

The logo for 'ENERGY PROSPECTS' features the words 'ENERGY' and 'PROSPECTS' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic of a person with arms raised, standing within a series of concentric, curved lines that resemble a signal or energy field. The background of the top right corner is decorated with larger, light blue concentric arcs.

**ENERGY  
PROSPECTS**

# Enhancing Energy Citizenship through Business and Social Innovation Models

Karin Thalberg and Ariane Debourdeau

April 2024



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

# EnergyPROSPECTS partners

## University of Galway (GAL)

University Road, H91 TK33, Galway, Ireland



OILSCOIL NA GAILLIUMHE  
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



## Technische Universität Berlin (TUB)

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



## Universidade da Coruña (UDC)

Rúa da Maestranza 9, 15001 A Coruña, Spain



**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.

# Contents

- Introduction ..... 4
- Advancing energy citizenship through innovative business models with social and environmental impact..... 5
- Good practice BSIMs across Europe ..... 6
  - Publicly led BSIMs..... 6
  - Organisationally based BSIMs..... 8
  - Community-based BSIMs..... 13
- Replicability and scalability ..... 14
  - Replicability in other contexts..... 14
- Scaling up, scaling out and scaling deep ..... 17
- Recommendations for advancing energy citizenship through business and social innovation models ..... 19
  - Overarching recommendations..... 19
  - Recommendations targeting publicly led BSIMs ..... 19
  - Recommendations targeting organisationally based BSIMs ..... 20
  - Recommendations targeting community based BSIMs..... 20



## Introduction

EnergyPROSPECTS is a Horizon 2020 project that examines **the potential of energy citizenship to contribute the European energy transition**. Energy citizenship is understood as forms of citizen involvement and engagement in the energy system that pertain to the development of a more sustainable and democratic energy system. It can be practised at different levels of action, through different constellations of actors, in the fields of energy production, distribution, and energy consumption, and in the governance of the energy/climate transition.

**This policy brief specifically concentrates on *business and social innovation models (BSIMs)* as instrumental tools to promote the development of energy citizenship across different scales.** The brief showcases eight initiatives with innovative BSIMs led by public authorities, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, that support citizen involvement in the energy transition in different ways. The featured good practice initiatives have been chosen based on their endurance over time and the way they integrate environmental and social values that enhance energy citizenship into their BSIMs. These values include citizen participation and control, democratic governance, and social inclusion and justice, all embedded into the core of their functioning.

The aim of the policy brief is twofold. First, to **provide inspiring examples** that could be reproduced elsewhere and **outline concrete strategies** for how energy transition initiatives and intermediary actors could further strengthen energy citizenship in their activities and functioning. Second, to **offer concrete policy recommendations** on how policy makers at different levels can create an enabling environment for energy citizenship to thrive.



## Advancing energy citizenship through innovative business models with social and environmental impact

This policy brief highlights eight business and social innovation models (BSIMs)<sup>1</sup> that are characterised by their ability to endure over time and their success in enhancing energy citizenship<sup>2</sup>. To evaluate how energy citizenship is enhanced by these initiatives, we have studied how environmental, social, and democratic values are integrated into the initiatives' BSIMs and how these values support the initiatives' viability over time.

Therefore, in addition to the environmental values and concrete objectives that contribute to a more sustainable energy system, the following were explored as core values to enhance energy citizenship:

- the participation of citizens and collectives of citizens, including the possibility to take part in decision-making processes (citizen participation and control);
- transparency, fairness, and openness (democratic governance);
- affordability and accessibility for the larger public (social inclusion and justice/equity).

The eight good practice cases highlight different kinds of BSIMs that work within the domains of energy retrofitting, sustainable local planning, citizen-led renewable energy development, environmentally conscious lifestyles, and support for neighbourhood and community-led energy transitions.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the eight cases are led by different types of actors: public authorities (publicly led), non-governmental organisations (organisationally based) and local communities (community-based). In the next section, we present the eight cases.

---

<sup>1</sup> Debourdeau, A. and Markantoni, M. (2023). [Viable business models and strategies for growth and expansion. The economic-transactional aspects of energy citizenship cases](#). EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 4.5, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

<sup>2</sup> For a development on the methodology, see: Debourdeau, A. and Markantoni, M. (2023). [Models' scalability and potential strategies to advance energy citizenship](#). EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 5.3, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

<sup>3</sup> For more inspiring initiatives that enable energy citizenship, see: Vadovics, E. *et al.* (2024). [Collection of case summary reports](#). EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 3.5, Part 2, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.



# Good practice BSIMs across Europe

## Publicly led BSIMs

### Hauts-de-France Pass Renovation, France, 2013-present

Hauts-de-France Pass Renovation was first launched as a pilot project by the region. After the pilot-phase, the initiative was continued and is operated by the regional one-stop-shop PSEE (the Regional Public Service for Energy Efficiency). The BSIM enhances energy efficiency in private buildings, including both single-family homes and condominiums, and is based on an innovative *third-party financing* economic model. The economic model is financed by a dedicated public fund through which the PSEE advances the payment for renovation works to the beneficiaries. Once the renovation has been carried out, the beneficiaries can make the repayment in whole or in part through the financial savings that the energy renovation has generated. At the time of its initiation, there was a strong political will by certain regionally elected representatives to pilot the financing model and support households' access to energy renovation.

**Business and social innovation model:** Pass Renovation relies on an innovative economic model through which the region can provide financial assistance to households - particularly those with limited self-financing capacity - so that they can engage in deep energy renovation works. The financial mechanism consists of: 1) pre-financing of government subsidies and loans; 2) taking the energy savings generated by the renovation works into account in the repayment plan; 3) long repayment periods (15 to 25 years depending on the work carried out); 4) collective loans to condominiums, which are currently not widely distributed by the banking sector. Key to its operation is the process of economisation of energy renovation at the regional scale, which involves a complex ecosystem composed of public institutions, regional and local authorities and more than 700 local companies and craftsmen that carry out the renovations.

**Energy citizenship values:** By granting access to energy renovations, especially for households at risk of energy poverty, social inclusion is a core aspect of the BSIM. In terms of democratic governance, citizens are not directly included in the decision-making processes, but there is transparency in how the public funding is allocated and how the initiative functions.



## Nagypáli - The renewable energy village, Hungary, 1996-present

An ambitious mayor was elected in the rural village Nagypáli in 1996. At this time, Nagypáli was a settlement in the Hungarian countryside on the brink of extinction without an attractive profile for residents or local businesses. The *Green Road* development plan was launched, including a variety of initiatives, especially related to renewable energy.

**Business and social innovation model:** The municipality set-up a strong organisational support system through non-governmental entities such as the Foundation for the Village and the Tender Management Office in order to carry out local projects. Other key actors in the municipality’s BSIM are businesses, primarily from the transportation sector. The municipality attracted the businesses through tax reductions to create a financial basis for the desired developments. The business settlement resulted from bilateral agreements between the municipality and each potential enterprise. In return for the tax reduction, the businesses were asked to invest or in other ways provide a benefit for the village. Other examples include sponsorships, the exchange of ideas, the creation of networks and the organisation of events. Through the mutually beneficial relationships between the municipality and the businesses, the BSIM has a strong local anchoring that has brought with it long-term innovative changes for the village that reach beyond political interests.

**Energy citizenship values:** The municipally driven BSIM includes strong features of democratic governance. Local citizens are involved from the beginning of the development processes, and are given the opportunity to express ideas, problems, and suggestions through different fora. Citizens are furthermore involved in the implementation process and are partners in various activities to promote environmental awareness.

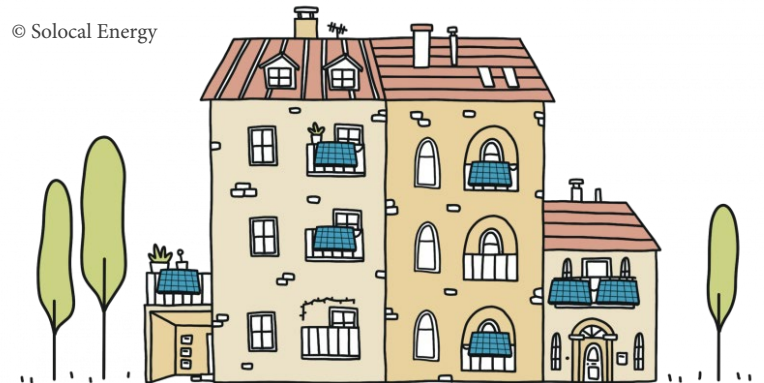


## Organisationally based BSIMs

### Local/regional scope

#### Solocal Energy, Germany, 2020-present

Solocal Energy is a non-profit organisation that involves and directly empowers citizens at the local scale through three pillars: balcony power plants; Do-It-Yourself (DIY) groups for photovoltaic installations; and neighbourhood climate circles. Core values of solidarity, justice, sustainability, and personal responsibility are at the heart of the BSIM. In the initiative’s vision, solar energy is central to the energy transition in cities, representing the most important building block for a decentralised energy transition in cities and enabling a solidarity-based economy strongly oriented towards the needs of the people.



**Business and social innovation model:** The first of Solocal’s three pillars, the instalment of balcony photovoltaic plants, provides a source of income and leverage to empower citizens and communities from the bottom-up, while also financing the development of the two other pillars (the DIY groups and the neighbourhood climate circles). Networking activities are a decisive part of the BSIM. Firstly, to involve citizens in Solocal’s social entrepreneurship related to DIY and energy literacy. Secondly, to establish local and regional partnerships (including the Kassel municipality) to increase the initiative’s legitimacy. Nonetheless, Solocal is facing difficulties due to the hybrid nature of its activities. As a non-profit organisation, it does not have the right to undertake economic activities. The initiative therefore faces constant uncertainty and risks having its associative status removed due to the economic revenue derived from the instalment of photovoltaic plants. The legal status is, however, a conscious choice rooted in the belief that Solocal should belong to the community rather than to a few individuals.

**Energy citizenship values:** Membership is open to all, with various possibilities according to the time and financial resources of the members. Therefore, financial capacities are taken into account by the association, which adapts its offers accordingly, either for the membership or for the installation of balcony PV plants. The basic democratic principles applicable to associations are guiding decision-making processes, in which each member has one vote.



## Local/regional scope

### Hydro Electricity Ourthe and Sambre, Belgium, 2003-present

Hydro Electricity Ourthe and Sambre (HOSe) is a cooperative company created by extensive collaboration between ten RESCOOP cooperatives. The company operates several hydro-power plants on the Ourthe and Sambre rivers, led by the Emissions Zero cooperative and the private shareholder Hydro-B, which provides technical expertise. HOSe is committed to renewable energy and sustainability. Hydroelectricity is seen as a creative nature-based solution, through which the BSIM brings Hydro-B close to the cooperatives.

**Business and social innovation model:** The BSIM showcases an innovative organisational form; a cooperative of cooperatives together with a private company. HOSe is set up as a cooperative company with limited liability. It is owned 50/50 by Hydro-B and the cooperatives that together have more than 15,000 citizen shareholders. The cooperative company has been set up to develop and operate the new hydroelectric power stations. In the HOSe business model, the produced electricity is sold to green suppliers, with a marked preference for COCITER (a supplier that provides households with electricity produced by 12 citizen cooperatives - notably wind and photovoltaic). Thanks to the hydroelectric power produced by HOSe, COCITER can supplement its sources of green electricity production throughout the year.

**Energy citizenship values:** In terms of democratic governance, HOSe has a consensual decision-making process that ensures trusting relationships among all partners. The cooperative model has a shared commitment to environmental gains and societal welfare. Moreover, horizontal, democratic governance and strong local ties are core objectives of the associated cooperatives. While these values are not core values of the commercial partner, Hydro-B has embraced them through this project.



## National scope

### Energie Partagée, France, 2008-present

Energie Partagée brings together the citizen energy movement in France. It unites and advocates, provides project assistance and finances citizen-led 100% renewable energy projects. To carry out these activities, Energie Partagée consists of three different legal structures: a cooperative, an investment tool and an association. The three parts of the organisation are linked through the core values defined in their founding charter. By adhering to these values<sup>4</sup>, local initiatives across France can benefit from the Energie Partagée citizen-energy label.

**Business and social innovation model:** The purpose of the BSIM is to build a strong ecosystem favourable to citizen-led renewable energy projects by supporting and financing initiatives that are in line with the charter. This ecosystem is made of many kinds of partners including: an advocacy coalition, local authorities, regional support networks, funding partnerships and private partnerships with companies for joint actions. Moreover, Energie Partagée’s investment tool is the first innovative funding tool for citizen investment in the production of renewable energy and energy efficiency in France. The fund collects savings from citizens through shareholding and invests the capital in citizen renewable energy projects. The investment tool enables project promoters and regional stakeholders to raise the capital required to launch a project and to maintain citizen control. The equity investment has allowed the BSIM to consolidate over time and has enabled easier access to bank financing.

**Energy citizenship values:** Energie Partagée is open to everyone and reducing energy poverty is defined in the charter as a core objective. The Energie Partagée investment tool offers a lower price to make shareholding more accessible (€10 compared to €100). Democratic governance is a core criterion that a renewable energy project must fulfil in order to be supported and/or part of the Energie Partagée movement and labelled as a citizen renewable energy project.



<sup>4</sup> Strong, diversified presence of public and private local actors in the project, democratic decision-making, making use of local competences and mobilising local communities, seeking to reduce environmental impacts and energy consumption, and ethical citizen-based financing. See [Energie Partagée’s website](http://www.energie-partagee.org).



## National scope

### TreeDependent, Hungary, 2010-present

The TreeDependent programme is a service for individuals, communities, and private and public organisations. The programme is driven by the GreenDependent Institute, a non-profit, public benefit, private limited company. The programme has multiple goals. First, raising awareness about environmentally conscious lifestyles. Second, calculating carbon footprints and planting trees as carbon compensation. Third, community-building/networking by connecting the participants of the programme. Through the programme, a fair and sustainable carbon compensation tool has been developed.



**Business and social innovation model:** The core objective of the BSIM is the development of a fair and sustainable carbon compensation tool that contributes to raising awareness and reducing the carbon footprints of individuals, communities, and organisations, and in particular the carbon footprints of events and transportation. In terms of economic activity, the clients who partake in the programme pay for the services provided. The income directly supports the continuation of the TreeDependent programme and the development of a *fairy garden*, and indirectly, the schools and non-profit organisations who receive the trees. Although the programme has grown over time, especially with the development of the carbon compensation tool, there is a continuous need to increase the client base for the BSIM’s viability over time.

**Energy citizenship values:** TreeDependent is fully open to all individuals, communities, and organisations, and follows socially aware pricing of services to ensure social inclusion. Special attention is paid to clients with less capacity to undertake the actions proposed by the programme and prices are adjusted accordingly.



## National scope

### National Association of Active Citizens, Netherlands, 1985-present

The National Association of Active Citizens (Landelijk Samenwerkingsverband Actieve Bewoners, or LSA) is a national network organisation for groups of active citizens, mobilising citizens from the bottom-up, at the neighbourhood and local level. LSA works with different types of citizen groups, from citizen businesses to healthcare initiatives, energy cooperatives and neighbourhood vegetable gardens. The energy transition is a core axis for LSA, as it has a major impact on local communities. The organisation advocates for a citizen-driven energy transition by organising local, regional, and national workshops, information evenings, and trainings for community groups that wish to start a neighbourhood project to contribute to an inclusive energy transition. Furthermore, LSA employs energy coaches that, for example, support citizens to apply for energy renovation subsidies or provide energy saving tools and advice.

**Business and social innovation model:** LSA is a nonprofit organisation with a strong collaborative structure. A decisive feature of the BSIM is the wide diversity of partnerships. It assembles around 250 local or neighbourhood groups across the Netherlands. Moreover, together with four other organisations, LSA is part of the Participation Coalition. This partnership enables knowledge-exchange and easier access to resources and funding. Moreover, it allows the organisations to have a bigger impact in their advocacy for a citizen-driven energy transition. The BSIM self-sustains over time due to its public funding structure. While the biggest part of its financing is provided by the Dutch government, the organisation is independent in its actions and activities. Additionally, the organisation receives contributions, donations, funds, or grants from various organisations through national equity funds. LSA also has a certain number of paying members, including municipalities, knowledge institutes and private organisations.

**Energy citizenship values:** Social inclusion is a core value in the BSIM. The energy transition is considered a collective task that must be just and requires citizen participation. In 2018, LSA published a roadmap for the energy transition to inform about its activities. In 2019, they joined forces with the Participation Coalition to influence national energy policy towards a “a socially and nature-inclusive energy transition, in which citizens work together with the public and private sector”. LSA provides guidance for neighbourhood groups to develop tailor-made solutions to self-manage collective heating systems. The BSIM furthermore facilitates the collaboration between municipalities and citizen groups. They play an important role to ensure democratic governance of the local heat transition where institutionalised policy instruments are not yet in place to facilitate this collaboration.



## Community-based BSIMs

### Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative, Ireland, 2013-present

The Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative (ECTC) is a cooperative made up of 15 community groups that represent different areas in the wider Tipperary region. In the cooperative, the communities are represented by local community councils and development associations. The aim is to reduce the amount of money that leaves the local economies every year in the form of energy and fuel bills. To do this, ECTC facilitates renovation works to improve the energy efficiency of older houses and generate community-owned energy. ECTC also supports community building and helps communities to access grants from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. To access the grants, member communities are required to set up a ‘Sustainable Energy Community’ (SEC).

**Business and social innovation model:** The purpose of the BSIM is to enable communities in the Tipperary region and surrounding areas to create local employment and community benefit through reducing their carbon footprint and generating community-owned energy. It supports its member groups to develop a vision of a community-led energy transition, which benefits communities, creates warmer, healthier homes while saving money for homeowners, helps to tackle climate change, and creates new employment. The strong network of partners is a crucial feature for the viability of the BSIM. The partners include the Tipperary Energy Agency, the North Tipperary Development Company, and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. The Development Company offered essential start-up support for the cooperative. The Energy Agency and the Irish Just Transition Fund provide consistent financial support around which the main work of the case is designed. The economic component of the BSIM uses economies of scale when leveraging funds under different governmental retrofit programs, such as the Better Energy Communities Scheme and the Just Transition Fund. Financing and contractors are organised for several households together, instead for each household separately.

**Energy citizenship values:** The cooperative consists of local communities, which themselves are represented by local community councils or development associations. In terms of democratic governance, decisions are made on a consensual basis and not on a majority vote principle. ECTC has gained legitimacy through its expertise and working “on the ground” with local communities/groups and has therefore become a trusted point of contact for the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) for questions of community engagement in energy-related governance.



## Replicability and scalability

The good practice BSIMs introduced above highlight how initiatives can self-sustain while incorporating social, environmental and democratic values in their DNA. These promising BSIMs have the potential to further scale their activities to impact policy and legislation (scaling up), to reach a greater number of citizens (scaling out) and to have a greater impact on norms and behaviours (scaling deep). The BSIMs furthermore have potential for being replicated in other contexts. However, special attention needs to be paid to how energy citizenship values can be safeguarded and further strengthened in such efforts.

In the following section, we will first deal with key factors for the viability of the BSIMs outlined in the section above, as well as challenges and vulnerabilities that need to be considered for their replication in other contexts. Thereafter, successful processes of *scaling up*, *scaling out* and *scaling deep* in our eight good practices will be outlined. In the next section, we introduce strategies for further scaling of energy citizenship values of these initiatives.

### Replicability in other contexts

The good practice cases presented in the last chapter were chosen as they have proved to be particularly viable and fruitful to advance energy citizenship in their respective contexts<sup>5</sup>. Could they be equally successful if replicated and adapted in other contexts? Below we list a number of key characteristics that have enabled the success of the good practice cases. We also highlight vulnerabilities of their BSIMs and the potential for replicability.

---

<sup>5</sup> Hajdinjak, M. *et al.* 2023. [Analytical report on PESTEL factors in the national and local contexts](#). EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 5.2, European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492; [Country Profiles](#) of the project's partner countries.



## Publicly led BSIMs (local/regional level)

### *Key characteristics for success*

- Enabling institutional and legislative context.
- Long-term, stable income from public financing.
- Adequate human resources and know-how, in addition to stable financing.
- Proactive policy makers and/or other political actors that drive the initiative forward.
- Capacity to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders that support the initiative.

### *Vulnerabilities*

- Changing political priorities.
- Economic recession.

### *Potential for replicability*

- Challenging due to the need for strong political drive and enabling legal and institutional contexts.
- 

## Organisationally based BSIMs (local/regional scope)

### *Key characteristics for success*

- Strong anchoring at the local scale: focused on local activities and embedded in local ecosystems of actors and informal partnerships.
- Diversity in funding, stakeholders, partnerships, and networks.

### *Vulnerabilities*

- Highly dependent on a number of engaged individuals.

### *Potential for replicability*

- Good, if well-adapted to the local context.



## Publicly led BSIMs (local/regional level)

### *Key characteristics for success*

- Enabling institutional and legislative context.
- Long-term, stable income from public financing.
- Adequate human resources and know-how, in addition to stable financing.
- Proactive policy makers and/or other political actors that drive the initiative forward.
- Capacity to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders that support the initiative.

### *Vulnerabilities*

- Changing political priorities.
- Economic recession.

### *Potential for replicability*

- Challenging due to the need for strong political drive and enabling legal and institutional contexts.
- 

## Organisationally based BSIMs (local/regional scope)

### *Key characteristics for success*

- Strong anchoring at the local scale: focused on local activities and embedded in local ecosystems of actors and informal partnerships.
- Diversity in funding, stakeholders, partnerships, and networks.

### *Vulnerabilities*

- Highly dependent on a number of engaged individuals.

### *Potential for replicability*

- Good, if well-adapted to the local context.





## Scaling up, scaling out and scaling deep

In the last section, several key characteristics for the viability of the good practice cases as well as key challenges and vulnerabilities were outlined, drawing the general context in which the spread of good practice cases can be envisioned. Here, we address the spreading of good practice BSIMs more in detail through the lenses of 3 forms of scaling - scaling up, scaling out or scaling deep - which underpin core aspects to consider for replication.

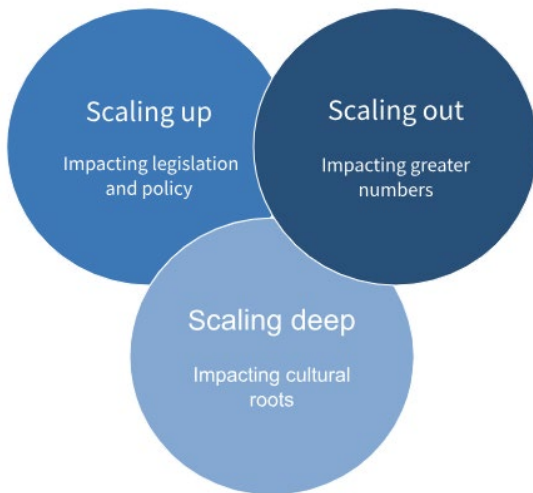


Figure 2. Scaling up, scaling out and scaling deep

**Scaling up** refers to the impact that initiatives can have on legislation and policy. The National Association of Active Citizens and the Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative are among the good practice initiatives that have successfully scaled up their activities. The National Association of Active Citizens progressively built up their citizen involvement and sought partnerships with likeminded organisations until they were large enough to have an impact on politics through lobbying and evidence-sharing. They played a key role in the ‘*Strengthening the Decentralised Participation Act*’ that was passed in the Netherlands in 2022. The

Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative, on the other hand, is regularly consulted by national governments and departments for input when developing new regulation due to the expertise they have developed in the area of community engagement in energy-related governance.

**Scaling out** relates to the number of people that can take part of and are impacted by the initiative. This scaling-aspect is more frequent among the good practice cases. The Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative consists of a community-based model that is being replicated in more and more communities in the Tipperary region. Similarly, the Hauts de France Pass Renovation has been replicated in other French regions, while also raising interests abroad.

These three cases underline that scaling up and scaling out are simpler processes for cases that benefit from high institutional support, either since they are publicly led (Hauts de France Pass Renovation) or because they have institutionalised relationships with different levels of government (Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative, National Association of Active Citizens). Thus, they have the capacity to influence both policy and legislative conditions for their functioning, as well as the diffusion of their model.

For BSIMs that do not have the same institutional support, scaling out rather means replication/adaptation of their innovative models indissociably from their core values and tools. TreeDependent’s carbon footprint compensation model is, for example, envisioned to be replicated in the UK and in India. Solocal Energy’s BSIM that empowers citizens to produce renewable energy could be adapted in other contexts where balcony photovoltaic plants are allowed.

**Scaling deep** encompasses processes that impact cultural values, norms, beliefs, perceptions, practices, and routines. Such processes are much more difficult to identify but are crucial when considering the scaling of energy citizenship values. Therefore, scaling deep should be given special attention and calls for further research.

Two of the good practice cases demonstrate how this can be done. Hydro Electricity Ourthe and Sambre contribute to energy citizenship values through improving energy literacy in the region, especially by organising visits to the hydropower plants for schools to learn about collective ownership and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the inclusion of a private company in the cooperative that has embraced the BSIM's sustainable and democratic values is another example of scaling deep. Solocal Energy provides an additional example of scaling deep, as it addresses empowerment, energy democracy and literacy in its core activities. Additionally, they mobilise DIY building-groups for solar plants and neighbourhood groups to tackle climate and energy challenges at the local scale in a more holistic way, thus scaling deep through collective processes of learning and sharing knowhow.



# Recommendations for advancing energy citizenship through business and social innovation models

## Overarching recommendations [European Institutions]

- **Include research on how energy citizenship values could be enhanced within the next *Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2025-2029)* or within the *LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme*.** This research should particularly aim to explore how energy citizenship values, such as citizen participation and control, democratic governance, and social inclusion, justice and equity could be further enabled by decision-makers through local innovative initiatives such as the ones outlined in this policy brief.
- **The creation of a European Facility for Citizen Involvement in Local Innovative Initiatives.** This facility could serve to complement the Energy Communities Repository by supporting initiatives beyond energy communities, for example led by public actors, NGOs, citizen-based organisations, or businesses, and provide funding calls, tools, recommendations, and best practices on how to involve citizens in local initiatives and enhance energy citizenship values in such endeavours.

## Recommendations targeting publicly led BSIMs [European Institutions, Member States and local/regional governments]

- Increase direct citizen involvement and control capacities within publicly led projects, for instance through the **systematic creation of a “citizen co-decision structure”** within initiatives that target citizens. This needs to be done with respect and care for a citizen-based approach to avoid local and regional authorities appropriating citizen-based mechanisms.
- **Increase the innovation capacity of local and regional authorities.** This means creating a supportive innovative environment where new types of energy transition projects with citizen-involvement can be tested and developed:
  - **Support the development and replication of innovative financial tools** (such as the Haut-de-France Pass Renovation third party financing scheme) through networks where best practices can be shared, and support can be given for their implementation. *[European Commission, Member States]*
  - **Increase the capacity of local and regional governments for innovative projects to be tested and developed** by ensuring adequate human resources, competences, and financial capacities, in order to carry out the transition as well as support and involve citizens in this endeavour. Here, innovative partnerships and collaboration between citizen-based organisations, the private and public sectors should be given particular attention. *[Member States]*
- **Develop strategies for boosting energy literacy within innovative energy transition initiatives - “Next Door Energy Literacy”.** This can be done by public authorities including citizen-based organisations or NGOs with an expertise on public outreach. It is important to ensure that energy literacy strategies are not perceived as constraining “musts” coming from above, but rather operate on a citizen-to-citizen level that raises interest and appeals to citizens’ everyday lives and challenges. *[Local and regional governments]*



- **Strengthen support to enhance environmental sustainability aspects within innovative energy transition initiatives.** For example, this could be done by ensuring that local and regional governments are adequately staffed with the right competences to support the calculation of carbon emission impacts on projects and sharing of best practices. [Member States, local and regional governments]

## Recommendations targeting organisationally based BSIMs [Member States, local and regional governments]

- **Create an enabling environment within local and regional business ecosystems** to increase innovative capacity and promote partnerships between the private sector, public sector, and citizen-led organisations. This includes:
  - Providing examples for how the private sector can enable energy citizenship jointly with other types of organisations.
  - Supporting capacity-building, professionalisation, and exchange structures/networks to share knowledge and good practices, such as the [Selbstbau.solar](#) network in Germany.
  - Create solidarity structures among organisations that could mutualise resources to enhance the resilience of the organisations' ecosystems in situations of crisis (e.g. pandemic).
  - Enable and support alternative financing tools and funding models to enhance the BSIMs viability over time.

## Recommendations targeting community based BSIMs [European Institutions, Member States and local/regional governments]

- **Earmark EU-funding and technical assistance for citizen-based organisations,** for example in initiatives like the Green Assist project and the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub. [European Commission]
- **Speed up and improve transposition of Renewable Energy Communities (REC) and Citizen Energy Communities (CEC) frameworks and support structures at the national level.** Ensure that the transposition limits co-optation of these models by incumbent businesses and that it is well-adapted to the national context. Remove bureaucratic hurdles and improve support, for example through one stop shops for REC/CEC. [Member States]
- **Provide support to local authorities and regions that need increased human resources, competences, and financial capacities to support community based BSIMs.** [European Institutions, Member States]
  - **Support community-based organisations in improving energy citizenship values in their projects, such as by:** [Member States, local and regional governments]
    - Enhancing environmental sustainability aspects of initiatives, for example, by providing recommendations and support on how to carry out carbon emission calculations and facilitating the sharing of best practices.
    - Sharing best practices on how to improve energy literacy beyond the initiative.
    - Co-developing strategies for participation beyond financial contribution.
    - Providing networking and capacity building opportunities to support the emergence of similar initiatives beyond the local community.

