

What do we mean when we talk about energy citizenship?

Ten tentative types of citizen involvement in the energy transition

European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

Conceptual typology



Synthesis brief 2

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Citizen participation and acceptability of the energy transition will determine the success of the European Green Deal.¹ Energy citizenship is a key concept in this quest, but for many decision makers it remains unknown. What do we 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?

The first EnergyPROSPECTS synthesis brief laid out the foundations for a nuanced understanding of how energy citizenship takes shape across Europe today.² **This second synthesis brief presents 10 tentative types of energy citizenship that will be further refined along the course of the project.** The aim is to go beyond the most obvious and common forms and broaden the perspective of what we mean when we talk about energy citizenship. Ultimately, the goal is to provide evidence-based policy recommendations to promote sustainable, democratic, just, or otherwise desirable forms of energy citizenship in the EU.

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 framework³, a typology of ten types of has been developed. **These ten types provide a broad picture of the phenomenon and a lens through which existing forms of energy citizenship become describable.** This helps to structure the collection and analysis of 500 cases of energy citizenship that will be carried out in the project. However, it is important to bear in mind that these ten conceptual types describe ‘ideal-types’ of energy citizenship. It is likely that the case studies will reveal cases that are combinations of different types or that altogether new types will emerge. Further along in the project, the typology will be adapted accordingly.

To create the ten types of energy citizenship, two key dimensions of energy citizenship were derived from the conceptual framework – agency (where and how) and outcome-orientation (to what end).

¹ European Commission, 2021. Proposal for a Council recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality. COM(2021) 801 final.

² Pel, Bonno and Thalberg, Karin. 2022. Synthesis Brief 1: Setting the scene for a critical exploration of the roles of citizens in the European energy transition. European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.










³ Pel, Bonno; Debourdeau, Ariane; Kemp, Rene; Dumitru, Adina; Schäfer, Martina; Vadovics, Edina; Fahy, Frances; Fransolet, Aurore; and Pellerin-Carlin, Thomas. 2021. Conceptual framework energy citizenship, EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 2.1. European Commission Grant Agreement No. 101022492.

The five categories of agency pertain to the levels, constellations, and arenas of action where energy citizenship can be found and practised.

- Individual level:**
- the private sphere of the household
 - within organisations (such as workplaces and schools)
 - in the public sphere
- Collective level:**
- as citizen-based organisational forms or in hybrid constellations where different types of actors collaborate
 - as social movements

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.

- Reform-oriented:**
- pragmatic and incremental change of the energy system
 - limited considerations of energy democracy and justice
 - lifestyle and societal changes with shallow environmental ambitions
- Transformation-oriented:**
- radical change of the energy system
 - strong commitment to energy democracy and justice principles
 - profound pro-environmental changes in everyday life and society

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

Examples of different types of citizen involvement in the energy transition

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

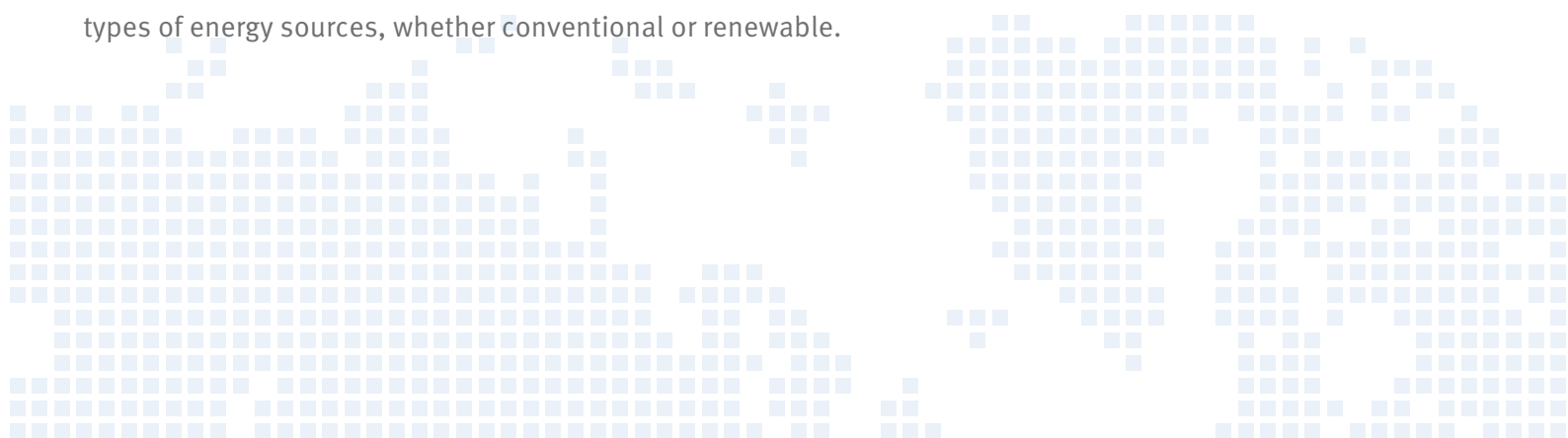
6. Make their vote count as an individual in the public sphere by mobilising votes for the energy transition, for example, in referenda for a specific energy transition pathway at different geographical scales, or in general elections that are directly targeting climate and energy transition issues.

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.

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.

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.

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.



Towards a database of 500 cases of energy citizenship

In the next steps of the project these types will be empirically assessed and refined through a database of 500 case studies across Europe, followed by 40 detailed case studies. The analyses that will be undertaken later in the project will also consider how different forms of citizen involvement evolve across time and space, for example, in different geographic contexts to be able to determine the societal conditions under which sustainable, democratic, just, or otherwise desirable forms of energy citizenship thrive. This will provide key inputs for policy makers at the local, national and EU level, to make sure that the energy transition truly belongs to everyone.

Coming up from Energy PROSPECTS

- Regional workshops in Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Hungary
- A database of 500 cases of energy citizenship
- 40 in-depth case studies
- An empowerment toolkit for citizens and practitioners
- An exploration of the roles of ICT, business, and social innovation models
- An analysis of political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and legal conditions that enable or hinder energy citizenship at the local, national and EU-level
- Policy recommendations aimed at the local, national and EU-level

Deliverable 2.2 – Conceptual typology

Debourdeau, Ariane; Schäfer, Martina; Pel, Bonno;
Kemp, Rene; Vadovics, Edina; and Dumitru, Adina,
2021. Conceptual typology. EnergyPROSPECTS Deliverable 2.2,
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