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Title of dissertation: *The Energy Cooperative as an Actor in the Energy Transition: Legal Aspects*

Summary of the doctoral thesis in English

For more than two centuries, cooperatives have supported their members across the globe in meeting basic needs, such as the provision of food, energy, housing, and employment. They are entities characterized by flexible organizational structures, adapted to the needs of the members they unite and to global and regional challenges. One such challenge is the energy transition, understood as the process of moving away from fossil fuels toward low-emission and renewable technologies. Accordingly, the literature has articulated the concept of a “just energy transition”, emphasizing the need to conduct this process in a manner that ensures an equitable distribution of benefits and costs and the inclusion of society – including groups vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

In the author’s assessment, there is a close relationship between the cooperative movement – including energy cooperatives – and the realization of a just energy transition. Activity grounded in cooperative principles fosters the pursuit of energy justice, as it ensures member participation, an equitable sharing of benefits, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Energy cooperatives are now present on all inhabited continents. In Poland, a legal definition of an energy cooperative was introduced in 2016. The activities of such an entity encompass the generation of electricity, biogas (including agricultural biogas), biomethane, or heat in installations based on renewable energy sources (RES), as well as the trading in or storage of such energy, conducted exclusively for the benefit of the cooperative and its members.

The principal research objective of the dissertation is to assess whether – and to what extent – the applicable regulations governing energy cooperatives facilitate the participation of these entities, and thus of society, in a just energy transition. From this overarching objective flow the following specific aims: 1) to assess the development of the energy transition at the global, European, and selected national levels, with particular attention to its social dimension, including cooperatives; 2) to evaluate the evolution of the legal framework governing energy cooperatives as a form of developing community energy within Poland’s just energy transition, and to identify the legal and social factors influencing their development; and 3) to assess the legal conditions governing the establishment, organization, and functioning of energy

cooperatives (including financial aspects), as well as the extent to which they give effect to cooperative principles in the context of a just energy transition.

In conclusion, the author finds, *inter alia*, that the foregoing analysis supports the proposition that energy cooperatives enable societal participation in a just transition, since as a legal form they allow local communities to undertake activity in the field of renewable energy, guaranteeing members participation in the governance of the common enterprise and a share in its benefits. The introduction into Polish law of a legal definition, together with the establishment of support scheme, has been a key driver of the development of the energy cooperative sector. At the same time, the author advocates changes to the organization of energy cooperatives aimed at strengthening the position of cooperative members. With respect to the net-metering regime, the author indicates the need for preferential treatment of cooperatives that utilize stable, dispatchable renewable sources, particularly those linked to agriculture.