

# Newsletter

ISSUE 3 - SEPTEMBER 2022



**Welcome to the quarterly newsletter from EC²: Energy Citizenship and Energy Communities for a Clean Energy Transition.**

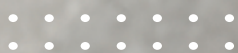
Funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Grants, EC²'s aim is to discover what it takes for energy citizenship and energy communities to thrive.



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# Introduction: Winter is coming – sustainability and security in the spotlight

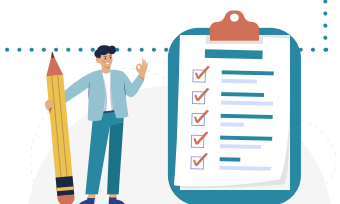
**W**ith winter around the corner in Europe – on the heels of another record-breaking summer – the issues of both energy security and climate crisis remain firmly on the agenda. As governments take measures to reduce demand and soften the financial impact, what is the role of citizens? Energy communities can help citizens cut costs while consuming cleaner, locally-produced energy – as well as weaving stronger and more resilient communities – but barriers remain to increased uptake.



***Our work continues on both identifying these barriers and co-creating resources and policy recommendations to overcome them.***

Having established our definition of energy citizenship, longitudinal studies are now under way to explore what motivates individuals and groups to join energy communities and the relationship between the social, legal, and economic energy community set-up, and energy citizenship of members and non-members. Meanwhile, ground is being prepared for the project's next exciting phase of creating tools and resources to empower citizens to become active co-creators of a new, decentralised and democratic clean energy system.

This will include **policy recommendations** aimed at reducing the barriers to citizenship, and an energy citizenship academy.



Finally, we're pleased to present a new infographic visualising our definition of energy citizenship – read on to see it and to find out what else has been going on in EC<sup>2</sup> and among our partners.



# What is energy citizenship?

## Presenting a new visualisation



Back in February, we released our interdisciplinary definition of energy citizenship: you can read the full deliverable that dives deep into the definition and the debates surrounding it [here](https://www.ec2project.eu). We're pleased to present a new infographic that helps the general public to visualise and understand the definition: what it is, what it means, and what energy citizenship can look like. We hope you enjoy it - feel free to share!





# WHAT IS ENERGY CITIZENSHIP?

To tackle the climate crisis, we need a radical shift in our energy system.

“

**ENERGY CITIZENSHIP** is people's rights to and responsibilities for a just and sustainable energy transition.

**THE EU AIMS FOR 45% OF ITS ENERGY** to come from renewable sources by 2030. This will require not only technological innovation, but **citizen participation** and collective action.

## WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN?

### RIGHTS

people are **entitled to and supported by** governments and decision-makers to access energy services and opportunities to participate in the energy transition

### JUST TRANSITION

a fair and **inclusive system** where the costs and benefits of the transition are fairly distributed, and nobody is left behind

### SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION

making decisions that seeking **long-term stability** of the environment and economy

### RESPONSIBILITIES

people are **committed to** promoting and participating in the energy transition

**CITIZENS** are already playing a crucial role in the energy transition

**1800+**     
COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECTS IN EUROPE

      
**1 MILLION+**  
CITIZENS INVOLVED

These citizen-led projects are **reducing carbon emissions**, reviving local economies, and helping reduce energy poverty.

## WHAT CAN ENERGY CITIZENSHIP LOOK LIKE?

- ✓ Changing energy suppliers
- ✓ Writing to decision-makers about clean energy issues
- ✓ Installing solar panels
- ✓ Joining a renewable energy community
- ✓ Collaborating with friends, neighbours, and fellow citizens to work together on energy issues

But there are often **legal and economic barriers** to active energy citizenship, even if people are motivated to act - so **governments need to support citizen action** by removing barriers and creating supportive policies for the energy transition.

## The concept of energy citizenship represents a PARADIGM SHIFT IN OUR ENERGY AND ECONOMIC MODELS:

From a market of passive consumers to one where empowered citizens, **supported by their communities, governments and regulators**, take **collective action** around the production and use of clean, green energy, in a way where nobody gets left behind.

## THE GOAL?

To create an **equitable and regenerative energy system**, for a better world and a thriving living planet for current and future generations.



# Moving from research to practice: Who can help mainstream energy citizenship?



Yu-Yi Huynh, ICLEI Europe

Up to now, EC<sup>2</sup>'s work on energy citizenship and its links to energy communities has been primarily research-oriented. In addition to this, the project is now starting to increase its attention to practical applications and engagement with wider stakeholders.



**Who could help to mainstream and strengthen energy citizenship in Europe, in cities, in communities?**

**How could EC<sup>2</sup> help them in this work?**

These were amongst the key questions which the participants tried to collectively answer in a workshop organised by ICLEI Europe, which is leading the project's work on practical advice and policy recommendations. Participants included project partners and external observers from diverse sectors and backgrounds including researchers, local governments, and energy communities.

## Stakeholders to activate the transformative potentials of energy citizenship

Placing people at the centre of the energy transition is not only central to the concept of energy citizenship, but also to the project's methodology. EC<sup>2</sup> is producing new knowledge on people's engagement and empowerment in the energy transition, focusing on barriers and facilitators but also on tools to support this. In order to make sure that this knowledge will have a transformative impact on the energy sector, energy communities, and cities, the project aims to engage with people who can use this knowledge to support their work and actions for a more sustainable and just energy transition.

The stakeholders identified in the workshop include a variety of relevant political actors, administrators, interest or advocacy groups, social and community actors, and energy producers. Overall, the participants concluded that it would be smart for the project to focus on initiative takers and multiplier levels (e.g. network actors). The idea of "training the trainer" emerged many times as a possible approach for the project to connect with practice, as well as to deal with contextual differences between countries.





## Using roleplaying to get into the mindset

To better understand the motivations and needs driving different people to connect with EC<sup>2</sup>, and to join the upcoming Energy Citizenship Academy (due for launch in March 2023), the workshop used imaginary characters and roleplaying. The characters included Maya (EU official in DG Energy), Kazimir (city official in the energy department), Valentina (active member of an energy community), Aisha (expert in civil society organisation), and Andrea (student and climate activist).

On the one hand, the creative approach helped to **step into the shoes of 'real' people and connect the project work to their needs**. On the other hand, the exercise encouraged researchers to step outside their comfort zone and allowed the practitioners to share their experiences. Even though the characters were imaginary, they are based on real people involved in the energy transformation - some even present at the project meeting! Keeping them in mind is crucial for furthering the mindset of putting people at the centre of the research, before developing new tools and drafting policy recommendations.



## Stakeholder engagement continues and strengthens EC<sup>2</sup>

EC<sup>2</sup> is already meeting and engaging with different stakeholders, for example through the local co-creation workshops. More in-depth analysis on the stakeholders will follow after conversations with sister projects and the results of the longitudinal survey study - the latter being crucial for identifying marginalised and vulnerable groups in relation to energy citizenship.



# Energy security, energy citizenship and energy communities

at Economic Forum in Poland  
September 2022



Bożena Ryszawska, Piotr Szymański

**E**C<sup>2</sup> project partners Professor Bożena Ryszawska and Professor Piotr Szymański from Wrocław University of Economics and Business participated this September in the 31st Economic Forum, in Karpacz, Poland: "Europe in the Face of New Challenges". The Forum is the largest meeting platform in Central and Eastern Europe, where issues of security, economic development, challenges and crises are debated, while also presenting specific solutions and innovative ideas.

Bożena Ryszawska moderated the panel entitled "Energy security and green economy in the current geopolitical situation", commenting that *'the transition towards a green economy and renewable energy has been identified for several years as a mega trend - a process that cannot be stopped. An additional mega trend in this context is climate change, the decline of biodiversity, limited access to energy and other natural resources.'*

Katarzyna Szwarz, a participant of the debate from the Polish Ministry of Finance, emphasised the importance of green finance in economic transformation, not only in the energy sector, but also in transport, construction and agriculture. Katarzyna Jodko-Piorecka of the Lukaszewicz Research Network also commented on the necessity of a green transformation of the economy and presented research projects in this area.

Piotr Szymański stressed the importance of energy citizenship and energy communities in this process based on results of the EC<sup>2</sup> project.

He also led a panel devoted to the goals of the European Green Deal in the context of the new geopolitical reality. The panel was attended by MPs Beata Maciejewska and Adam Gawęda, marshals of the Silesian provinces Jakub Chełstowski and Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Gustaw Brzezina and the president of Xylem Polska, Rafał Bonter.

The subject of the discussion was, among others, delays in the implementation of the IMED and REDII Directives, a fair energy transition and the exclusion of residents of multi-family buildings, a small 16% share of smart electricity metres, the lack of a collective prosumer and peer-to-peer institution, misdirection of public funds to support the purchase of coal stoves, and eco-pea coal and gas. Representatives of parliament and local authorities also answered the question of whether they had done their job well in recent years to provide citizens with clean, cheap and safe energy, reduce pollution and ensure the transition to a clean circular economy. Overall, the Forum provided rich opportunities for dialogue and important insights into the future of green energy in the current global situation.



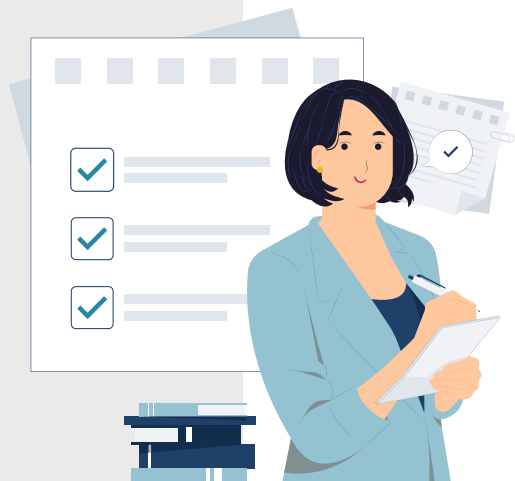


# The legal and economic barriers to energy citizenship: bringing in the voice of citizens



Maria Bertel, University of Graz

Over the last few months, we have been elaborating a list of legal and economic barriers and facilitators for energy citizenship, based on an earlier report on the legal and economic situation of energy communities in six EU member states (Austria, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands). This list will help form the basis of the tools EC<sup>2</sup> will be developing to help overcome these obstacles. What we were still lacking was the citizen perspective. Finally, in spring and early summer, citizens had the opportunity to express their concerns and ideas.



## Where did the co-creation workshops take place and what did they look like?

EC<sup>2</sup> will be creating tools and policy recommendations aimed at helping citizens overcome obstacles to energy citizenship - so a key part of our project's research component has been studying what these obstacles are. The perspective on legal and economic barriers has been enriched by four co-creation workshops exploring people's general motivation to establish or join an energy community. The workshops took place in Arterra Bizimodu, Spain; Groningen, Netherlands; Prusice, Poland; and Scalenghe, Italy. The Graz Law Team together with ZSI, ICLEI and GEN Europe elaborated a template for the moderation of the workshops which was adapted by the facilitating teams in each country according to the local needs.

## Who discussed what?

The workshops allowed for the meeting of participants with different levels of experience regarding energy communities and knowledge regarding the energy transition. Additionally, local political representatives were present in most cases. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the challenges of participating in an energy community, and how these could be overcome. The discussions in the workshops can be grouped around four main topics: the setting-up of an energy community, the motivation to start and/or participate in an energy community, and support in setting-up and running an energy community. All questions were linked to the motivation and willingness of people to get active in an energy community.



## What did we learn?

The results can be grouped around different topics: **the motivating factors** are mainly **environmental concerns, personal motives and the support of a group**, whereas factors that are keeping people away from engaging in an energy community are often linked to **legal and political factors**, as well as **lack of knowledge and lack of public support and funding**.

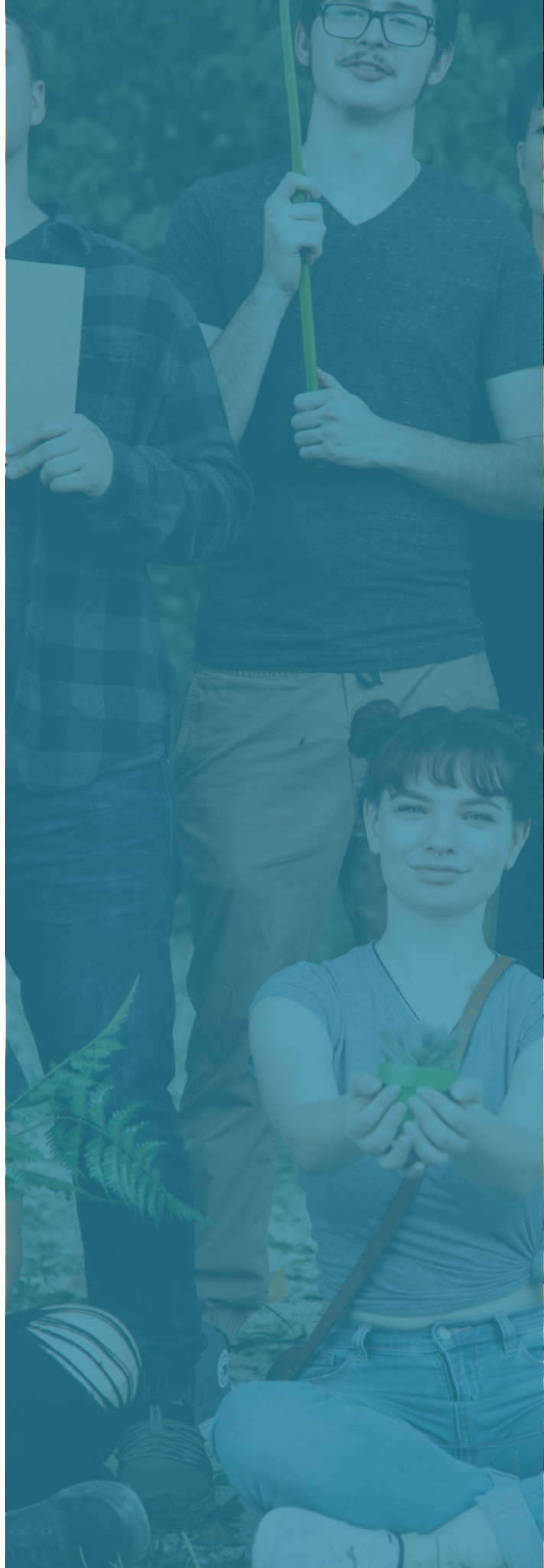
Additionally, personal factors and the (difficult) market situation were mentioned by citizens as barriers to participation.



### How did the co-creation workshops influence the results of the analysis?

It is very interesting that the citizens' perspective provided by the co-creation workshops both supports and strengthens the findings of the previously undertaken analysis of the legal framework and of the market analysis. Concerning barriers, the legal factors, lack of knowledge, lack of public support and economic resources, and market factors were barriers also addressed in the initial legal and economic analysis. Moreover, the citizens' perspective has shown that both a legal system that people perceive as accessible for their questions and concerns, and economic conditions which are supportive of their endeavours can work as facilitators and motivating factors.

Yet the co-creation workshops have shown that there are barriers which we probably cannot overcome with political and legal action or better economic support alone. For example, citizens mentioned personal factors, such as a lack of interest in topics of energy transition or ideological factors, as individual barriers. With this in mind, we remain curious for further research within the EC<sup>2</sup> project on how these topics can be addressed.





# Buurkracht online: a platform to support neighbourhood initiatives



Djoera Eerland, Buurkracht

**E**C<sup>2</sup> works with practice partners: on-the-ground citizens initiatives that are working examples of energy communities in action. Netherlands-based Buurkracht is one such partner. Here Djoera Eerland presents their latest innovation to make it easier for citizens to collaborate.

// **'Buurkracht' translates as 'neighbour-power'.**

We chose this name because we strongly believe in the power of neighbours. Together they have the power to make things more beautiful, better, greener, safer or more fun in their neighbourhood, and thus increase its social network and resilience. That is why we make it possible for neighbours throughout the Netherlands to connect and start activities together. Because only by doing things together does real connection arise.

Recently, we asked our neighbourhood teams and other citizens initiatives what they need to use their 'buurkracht' with even more success. Their answer was: "additional support in the areas of communication, contact management and administrative tasks, so we can dedicate more time to organising activities in our neighbourhood".

## A new platform

That is why we have developed Buurkracht Online: a handy online platform that supports initiatives and offers the possibility to carry out professional and structural actions. It offers an easy interface to build a well-functioning website, to design promotional material and have it printed, to keep a clear membership administration, to draw up attractive newsletters, send out surveys, and more. This way neighbourhood initiatives can grow and become a structural, long lasting neighbourhood level organisation - for example an Energy Community of EnergyCooperative.



[Read more here](#)



# “Keep up the good work, Groningers”: showcasing citizen sustainability



**R**ecognising the important role of local government actors in the clean energy transition, EC<sup>2</sup> is also collaborating with three municipalities - Groningen in the Netherlands, Scaleghe in Italy, and Prusice in Poland. Groningen Municipality has been busy recently with several sustainability initiatives that highlight the role of citizens.

**Groningen Municipality launched a new sustainability platform this summer:** a one-stop shop for all sustainability-related issues in the area, from transport and food to waste issues and doing greener business. Its sustainability tips are complemented by stories from citizens on how they're tackling climate issues. The “Ga zo door Groningers” (“Keep up the good work Groningers”) campaign for the platform highlights how neighbours and citizens have been contributing to making the municipality more sustainable, for example showcasing the number of new solar panels installed in the past year (an impressive 60,905).

A representative of the municipality said of the campaign: “This is contagious: when you see what is already being done, it motivates you to participate.” This is one of the factors EC<sup>2</sup> is exploring when it comes to energy citizenship and participation in energy communities - the impact of the behaviour of others and being part of a group as a motivating factor.

Groningen has also recently been selected as one of the 100 participating cities in the EU's “Mission on 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities”. We're excited to be working together with a municipality that's so committed to sustainability and look forward to seeing how citizens will be engaged in the transition to carbon neutrality.

**3.110 NIEUWE GEVELTUINTJES\***



**GA ZO DOOR GRONINGERS**

**60.905 EXTRA ZONNEPANELEN\***



**GA ZO DOOR GRONINGERS**





# Stay connected



Whether you're **researching energy citizenship**, a member of an **energy community**, working on **energy policy**, or simply curious about what the **green energy transition** can look like - we invite you to stay connected with us on social media:



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