbourhoods and municipalities. Of course, each community has its own context, so flexibility is key. The lessons we've learned here about trust, inclusivity, and practical regulation are being documented to create a framework that others can adapt. By combining flexibility with policy alignment at municipal and national levels, Cascais aims to demonstrate that community energy initiatives can be both scalable and socially inclusive, thereby contributing to the wider energy transition