

**Project acronym:** EnergyPROSPECTS  
**Title:** PROactive Strategies and Policies  
for Energy Citizenship Transformation  
**Grant Agreement number:** 101022492



# EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT AND KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY

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**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.

## Fostering collective empowerment

### Why join a hybrid-community-based ENCI initiative

Through ENCI initiatives, people have been able to put their skills and knowledge on the energy system to the test. They also can gain new knowledge and information:

The whole essence of the case provides opportunities in both dimensions: practicing existing knowledge of the stakeholders and obtaining new knowledge necessary to implement goals (Interview 51, energy citizen association)

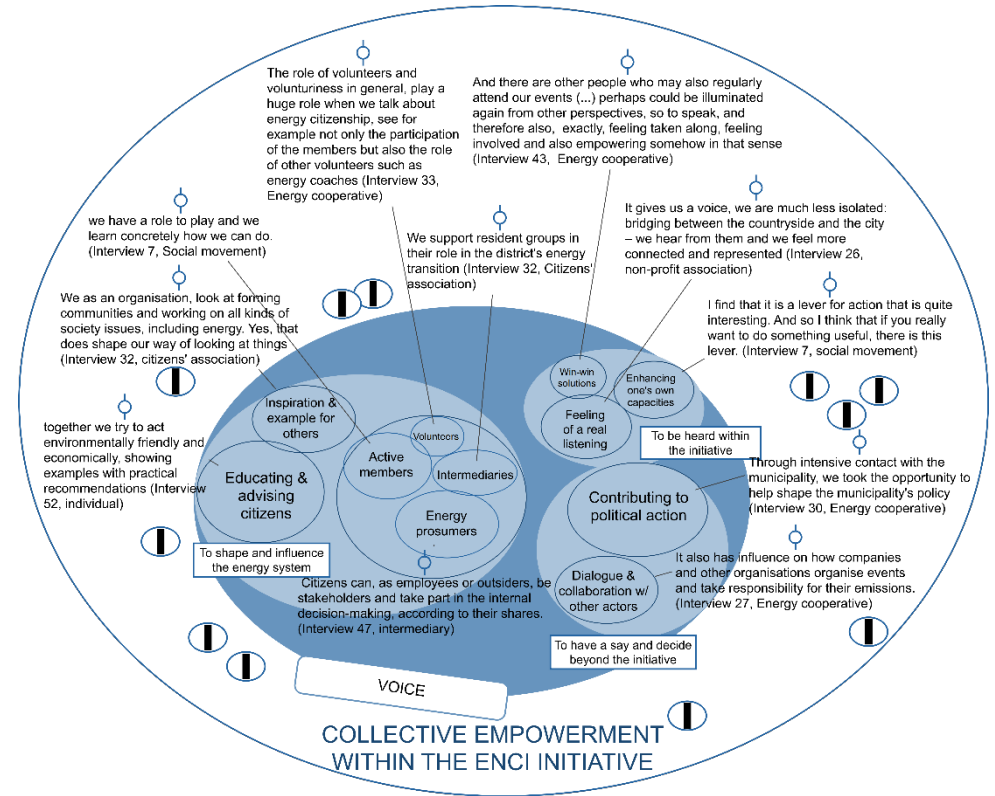
Citizen-based initiatives tap into the full potential of human resources based on what each member can achieve, what their potential is and what contribution they can make to the initiative: "It's basically: What is your job profile? And support the evolution of people's function profiles" (Interview 1, Institutional campaign). Therefore, anyone can be of service, as the ethos is to build from the ground up, where everyone, through their personal resources, contributes to the functioning of the project. Furthermore, key point of collective empowerment refers to the possibility of having a voice within and beyond the ENCI initiative (see figure 6).

To be heard within an organisation is crucial, or to be of the political sphere and acting in shaping and influencing the energy system are three key points that appear in our respondents' discourses.

- **To be heard within the initiative.** The feel truly heard empowers members: By listening to your voice and those of the other, the organisation contributes to encouraging personal skills, helping you feel that you have something to contribute. Likewise, initiatives offer spaces for participation in contact with other local actors: "Being a member of project and a boarder network of project activities, involving other communities, provides opportunity for discussion and selection of solutions to be promoted by the project" (Interview 53, cooperation project for renewable energy production).

The consensus within the community as the basic rule for decision-making does contribute to the feeling of empowerment of each member, of which voice can be seen as decisive (Interview 48, co-housing)

Figure 6. Collective empowerment: voice



- **To have a say and decide within and beyond the initiative.** You decide how

you wish to participate. For certain people, participation may be less active, contributing capital, attending the odd meeting and/or occasionally exercising a right to vote. In other cases, there are different levels of active participation, with commitment to the construction of elements necessary for its functioning, the preparation of activities, the disclosure of the initiative's aims, etc. For others, it is important to be able to be involved in effective decision-making: "Through intensive contact with the municipality of Weert, we took the opportunity to help shape the municipality's policy" (Interview 30, energy cooperative).

- **To shape and influence the energy system.** If it applies to you, the initiative can become means of connection with local government, and allows you to contribute as a pivotal element in decision making: "[the municipality] needs support [from the case] to meet their [climate] targets. We can and responsible for shaping the energy system, to some extent at least (interview 28, intermediary)]. Involvement levels in initiatives with local, regional and even national governments may vary depending on the nature of the institution. It is therefore significant that you choose your level of participation according to your interests, possibilities, resources.

**[Please stop here for doing Activity 6].**





# Activity N.º 6

## Let's consider and reflect on my potential commitment to an ENCI initiative by:

*Please take a brief pause here so that you can reflect more deeply on what you would be willing to commit to as a member of an ENCI initiative, what are your possibilities and what resources can you offer?*

	My knowledge and skills are...	My available resources are...
Finding out how I can reduce my energy consumption at home/in the workplace (e.g. using more efficient devices, installing solar panels on the roof...)	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Making changes to my consumption patterns (e.g. reducing hot water consumption and/or lowering the temperature, turning off lights...)	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Fostering and backing the creation of energy-sharing communities or neighborhoods by getting involved in an organization.	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Involvement in assemblies, consultations and public decision-making debates on energy issues, as a "guest" (virtually or in person).	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Being a minority shareholder in a project (e.g. a wind farm launcher by a private company with public support) with the entitlement to buy shares.	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Being actively and directly involved in the creation of an organization (e.g. an energy community) where the onus is on you and the other members.	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Being actively and directly involved in an existing organization (e.g. an energy community) exercising speaking and voting rights in decision-making in all the processes that take place in the organization.	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Contributing to the debate on alternative forms of mobility and energy production and consumption (e.g. power transmission lines, solar farms, wind energy) that is promoted by non-profit organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	
Engagement in climate protest movements (e.g. Friday for Future) against the construction of new power-lines, anti- or pro- nuclear movements...	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Scarce <input type="checkbox"/> Lacking	

<sup>1</sup> We refer here both to the personal resources at your disposal (e.g. knowledge and skills, information, availability of time, interest and motivation, space and infrastructure, materials...) and social resources (e.g. having a support network nearby or acquaintances, contact with people, organisations and places, proximity to initiatives and information regarding them...).



Finally, we must not overlook the fact that through an ENCI initiative, you can shape and influence the energy system. The responsibility you can hold individually and collectively in the energy system is related to the influence that your behaviour and actions can serve as inspiration or example for other people: "I have realised that my voice has power, as I create content through it every day as to influence people to take action" (Interview 52, individual energy citizen), and the dynamics that are generated in the organisation you are part of:

Personally, I would like people to see that model, because in fact many people are doing it and are imitating it. (...). I think that there we would like to influence and, above all, in teaching circles. Searching for educational tools to influence that. Yet deep down, what our ultimate aim is to inspire. (Interview 35, Co-housing)

- **Acting collectively can generate wider impact.** Your commitment may also extend beyond by passing on your knowledge and experience to others, offering advice and help, or even educating others. These collective actions are basis of creating and promoting new roles in the wider energy system:

I have learned over the years the best way to change anything out there in the world is to become a standout example of what that change might look like. So, if we can change our own community to be an example of that, that will influence much wider groups out there (interview 14, energy cooperative).

- **Moving from the role of consumer to the prosumer.** Various roles can be played in collective citizenship-based or hybrid initiatives and social movements. They achieve by helping them to become part of the actions that take place within them and in the wider energy system. It entails giving citizens, beyond the people who are part of the initiative, a space for power and decision-making within the energy system: "we give citizens the power to act and to make decisions, and this helps to further democracy a little" (Interview 7, energy cooperative).
- **Members of the initiative can be active inside and outside the initiative.** The role of active member is facilitated both by the possibilities offered by the governance system of the organisation itself, by the individual's desire to

participate, and by the possibilities offered by the energy system to act freely.

there are rules that are forced on us from outside and that can be shifted as to add many voices and draft manifestos, but it is difficult for us to change them. That said, there are still there are many other things such as promoting local communities, promoting people having deeper-rooted knowledge and learning to save energy. Placards can be placed in your home. Facilitating all the above is doable and it is underway (Interview 41, energy cooperative).

- **Initiatives may also require support from third parties.** For example, from educational institutions such as universities, which have a privileged place in the social sphere to champion the fight against climate change and promote commitment to the energy transition:

Here the question of energy consumption is directly linked to the matter of sustainability and climate. While also being a stakeholder in society, the university similarly wants to engage. Thus, it takes on a role of exemplarity. In any case, it has a leadership role in the climate emergency and therefore, work must focus on the University's strategic commitments, and how it this is specifically passed on (Interview 1, Institutional campaign).

- **Initiatives can support the creation of new entities.** For example, energy communities. Through knowledge and experience, it serves as a support for other groups to start their own production and consumption projects:

we help to create an energetic community. If the villagers want, we participate in the energy community, if necessary, and if not, we are there as advisors. What we do is promote, normally, through our partners who think they can set one up, we accompany them to develop all of this... by giving talks and so forth (Interview 37, energy cooperative).

**[Please stop here for doing Activity 7].**





## Let's think about myself once more:

After reading these stories, would you change anything about the first two questions:

- When it comes to energy-related behavioural aspects, to that extent do you feel that you have been granted autonomy and choiceregarding your energyoptions?
- To what extent do you feel you are able to influence what is being discussed and decided upon in relation to the energy system?

# Activity N.º 7

If you already belong to an ENCI initiative	It you are not yet, but might one day...	Answers
I have the freedom to make decisions on what I do and do not want to do within the initiative (i.e. I can take tailor my choices to my interests)	I have the freedom to make decisions on what I do and do not want to do in relation to my energy choices.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but it could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, totally
There are different options for participating within an initiative (from occasional and sporadic participation to an active participation)	I could increase my autonomy and choices by participating in an ENCI initiative.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but it could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, totally
In my organization my knowledge and skills are taken into account when making decisions that affect us all.	I have knowledge and skills in energy operations that I could use to find solutions to reduce net emissions.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but it could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, totally
I have a voice and it is heard (I can express opinions, discuss) and my opinions are borne in mind (it has relevance within the agreements made) within the initiative	I am interested in engaging an ENCI initiative, but I don't know if I have (or will have the time - and I don't know what it will be).	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but it could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, totally
The initiative acts as a loudspeaker for my opinions, thoughts and demands (i.e. through it I feel I can influence the wider system: educating others, inspiring and giving advice...)	I have many things to say about the energy system, and a strong desire to have my voice heard and acted upon.	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but it could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, totally
<i>If the answers to any of the above is NO or YES, BUT IT COULD BE IMPROVED, try to find out <b>why</b> (e.g. because of the decision-making system set-up in the initiative, because I do not have the time to get more active...)</i>	<i>If the answers to any of the above is NO or YES, BUT IT COULD BE IMPROVED, we recommend you to read on to find out more about <b>how</b> these initiatives work.</i>	

