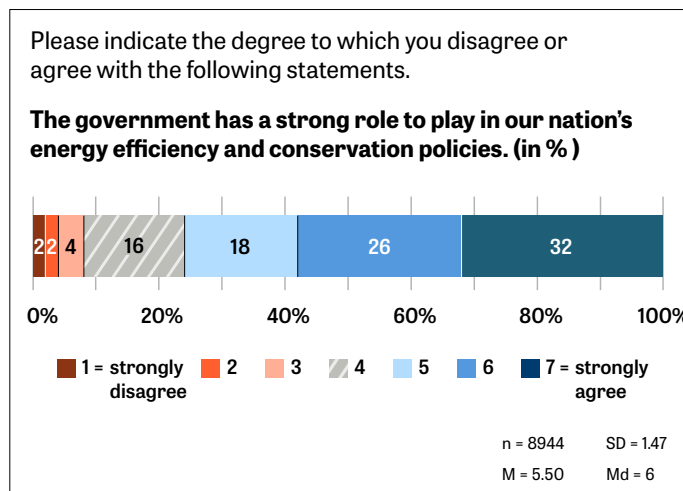


Everyday green energy actions:

## Engage citizens in the energy transition

**The European Green Deal aims to involve citizens in the energy transition by emphasizing their central role in driving socio-technical and socio-political innovations.** It highlights grassroots implementation of sustainable energy initiatives.

**GRETA addresses this policy challenge by advocating for inclusive policy solutions for all EU residents.** It recognizes that citizens contribute to the green energy transition not only through formalized Citizen Energy Communities (CECs) or Renewable Energy Communities (RECs), but also through various Green Energy Transition Actions in their daily lives. This recognition is crucial for the development of green and equitable energy transition policies in the EU and its Member States.



**Figure 1.** The project GRETA conducted a multinational survey with 10,000 participants across 16 EU countries. The majority (76%) of the EU citizens somewhat or strongly agree that the government has to play a strong role regarding efficiency and conservation policies. This highlights that both active (energy) citizens and policy support is needed for a successful energy transition.

### ABOUT THE PROJECT GRETA:

**GRETA aims to foster energy citizenship emergence by enhancing awareness and removing policy barriers within the European Union.** Its primary objective is to comprehensively investigate the conditions and challenges associated with energy citizenship to derive policy recommendations and policy tools to implement a just and green energy transition, ensuring inclusivity for all.

The project focuses on the relationship between energy citizenship behavior and the socio-political context, in which people engage in Green Energy Transition Actions. It particularly highlights the crucial role of policies in facilitating and empowering these activities.

Based on empirical research - drawing on data from a multinational survey, as well as six case studies conducted in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the Netherlands - the project offers policy recommendations to facilitate the engagement of citizens in current energy transition efforts.

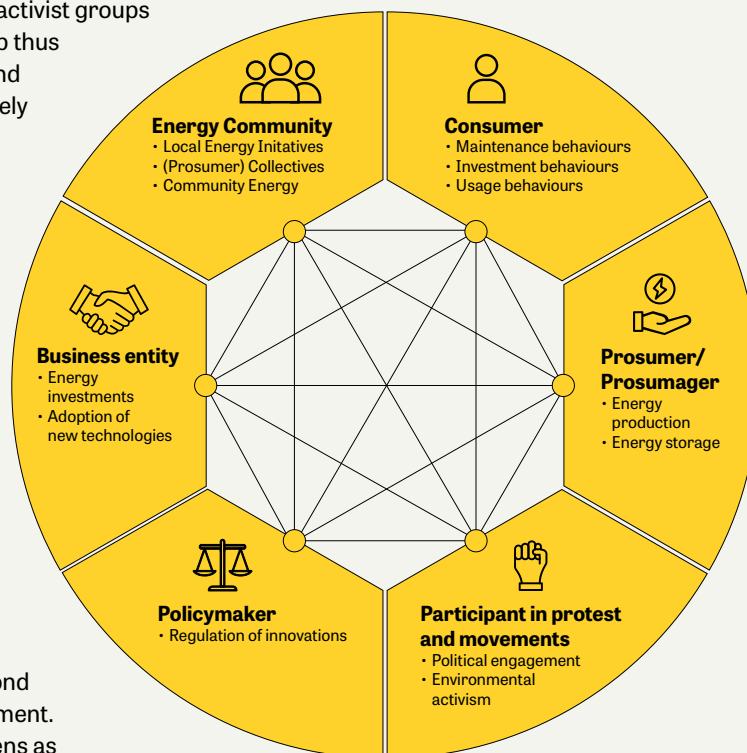
## ENERGY CITIZENSHIP

**Energy citizenship is about the active participation of citizens in energy systems in a particular geographical area.** Active participation can be both social and political, either as individuals (e.g., through energy efficiency measures in households or opting for sustainable modes of transportation in daily life) or in larger groups (e.g., through engagement with energy policy in climate activist groups or energy communities). Energy citizenship thus takes various forms including all socially and politically engaged stakeholders who actively participate in the energy transition.

Energy citizenship encompasses a wide range of behaviors, where individuals or collectives actively contribute to the transition towards sustainable energy through their everyday actions, political engagement, and the exercise of their rights and responsibilities.

Different types of energy citizens can be identified based on their behavior, including consumers, business entities, and policymakers (refer to Figure 2 for an overview of these types and their behaviors in the energy system). Energy citizen engagement thus goes beyond traditional consumer or prosumer involvement. While the latter focuses on the role of citizens as consumers or producers of energy as a commodity, Green Energy Transition Actions recognize the diverse ways in which energy shapes people's lives. Energy citizenship engagement empowers individuals and communities to do their part for the sustainability of the energy system.

**Figure 2.** Overview of energy citizens and their behaviours in the energy system (adapted from Schlindwein & Montalvo, 2023).



# Policy recommendations for EU policy makers

GRETA emphasizes the need to enhance regulatory frameworks to ensure the meaningful inclusion of all individuals in the energy transition. While acknowledging the value of policies that enable citizen participation in formalized Citizen Energy Communities (CECs) or Renewable Energy Cooperatives (RECs), GRETA recognizes that energy citizenship encompasses a broader spectrum of activities. These activities include adopting sustainable transportation, practicing energy efficiency at home, organizing campaigns, and seeking more information about energy.

However, engaging in these actions often requires both time and financial investment, creating a significant barrier for various societal groups. This gap between already engaged citizens and those underrepresented in energy transition efforts needs to be addressed. To overcome this challenge, project GRETA recommends the following policy actions on the next pages.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

Promote the implementation of **policy incentives that acknowledge and compensate for time and financial commitment** citizens invest in engagement activities beyond formalized Citizen Energy Communities (CECs) or Renewable Energy Communities (RECs).

### 1. IMPLEMENT POLICY INCENTIVES TO ACKNOWLEDGE CITIZENS' TIME AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

To encourage citizen participation, policy incentives can be provided, such as free or reduced-cost public transport and monetary compensation (e.g., vouchers) for organizing neighborhood initiatives below the CEC and REC thresholds. These measures can generate greater interest in the energy transition, particularly among underrepresented communities.



Example:

**The Earnest App - a virtual community for sustainable mobility (Germany).**

The case study examines how using a sustainability app can promote energy citizenship in a virtual community. Research findings suggest that as the financial and time commitment increases for participating in a Green Energy Transition Activity, people are less likely to engage.

## 2. ESTABLISH FUNDING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ENERGY INTERMEDIARIES TO SUPPORT ENERGY CITIZENSHIP

An effective approach to empower underrepresented communities in the Green Energy Transition Actions involves the engagement of mediators. These mediators serve a dual role: they interpret policy and regulatory frameworks to facilitate the implementation of local and regional transition goals, while also providing policymakers with insights into the objectives and resources available to communities. To achieve this objective,

it is essential to establish national training programs that support, educate, and financially compensate energy intermediaries operating at the local and regional levels. Special emphasis should be placed on recruiting energy intermediaries from vulnerable groups, fostering effective assistance and ensuring inclusive engagement in the energy transition for all.

By implementing these measures, we can foster community empowerment, ensuring that all segments of society have equal access to information, resources, and opportunities in the realm of green energy transition.



### Example: Renewable Energy District (Italy).

The case study focuses on the Pilastro-Roveri district in northeast Bologna, where the GECO (Green Energy Community) project has been active since 2019. The project aims to assist the local communities (residents and business owners) in designing and establishing a renewable energy community. Pilastro-Roveri is a district with diverse socio-economic groups. Research findings emphasize the importance of policy measures to eliminate financial and informational obstacles, thereby empowering vulnerable communities to actively engage as energy citizens.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

Promote national programs for **energy intermediaries** operating on local and regional levels paying special attention to vulnerable communities.

### FURTHER READING:

<https://projectgreta.eu/>



Schindwein & Montalvo, 2023.  
Energy citizenship: Accounting for the heterogeneity of human behaviours within energy transition  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2023.113662>