

**Project acronym:** EnergyPROSPECTS

**Title:** PROactive Strategies and Policies for Energy Citizenship Transformation

**Grant Agreement number:** 101022492

## Deliverable 6.2

### Summary of policy relevant findings to harness energy citizenship in Europe

**Description:** Summary report on policy-relevant project findings.

**Lead partner for deliverable:** Jacques Delors Institute (JDI)

**Document type:** Report

**Due date of deliverable:** 31-01-2024

**Actual submission date:** 31-01-2024

**Revision:** Version 0.2

**Dissemination level:** Public

**Authors:** Karin Thalberg (JDI), Bonno Pel (ULB), Benjamin Schmid (GAL), Frances Fahy (GAL), Edina Vadovics (GDI), Anita Szöllőssy (GDI), René Kemp (UM), Marianna Markantoni (UM), Marko Hajdinjak (ARC Fund), Desislava Asenova (ARC Fund), Camille Defard (JDI), Jānis Brizga (UL), Rasa Ikstena (UL), Ariane Debourdeau (TUB), Martina Schäfer (TUB), Luisa Losada Puente (UDC), Adina Dumitru (UDC)

**Reviewers:** Rebecca Corless (GAL), Frances Fahy (GAL)



## EnergyPROSPECTS partners

### University of Galway (GAL)

University Road, H91 TK33, Galway, Ireland



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIAMHE  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

### Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50-1050, Bruxelles, Belgium



### GreenDependent Institute (GDI)

2100 Gödöllő, Éva u. 4., Hungary



### Universiteit Maastricht (UM)

Minderbroedersberg 4-6, 6200 MD, Maastricht, Netherlands



### Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund)

Alexander Zhendov Street 5, 1113, Sofia, Bulgaria



### Notre Europe – Institut Jacques Delors (JDI)

18, rue de Londres 75009, Paris, France



### University of Latvia (UL)

Raiņa bulvāris 19, LV-1586, Riga, Latvia



UNIVERSITY  
OF LATVIA

### Technische Universität Berlin (TUB)

Straße des 17. Juni 135, 10623, Berlin, Germany



### Universidade da Coruña (UDC)

Rúa da Maestranza 9, 15001 A Coruña, Spain



UNIVERSIDADE  
DA CORUÑA

**Acknowledgment:** EnergyPROSPECTS is a Horizon 2020 project funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

**Disclaimer:** the views and opinions expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



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

## Summary

This deliverable summarises main findings of EnergyPROSPECTS in an accessible language for a wider audience interested in energy citizenship, including policy makers and a variety of energy stakeholders. The five synthesis briefs<sup>1</sup> that were published in relation to main project publications form the basis for this deliverable. Here, emphasis is placed on policy relevant project results. To limit its scope, this deliverable focuses on results that are not extensively covered by other WP6 publications.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Setting the scene for a critical exploration of the roles of citizens in the European energy transition .....	5
3. What do we mean when we talk about energy citizenship? Ten types of citizen involvement in the energy transition.....	8
4. Regional perspectives on energy citizenship .....	12
5. Taking stock of energy citizenship in Europe: 596 examples of how citizens engage in the energy transition .....	15
6. Towards a European energy transition driven by citizen action: The key role of intermediary actors and intermediation for enabling energy citizenship initiatives.....	22
8. List of references .....	26

---

<sup>1</sup> See the EnergyPROSPECTS website: [Synthesis briefs](#).



## 1. Introduction

This deliverable summarises main findings of EnergyPROSPECTS in an accessible language for a wider audience interested in energy citizenship, including policy makers and a variety of energy stakeholders. The five synthesis briefs that were published in relation to main project publications form the basis for this deliverable. Since the task of WP6 is to translate research results into policy action, emphasis is placed on policy relevant findings that will contribute to the writing of the projects four final policy briefs.

The deliverable is structured according to the order the synthesis briefs were published. First, it gives an overview of EnergyPROSPECTS conceptual framework (Pel *et al.* 2021) which sets the scene for our project's contribution towards a critical exploration of the roles of citizens in the European energy transition. Second, it introduces the ten types of energy citizenship that were produced in the energy citizenship conceptual typology (Debourdeau *et al.* 2021). Third, regional perspectives on energy citizenship are outlined, drawing on the regional workshops held in four partner countries (Pel *et al.* 2022). Fourth, to render the conceptual framework and typology concrete, key results from the mapping of 596 energy citizenship initiatives are displayed (See: Fact Sheet series and the EnergyPROSPECTS online map). Lastly, the role of intermediary actors to support the emergence and viability of energy citizenship initiatives are presented.

To limit the scope of this deliverable, it focuses on results that are not extensively covered by other WP6 publications. See table below:

WP6 Deliverables	Draws on project results from WPs
Deliverable 6.1 Feedback report on knowledge exchange workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WP5: National and EU-level PESTEL analyses.</li><li>• WP6: EU and National Knowledge Exchange Workshops.</li></ul>
Deliverable 6.2 Summary of findings to harness ENCI in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WP2: Conceptual framework, conceptual typology, and regional workshops.</li><li>• WP3: Case studies, large N case mapping (N=596).</li><li>• WP4: Intermediary actors.</li></ul>
Deliverable 6.3 Working paper with recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WP2: Conceptual typology.</li><li>• WP5: National and EU-level PESTEL analyses.</li><li>• WP6: EU and National Knowledge Exchange Workshops.</li></ul>
Deliverable 6.4 Four policy briefs with main recommendations per target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WP3: In-depth case studies (N=40), meta-analysis, and empowerment toolkit.</li><li>• WP4: Business and social innovation models, qualitative comparative analysis.</li><li>• WP5: National and EU-level PESTEL-analysis, citizen survey, and scenario building workshop.</li><li>• WP6: EU and National Knowledge Exchange Workshops.</li></ul>



## 2. Setting the scene for a critical exploration of the roles of citizens in the European energy transition

This chapter, based on [Synthesis Brief 1](#), summarises EnergyPROSPECTS first publication, the conceptual framework (Pel *et al.* 2021), that maps the landscape of energy citizenship today, both theoretically and politically. It lays the foundations for the project and opens the concept for a more realistic and nuanced view of energy citizenship. The transition is becoming everyone's business. What does this mean for citizens' roles in the European energy transition?

### Changing perspectives - from passive consumers to (pro)active citizens?

Asking about citizens' roles in the energy transition is more crucial than ever. The concept of 'energy citizenship' has been coined to assert the importance of active involvement of citizens in energy systems - as citizens rather than consumers. The first formulations of energy citizenship have challenged the common portrayal of individuals and households as passive and deficient publics. The figure of the energy citizen has been portrayed as the neglected counterpart of the passive public.

Energy citizenship is a social construction. It is not something that we can simply observe. We cannot count how many energy citizens are living in our street or in our apartment block. However, we can consider how citizens, households, and organisations (public and private) are enacting and practising energy citizenship in different ways.

Energy citizenship is also an emerging set of political ideals that feeds the social construction of the concept. Just as citizenship more generally, it comprises radical and moderate versions. Across the different interpretations, it refers to somehow more active, engaged, sustainability-oriented, democratic, or more desirable ways of participating in energy systems. Importantly, the societal landscape for this energy citizenship is changing. Ongoing technological, social, infrastructural, institutional, and market changes are creating a particularly turbulent era of energy system changes.

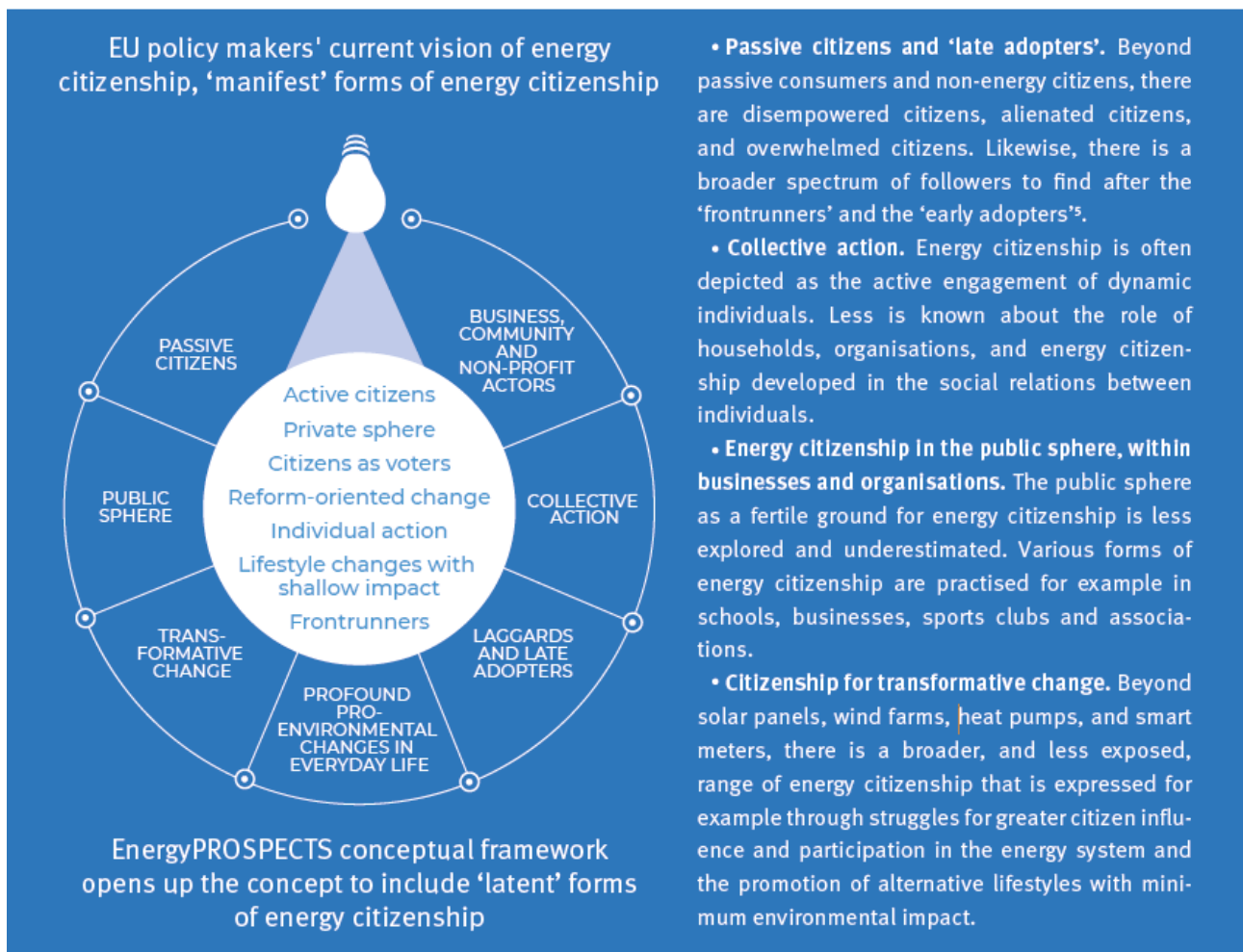
### Energy citizenship as a way to rethink the governance of the energy system

The energy transition requires transformative changes, including on the governance of energy systems. Examining energy citizenship gives direction for the kinds of social and institutional changes needed for citizen involvement that goes beyond the role as consumers on the energy market or as recipients of an energy efficiency campaigns. From this perspective, the concept of energy citizenship could help set the stage for renewed political decision-making and democratic settings.



## Getting a more comprehensive picture of energy citizenship practices today

In the current political debate and within academic research, there is an over-exposure of certain forms of energy citizenship - the celebrated exemplar cases, such as frontrunners within clean energy technology, pioneering community energy projects, and other such 'best practices' exchanged across member states. These 'manifest', visible and exposed, types of 'active', 'engaged', 'sustainable' or 'desirable' energy citizenship practices are arguably only showing a one-sided image of the actual practices enacted across Europe today. By using a broad range of social and innovation theory insights, EnergyPROSPECTS opened up the concept of energy citizenship by including multiple 'latent', less visible, forms of energy citizenship that also form part of the energy transition (see illustration below).



## Why should we care about less visible types of energy citizenship?

1. Realism. The circulation of visions of emblematic, idealised energy citizens easily narrows our vision and consequently that of any evidence-based policymaking.
2. Nuance. Exposing nuances of energy citizenship (what exists between 'frontrunners' and 'laggards', 'active' and 'passive' citizens, 'shallow' and 'profound' pro-



environmental lifestyle changes) also allows us to account for different local contexts that enable or hinder the development of energy citizenship and different understandings of its meaning.

3. Paying attention to the processes that make up the energy transition. Looking beyond the already visible forms of energy citizenship opens our eyes to the processes of empowerment that people, organisations, and regions are undergoing. This has helped us to understand what policies are required to promote active energy citizenship for a socially just and climate-neutral energy transition in Europe (see forthcoming Policy Briefs).

### Towards a definition of energy citizenship

Drawing on the definition of energy citizenship developed by Pel *et al.* (2021), for policy and outreach purposes, energy citizenship is understood as various forms of civic involvement and engagement that pertain to the development of more sustainable and democratic energy systems and transitions. It can be practised at different levels of action, through different constellations of actors, in the fields of energy production, energy consumption, and in the governance of the energy transition.



### 3. What do we mean when we talk about energy citizenship? Ten types of citizen involvement in the energy transition

Citizen participation, support, and acceptability of the energy transition will determine the success of the European Green Deal.<sup>2</sup> Energy citizenship is a key concept in this quest, but for many decision makers it remains unknown. So, what do we really mean when we talk about energy citizenship? Broadly, the concept encompasses the various ways that citizens are involved in the energy transition. But how do citizens engage in the energy transition, and to what end?

This second chapter presents 10 types of energy citizenship, presented in [Synthesis Brief 2](#). The aim was to go beyond the most obvious and common forms and broaden the perspective of what we mean when we talk about energy citizenship. Ultimately, in EnergyPROSPECTS the goal is to provide evidence-based policy recommendations to promote sustainable, democratic, just, or otherwise desirable forms of energy citizenship in the EU (see forthcoming Policy Briefs).

#### What to look for when searching for energy citizenship – ten tentative types

The conceptual work undertaken by the EnergyPROSPECTS project is a first step to grasp the diversity of energy citizenship. Based on the conceptual framework (Pel *et al.* 2021), a typology of ten types of was developed (Debourdeau *et al.* 2021). These ten types provide a broad picture of the phenomenon and a lens through which existing forms of energy citizenship become describable. This helped to structure the collection and analysis of 596 cases of energy citizenship that was carried out in the project. However, it is important to bear in mind that these ten conceptual types describe ‘ideal types’ of energy citizenship. While the case studies largely confirmed the relevance of the 10 types, some adaptations were made (see Debourdeau *et al.* 2022).

#### Examples of different types of citizen involvement in the energy transition

To create the ten types of energy citizenship, two key dimensions of energy citizenship were derived from the conceptual framework. First, the agency dimension responds to the questions

---

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, 2021. Proposal for a Council recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality. COM(2021) 801 final.














where and how energy citizenship is practiced. Secondly, the outcome dimension responds to the question to what end is the practice undertaken. For an overview, see the illustration below.

<p>The five categories of agency pertain to the levels, constellations, and arenas of action where energy citizenship can be found and practised.</p>	<p><b>Individual level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the private sphere of the household</li> <li>• within organisations (such as workplaces and schools)</li> <li>• in the public sphere</li> </ul> <p><b>Collective level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as citizen-based organisational forms or in hybrid constellations where different types of actors collaborate</li> <li>• as social movements</li> </ul>
<p>The two categories of outcome-orientation describe the outcomes that different types of energy citizenship envisage or aim for, either oriented towards reform or transformation of the energy system.</p>	<p><b>Reform-oriented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pragmatic and incremental change of the energy system</li> <li>• limited considerations of energy democracy and justice</li> <li>• lifestyle and societal changes with shallow environmental ambitions</li> </ul> <p><b>Transformation-oriented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• radical change of the energy system</li> <li>• strong commitment to energy democracy and justice principles</li> <li>• profound pro-environmental changes in everyday life and society</li> </ul>

Based on agency and outcome-orientation, ten types of energy citizenship were developed. See illustration below.

AGENCY	INDIVIDUAL 			COLLECTIVE 	
OUTCOME-ORIENTATION	 PRIVATE	 ORGANISATIONALLY EMBEDDED	 PUBLIC	 CITIZEN-BASED AND HYBRID	 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
REFORMATIVE 	1. DO THEIR BIT (in the household)  Complying with the green energy system	3. DO THEIR BIT (with in organisations)  Energy citizenship within organisations	5. MAKE THEIR VOICE HEARD  Participating in societal energy discussions	7. DO THEIR SHARE  Joining green energy projects	9. DO THE JOB  Facilitating the energy transition through alignment activities
TRANSFORMATIVE 	2. DO THEIR OWN (in the household)  The change-making energy citizen	4. DO IT THEIR WAY (with in organisations)  The energy-related change-maker in organisations	6. MAKE THEIR VOTE COUNT  Mobilising votes for energy transition	8. GO AHEAD  Building, expanding and linking citizen-based organisational forms	10. MAKE THEIR CLAIMS  Protesting against the current energy system



**Type 1.** Do their bit as an individual that complies with the green energy system in the household, for example, by adopting more efficiency in energy consumption practices, becoming a prosumer through the installation of solar panels, or by using smart meters and appliances.

**Type 2.** Do their own as a change-making individual in the household, for example, by aspiring for self-sufficiency through off-grid energy sources and storage technologies.

**Type 3.** Do their bit as an individual within an organisation such as a workplace or a school, for example, through complying with the organisation's climate policies, motivating the organisation to install solar panels on the roof, or initiating energy saving campaigns.

**Type 4.** Do it their way as a change-making individual within an organisation, mostly through involvement in energy market newcomers with the ambition to transform the local energy market, for example, through renewable energy exchange or flexible markets aimed at optimising production and consumption, or by supporting the creation of energy sharing communities.

**Type 5.** Make their voice heard as an individual in the public sphere by participating in societal energy discussions through citizen consultations, assemblies, committees, or fora, in the forms of institutionalised or isolated events, where citizens are invited to express their views on a specific local project or national energy/climate policy. In most cases, the organisers are not obliged to comply to the recommendations of the participants.

**Type 6.** Make their vote count as an individual in the public sphere by mobilising votes for the energy transition, for example, in referenda for a specific energy transition pathway at different geographical scales, or in general elections that are directly targeting climate and energy transition issues.

**Type 7.** Do their share by joining citizen or hybrid organisations, for example, as minority shareholders in renewable energy projects or by participating in the enactment of governmental public policy at the local level.

**Type 8.** Go ahead by building, expanding, or linking citizen or hybrid organisations, for example, in the shape of energy communities where the power rests in the hands of citizens, in energy cooperatives that promote active engagement for a decentralised energy system, or within initiatives that aspire towards low carbon footprints.

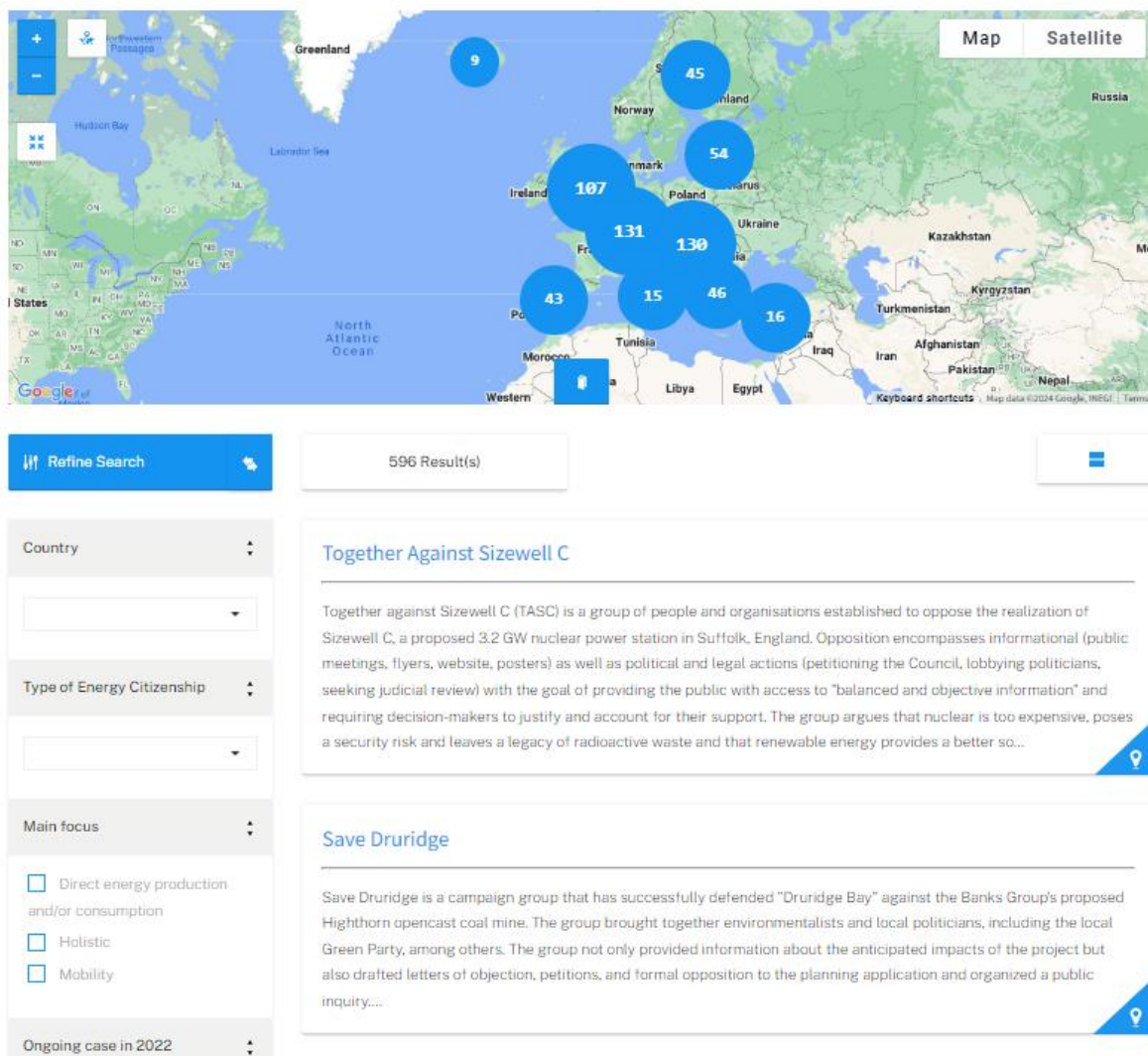


**Type 9.** Do the job within social movements to facilitate the energy transition through alignment activities, for example, in the form of non-profit organisations or unions that launch initiatives such as watt saving competitions in their neighbourhood, or promote debate, acceptance, and acceptability of renewable energy development.

**Type 10.** Make their claims within social movements that protest the current energy system in different ways, such as protest movements for the climate, against the construction of new energy infrastructure, or against certain types of energy sources, whether conventional or renewable.

### A database of 596 energy citizenship cases

The 10 types were put to use in the mapping of 596 initiatives that enable different types of energy citizenship across Europe. To see all the mapped cases, go to our [interactive database](#).



## 4. Regional perspectives on energy citizenship

In the previous two chapters, our conceptual framework and ten types of energy citizenship were introduced. Yet, we know that policy concepts need to be locally adapted to be relevant across the EU. Additionally, sensitivity to local translation is becoming an acute concern as the European energy transition is at risk of creating a politically, economically, technologically, and socially divided Europe. In this third chapter, based on [Synthesis Brief 3](#), insights from four regional/national workshops held in Wallonia - Belgium, Galicia - Spain, Germany and Hungary between December 2021 and February 2022 are presented (Pel *et al.* 2022). The former two had a regional focus, whereas the latter two had a national reach. During the workshops, local experts and practitioners were invited to discuss the concept of energy citizenship, its local translations, our ten types, draw comparisons and explore local conditions. Here, main takeaways from the workshops are outlined.

To learn more about each workshop, read our blogposts: [Wallonia](#), [Galicia](#), [Germany](#), and [Hungary](#).

### Energy citizenship - towards more inclusive and context-sensitive language

Beyond limited English-speaking academic and policy circles, the term energy citizenship is not widely used. Although the concept was translated into the local language during the workshops, it became clear that the concept is neither obvious nor neutral. A majority of the local experts and practitioners did not use it, and in some cases did not know of its existence. Energy citizenship was largely understood as informed, empowered, and initiative-taking citizens and organisations, thus excluding a large part of the population and, importantly, failing to consider the wider context of barriers that hinder citizens to engage in the transition.

One such example, primarily discussed in the Walloon and Hungarian workshops, were socio-economic inequalities and energy poverty. During the Walloon workshop it was noted that while the development of energy cooperatives and prosumerism could bring about a certain degree of democratisation of the energy system, they could also increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots. This reflection calls for more context sensitive language, which could also serve to emphasise the democratic and justice-related dimensions of energy citizenship and help empower practitioners in their work. Additionally, it highlights the fact that mechanisms of social justice, burden sharing, redistribution, and solidarity have important roles to play in the energy citizenship landscape.



## Local translations of energy citizenship

Wallonia, Belgium -

citoyenneté énergétique

Germany - energiebürgerschaft

Hungary - energia állampolgárság

Galicia, Spain -

ciudadania energetica

### Energy citizenship in the light of local and national contexts in the energy transition

The four regions and countries explored during the workshops display important differences that impact the development of energy citizenship. As previously mentioned, levels of energy poverty and socio-economic inequalities differ across European contexts, and so do characteristics such as the regional/national energy mix, urbanisation (including the age and spread of housing stock), demography, modes of governance, and civic culture (such as the prominence of cooperatives). Furthermore, Wallonia, Galicia, Hungary, and Germany find themselves in different stages of the energy transition and the prevalence of different types of energy citizenship practices varies accordingly, both in numbers and in types. While the energy transition in Germany has become quite normalised and accepted, in Galicia and Hungary, for example, workshop participants still considered their regions to be in early phases of the transition.

- Even if the occurrence of different forms of energy citizenship varied between the regions and countries, the workshops showed that the typology (see previous chapter) provides a set of recognisable and evocative types of citizen involvement in



the transition. In the current debate on solutions to decrease European fossil fuel dependence<sup>3</sup>, the types can inform debates on how to support and increase citizen involvement.

- Discussions emerged on the potential hierarchy between transformative and reformative outcomes (see outcome-orientation in the previous chapter). Transformative outcomes were often interpreted as more “desirable”. This is something to keep in mind in order to avoid any perceived classification of energy citizenship practices. What is considered as reformative or transformative can moreover differ according to the phase in the energy transition that the region finds itself in. The workshops also highlighted that everyone may not have the time, financial resources, awareness, skills, or network to be able to participate in more transformative initiatives, or even in reformative ones. At an aggregated level, however, reformative actions, such as the self-production of renewable energy in the household, can indeed have a transformative impact.
- Another recurring theme was the idea that energy citizenship can refer to both intentions, attitudes, actions, and the effects or outcomes of a certain practice, such as, reduced energy use, energy production, or mobilisation of the public. In the German workshop, it was observed that, while the energy transition is widely accepted among the population, only a small minority of the population is actively engaged. This leaves a large space for the emergence of new forms of involvement, which further underlines the utility of our PESTEL analyses at [national](#) and [EU-level](#) of what factors could facilitate the move from attitudes to action in the energy transition.

---

<sup>3</sup> See the [REPowerEU Plan](#), launched by the European Commission in May 2022.

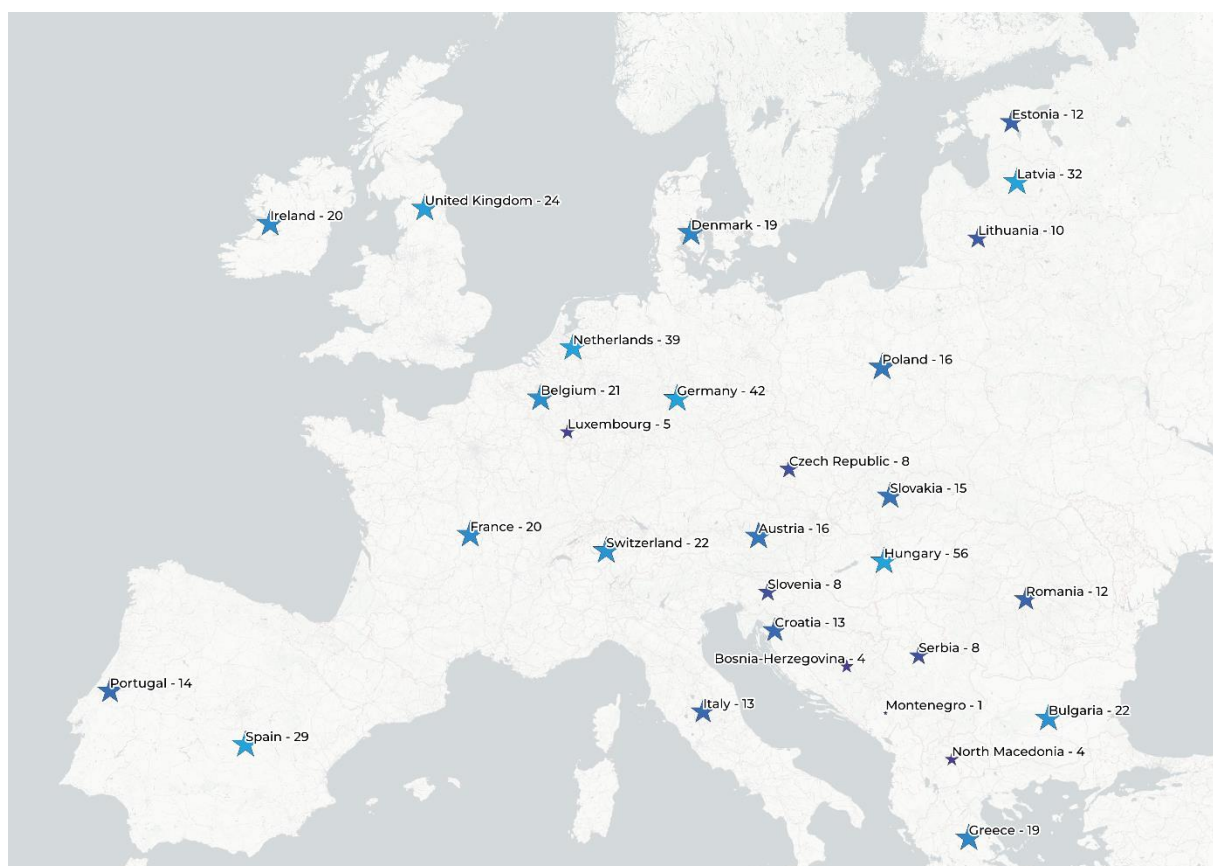


## 5. Taking stock of energy citizenship in Europe: 596 examples of how citizens engage in the energy transition

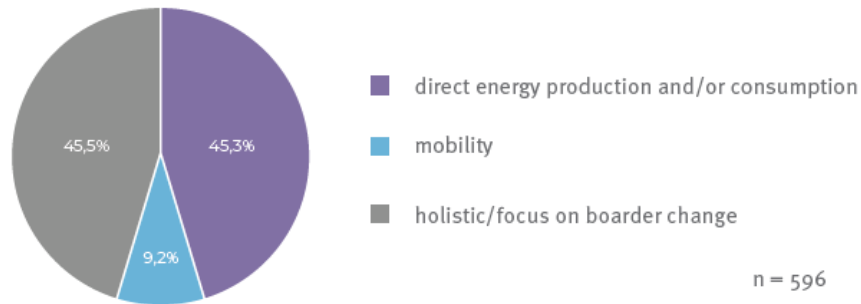
This chapter, based on [Synthesis Brief 4](#) and the [Fact Sheet Series](#), outlines how energy citizenship is taking shape across Europe today and takes stock of the 596 energy citizenship cases mapped in the project. The cases collected aim to capture the diversity of energy citizenship that is being practised on the European continent, but do not make any claim of representativeness. Nonetheless, the cases mapped can help us understand the roles of citizens in the energy transition today, and the potential that energy citizenship has to contribute to a more sustainable and democratic energy transition in the EU moving forward. Regional differences are also highlighted. Moreover, the cases provide evidence for what is needed of decision-makers to harness this potential, which will be treated in our forthcoming Policy Briefs.

### 596 cases of energy citizenship

Initiatives in EU, EEA, and accession countries were studied through desk-based research. The number of cases per country describes the mapping conducted within the project and does not intend to indicate higher levels of energy citizenship activity in certain countries. In the [EnergyPROSPECTS database](#), all cases can be found and filtered according to different criteria.



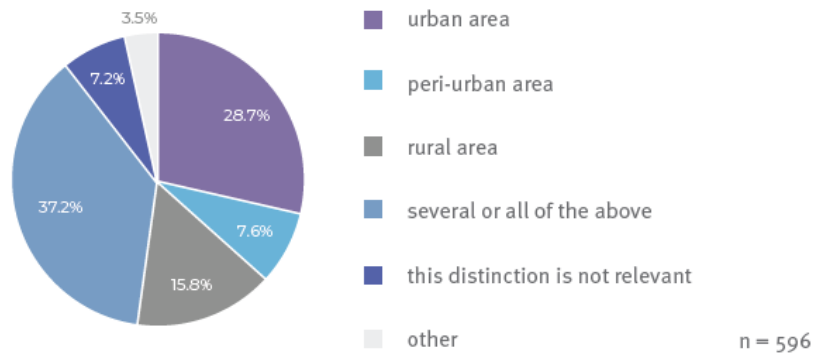
### What is the main focus of the case?



As potentially many forms and types of energy citizenship can be found in Europe, we decided to focus our mapping on three main focus areas: direct energy production and/or consumption; mobility; and holistic/focus on broader change. Examples of engagement under the category ‘direct energy consumption and/or production’ are energy renovation, changes of behaviour/practices and replacement of equipment for increased energy efficiency, and production of renewable energy. Initiatives that for example promote biking, car-sharing, and car-free living, as well as no-flight campaigns, are included within the ‘mobility’ category. Cases that have been categorised as having a ‘holistic overall focus on broader change’ include initiatives such as social movements, sustainable cities and communities, and citizen assemblies, to name a few.

Furthermore, the cases represent a mix of cases in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, or covers several of the levels<sup>4</sup>.

### What is the target area of the case?



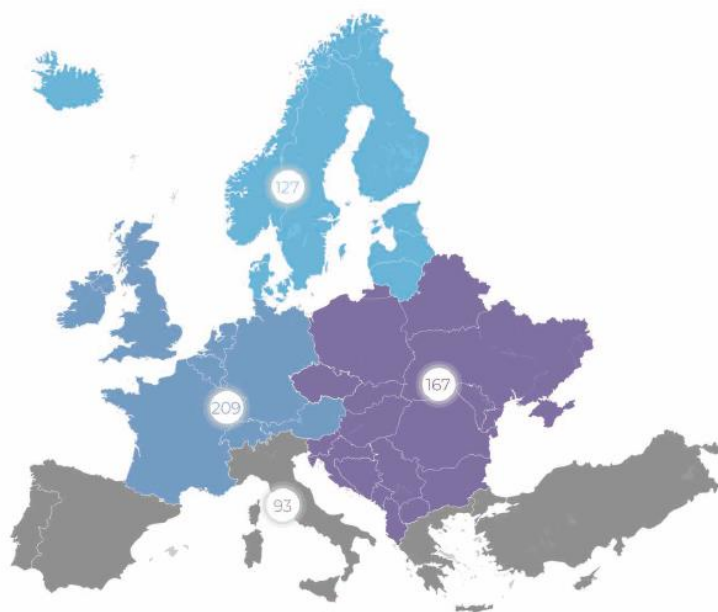
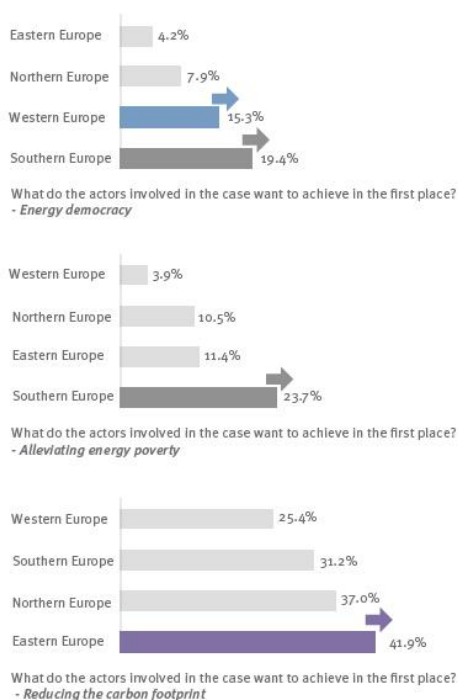
<sup>4</sup> To learn more about the mapping process and particular cases, see our [Blogpost](#).





Cases were also examined with regards to a focus on disadvantaged groups and/or gender. One fifth of all cases mapped have a specific focus on disadvantaged groups, and deal with, for example, energy poverty. This is a useful indicator when examining the potential of energy citizenship to contribute to a more just transition, especially in light of the energy price crisis that has highlighted the inequalities characterising the prevailing energy system<sup>5</sup>. In addition, around 6% of the cases have a specific gender focus that can provide further understanding of the role of women in the energy transition, considering that women are underrepresented in the energy sector and are more likely to live in energy poverty than men<sup>6</sup>.

### What do the initiatives want to achieve?



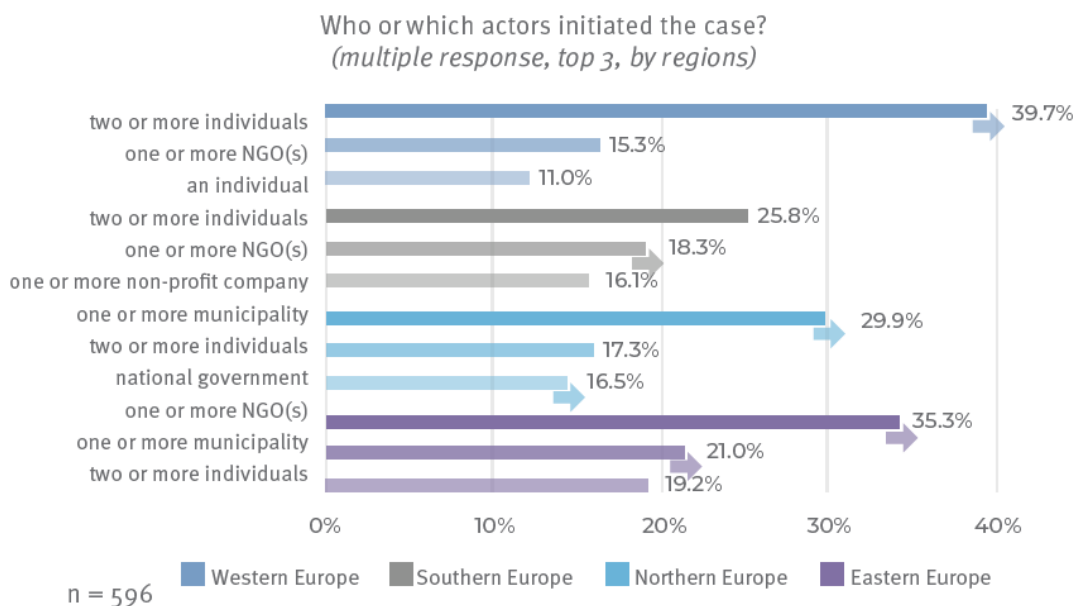
<sup>5</sup> European Commission. [Energy Poverty in the EU](#).

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament Think Tank (2019). [Women, Gender Equality and the Energy Transition in the EU](#).



One of the main findings is that citizens engage and involve themselves in different energy citizenship practices, across European regions<sup>7</sup>, as a response to the climate crisis, to reduce carbon footprints and thereby contributing to fighting climate change. The goal to increase energy democracy is particularly prevalent in Western Europe and Southern Europe. In Southern Europe, of the energy citizenship cases mapped, more than one fifth of cases work to alleviate energy poverty<sup>8</sup>.

### Initiating actors and main sources of funding



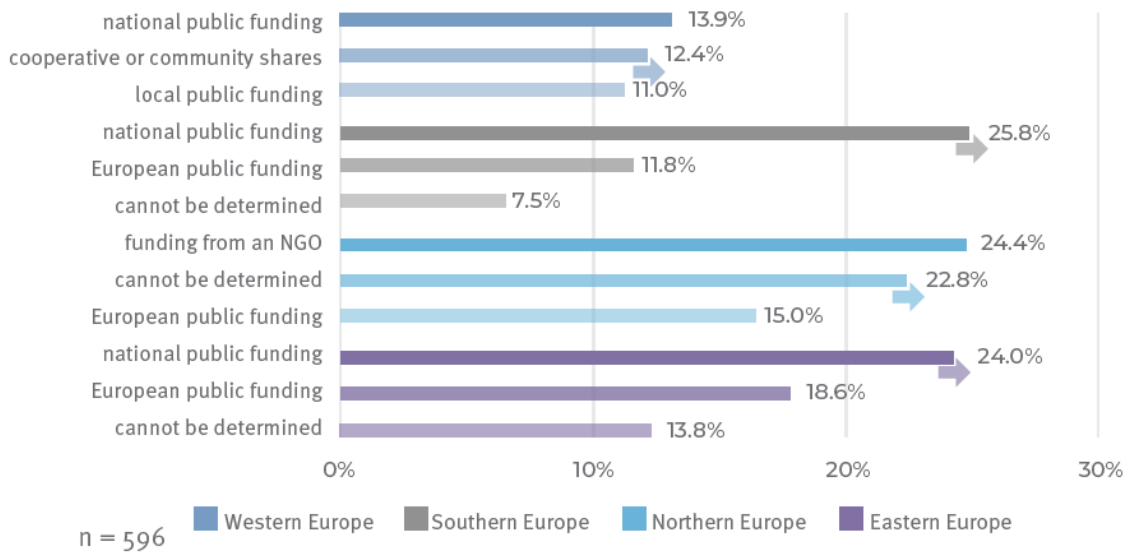
In order for decision-makers to better understand how to support energy citizenship, a key finding from the mapping is the actors that are involved in initiating energy citizenship initiatives. Across all regions, a significant share of the initiatives mapped are started by individuals, in some cases driven only by one person. NGOs are another key actor in all regions, although less so in Northern Europe, where more initiatives are started by municipalities or even the national government.

<sup>7</sup> To learn more, see our [Fact Sheet Series](#) that highlights regional differences of energy citizenship initiatives.

<sup>8</sup> Significant differences found in the analysis are indicated by arrows in the figures.



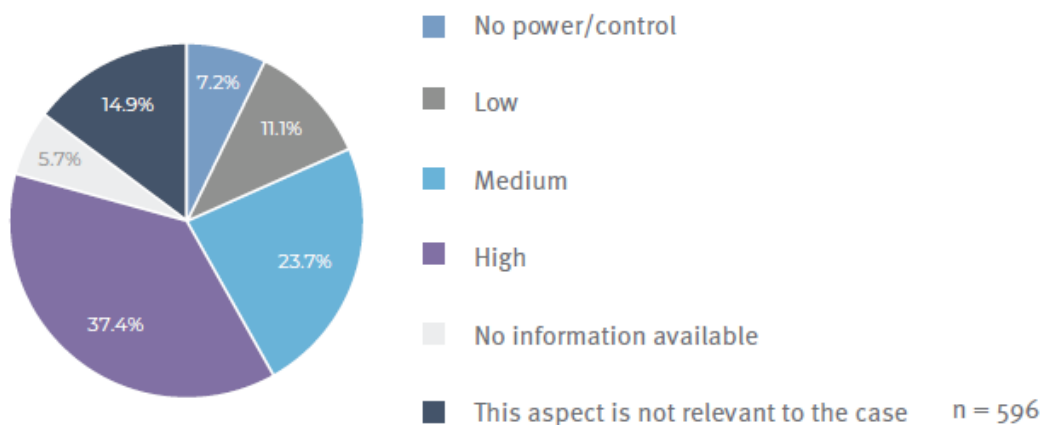
What is the primary / main source of funding for the case?  
(top 3, by regions)



The main source of funding of the mapped cases provides additional important information. For example, the results highlight the important role that European funding can play for energy citizenship initiatives. In many cases public funding from the national or local levels also make a significant contribution to financing the mapped cases. At the same time, the significance of community funding, especially the role of cooperative community shares also need to be recognised.

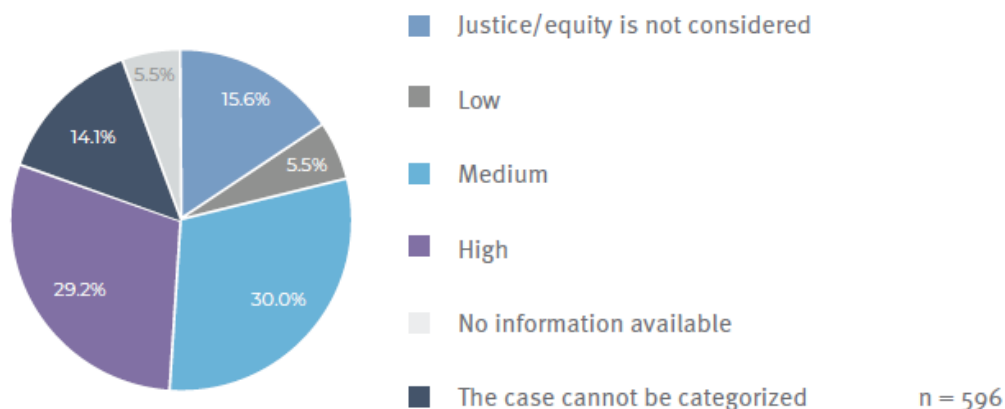
What contribution do they make to a more democratic and just energy transition?

Citizen power/control



When it comes to contributing to a more democratic energy transition, almost 40% of the mapped cases are committed to deeply renew and restructure the energy system towards a more democratic and sustainable one reflected by the share of cases with “high” citizen power/control<sup>9</sup>.

### Justice and equity issues



Around 60% of the cases mapped are set up to support increased justice and equity within the energy transition. For example, by taking energy poverty into consideration, targeting the inclusion of marginalized groups in the energy transition, or making sure that membership/taking part in the initiative is widely accessible.

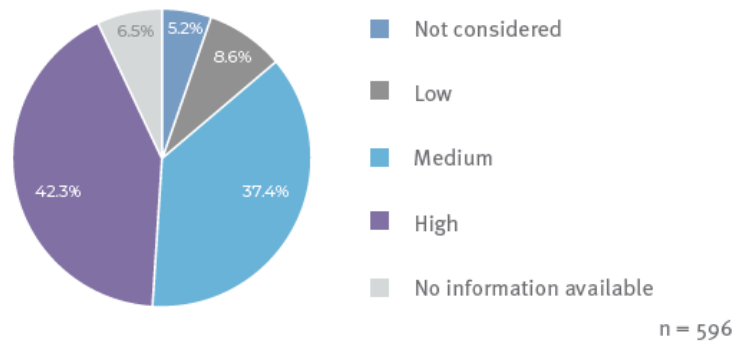
---

<sup>9</sup> To see the descriptions of the different categories for this and following graphs, please consult Vadovics *et al.* (2022).



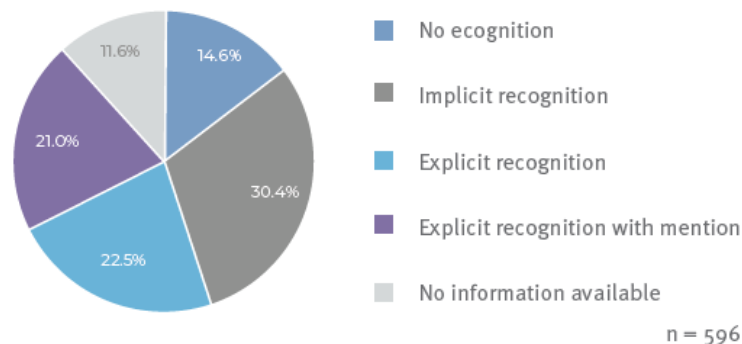
## What contribution do they make to a more sustainable and carbon-neutral energy transition?

### Environmental sustainability



Environmental sustainability is an important or even core part of around 80% of all mapped cases. The cases contribute to environmental sustainability for example by promoting a mix of sufficiency and efficiency measures and/or deploying renewable energy.

### Recognises the ecological limit of atmospheric carbon emissions



Given the significance of climate change for motivating the mapped cases, we found it important to examine the extent to which they recognise a carbon limit consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement. Seventy percent of all cases that were mapped are implicitly (without formal reference to carbon emissions or carbon footprints) or explicitly engaged in reducing in activities that reduce carbon consumption/emissions. This underlines the potential of energy citizenship to contribute to climate change mitigation. At the same time, the number of cases that explicitly recognize the carbon limit and mention a concrete reduction target with reference to a 1.5°C compatible carbon footprint is relatively low. Given the urgency of climate change, this finding is interesting to explore further for policies that want to harness the carbon reduction potential of energy citizenship.



## 6. Towards a European energy transition driven by citizen action: The key role of intermediary actors and intermediation for enabling energy citizenship initiatives

Within the project, 596 initiatives that enable diverse types of energy citizenship were mapped (see previous chapter). These initiatives were initiated and/or are driven by individuals or by collectives of citizens, in varied sizes. Eighty-five percent of the mapped initiatives were collective. Many of these energy citizenship initiatives exist in different organisational forms: most commonly as NGOs, cooperatives, and projects.

This chapter, based on [Synthesis Brief 5](#), highlights the rich ecosystem of actors that enable and provide support for energy citizenship initiatives. To that end, intermediaries and intermediation are a central part of emerging ‘new’ forms of governance aimed at accelerating the energy transition by helping energy citizenship initiatives to achieve their goals.

The analysis was based on a mixed-data collection consisting of desk-research and in-depth interviews with key informants of 34 cases in Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, Latvia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The research question that the analysis sought to answer was: “what kinds of intermediation is or has been required for energy citizenship initiatives to achieve their goals?”. An interdisciplinary mapping tool was also developed that showed the depth and breadth of the intermediaries in the context of their respective energy citizenship initiative (see Markantoni *et al.* 2023).

### What are intermediary actors and what types of intermediation do they carry out?

Many energy citizenship initiatives face a range of obstacles to get their activities or projects up and running. Examples include a lack of knowledge, skills or resources, time-constraints, information asymmetry or communication problems. This is where intermediaries come into the picture. Intermediary actors can act as bridge-builders and help initiatives overcome the diverse barriers they face.



## Key intermediaries in energy citizenship initiatives are grouped as:

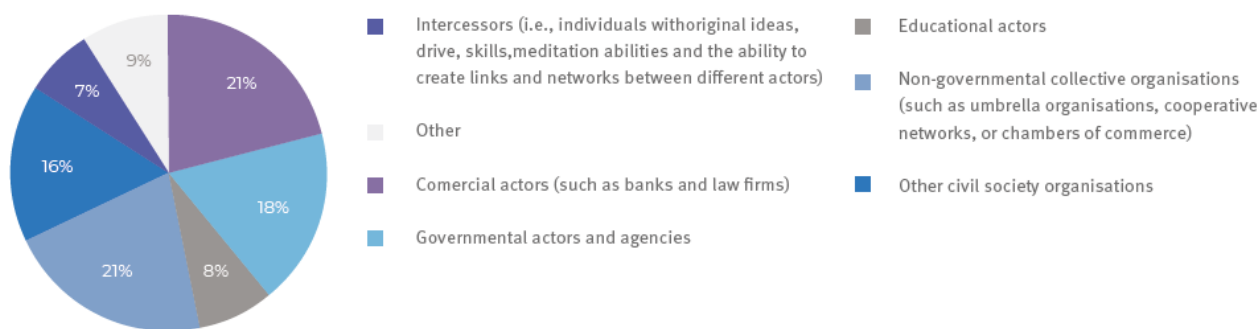


Figure 1. Distribution of types of intermediary actors in the analysis, by percentage (N34)

## These types of intermediaries perform a wide range of services:

- Organisational intermediation such as setting up the legal statues of an initiative, providing capacity building or negotiating with administrative authorities;
- Financial intermediation such as capitalisation and resource mobilisation;
- Scientific-technic intermediation in the form of technical and scientific expertise provided by for example planners, architects, photovoltaic or wind power specialists or project management specialists;
- Networking intermediation that enables cooperation, exchange, and networking between similar actors;
- Information and communication intermediation that can help make the case known, provide mediation or consultation services;
- Regulatory and lobbying intermediation mainly to undertake lobbying activities directed towards regulatory processes and decision-makers.

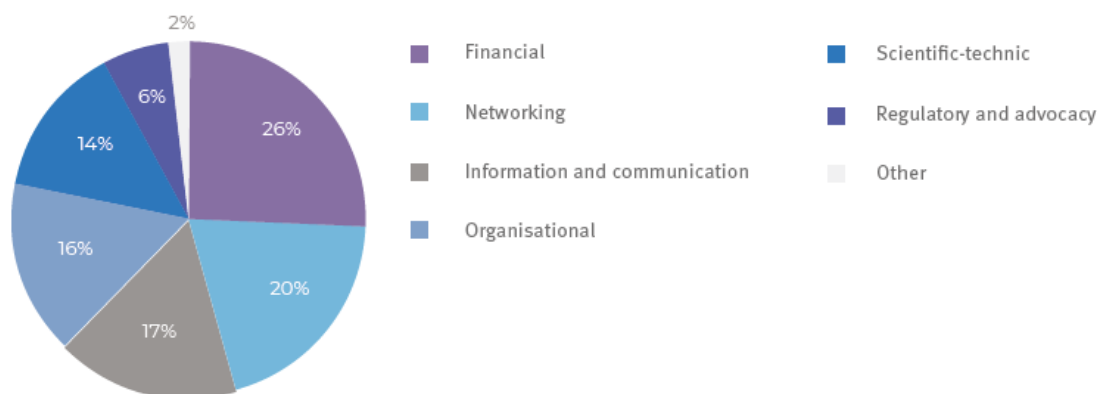


Figure 2: Distribution of the intermediation/services provided by the intermediary actors in the analysis, by percentage (N34)



## Main take-aways: Why is it important to further support energy citizenship ecosystems?

The analysis shows that a combination of intermediations was needed for energy citizenship initiatives to achieve their goals, providing diverse services across the development stages of the cases studied in Energy- PROSPECTS. More than 60% of the intermediations listed across the 34 cases were furthermore considered of high importance for the functioning of the cases, across all types. However, no two cases are identical, as each case is embedded into a unique and complex ecosystem of intermediation. Nonetheless, long-term, positive relationships with key intermediaries were found to be at the core of the cases' development over time.

Financial and organisational intermediation were found to be the two most important types of intermediations across the cases and seem to go hand-in-hand. Both kinds of intermediation are crucial in the early stages of the cases, to provide initial capital for the initiatives' activities and support organisational set-up, such as legal statues, registration and communication with authorities and funding organisations. For each kind of intermediation, some intermediary actors were found to be especially salient. For financial intermediation, those were governmental actors (33%) and commercial actors (23%). Regarding organisational intermediation, non-govern- mental collective actors were found to be especially important (39%).

At the European level, the European Commission and REScoop were found to be especially influential in the goal achievement of energy citizenship initiatives. The European Commission primarily acts as a financial intermediary via the funds and subsidies it provides, while REScoop provides valuable networking and knowledge exchange intermediation. On the one hand, this illustrates the importance of EU funds for the creation of cases, for example by providing initial capital, or for further development of cases through the participation in EU project consortiums. On the other hand, the administrative burden of accessing EU funding and projects was mentioned as a key barrier for many initiatives.

Intermediation is not always successful or neutral. In some instances, intermediary actors may champion certain innovations or represent certain interests that are influenced by their funding. This can negatively impact energy citizenship cases' contribution to a more democratic energy system, as they may be forced to adapt their activities and projects according to that vision. Furthermore, the analysis showed relationships with commercial intermediaries could be challenging. Oftentimes, the requirements of commercial banks are not adapted to the organisational structures and activities of energy citizenship initiatives, which makes it difficult for them to secure loans. Relationships with various levels of government were also found to be troublesome at times. In certain cases, a lack of appropriate support for the management of cooperatives and start-ups was found, in other cases the start of new projects was delayed or





even blocked by the administrative burden of permitting, restrictions or state guarantees. In certain cases, the relationship with one civil servant or elected representative was found to be a crucial component to the success of projects. This finding points to the fragility of certain initiatives, as their success can depend on the willingness and stability of a single relationship.

To further support ENCI initiatives, more strategic support is needed to build their capacities, alleviate institutional barriers, and open up the system for their uptake and acceptance<sup>6</sup>. In this regard, intermediaries are a key part of the solution in accelerating the development and impact of energy citizenship initiatives. Intermediation is part of the increasingly polycentric governance of the energy transition, where new forms of governance are emerging to intervene in the transformation and decentralisation of energy systems. However, intermediary work is often invisible. This analysis is one part of rendering the central role of intermediation for collective citizen action visible, but it is clear that energy citizenship initiatives will require transformative support in order to achieve their full potential and become viable alternatives to the ‘status quo’ of the current energy system. How this transformative support can be configured will be covered in our upcoming Policy Briefs.



## 8. List of references

Debourdeau, A., *et al.* (2021). “[Conceptual typology](#)”, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 2.2, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

Markantoni, M., *et al.* (2023). “[Strategic collective system building and institutional change: The nature and role of intermediation in making actors cooperate and transact with each other](#)”, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 4.1, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

Pel, B., *et al.* (2021). “[Conceptual framework](#)”, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 2.1, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

Pel, B., *et al.* (2022). “[Report on regional workshops](#)”, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 2.3, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

Vadovics, E., *et al.* (2022). “[Methodology for meta-analysis of energy citizenship](#)”, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 3.1, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

*All the Synthesis Briefs and additional project-related materials mentioned in this deliverable, including blogposts and the Fact Sheet Series, are available on the [EnergyPROSPECTS website](#).*

