

Strengthen public access and support vulnerable communities towards a just and sustainable energy transition



The European Green Deal stands as a visionary roadmap for a sustainable future. At its heart lies a commitment to place citizens at the forefront of the EU's climate and energy transition, empowering them to actively participate in the development and implementation of policy measures.

The Deal emphasizes an inclusive and just transition, recognizing the necessity of ensuring that no one is left behind in the shift towards a greener society for all. However, achieving this goal faces challenges due to a complex policy and actor landscape, which can hinder citizens' engagement and involvement in the transformational process. This is particularly true for more vulnerable communities in European societies. Overcoming these barriers will be crucial to harnessing the full potential of citizens' contributions and forging a cohesive path towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Policy recommendations for EU policy makers

Creating publicly funded and local neighborhood access points that serve as centralized information and advisory hubs can help mitigate the effects of the often complex national and regional policy and actor landscape that currently creates a barrier for many citizens to engage more actively in the energy transition (see Figure 1). **Local and regional “Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs”, similar to the One-Stop-Shops concept in the building renovation sector, should be established.** The funding of the

Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs could be a key priority of future EU funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Social Climate Fund. Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs aim to provide comprehensive guidance across different sectors including information about energy communities, prosumer initiatives, energy-efficient buildings, sustainable transport, renewable energy, energy efficiency measures, policies, regulations, and funding programs.

How complex do you find..?

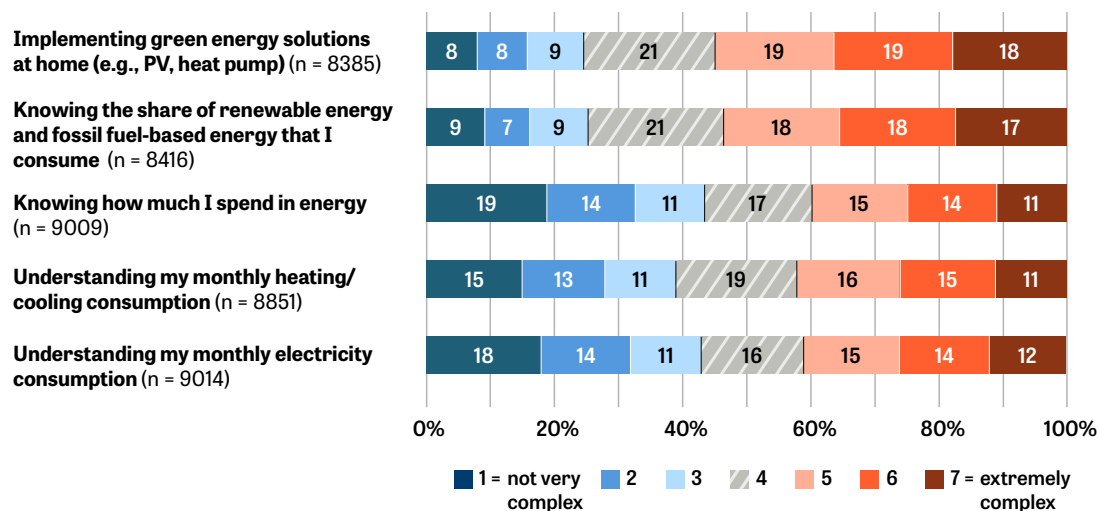
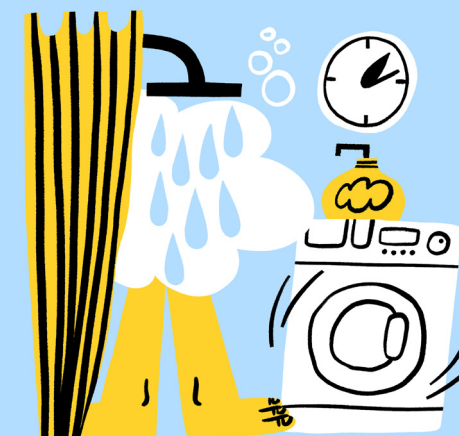


Figure 1. The project GRETA conducted a multinational survey with 10,000 participants across 16 EU countries. According to the study, 37% of the EU citizens perceive implementing green energy solutions at home to be (extremely) complex.

RECOMMENDATION:

Strengthen public access and support for a just and sustainable energy transition by **establishing local and regional “Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs”** for citizens seeking information and support related to energy transition actions.



By streamlining and concentrating information from various policy sectors, citizens can access reliable and up-to-date information on best practices, technologies, incentives, and funding programmes. This can help to consolidate resources, offer advisory services, and facilitate networking and collaboration. This way, citizens can easily explore and compare different options, empowering them to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions in their energy transition journey.

To facilitate an inclusive and just energy transition, **Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs should provide training and skill development for members of**

the local population to act as energy transition intermediaries within their communities. This can increase public awareness and trust in energy transition measures. Public funding is essential for the establishment of equal opportunity and inclusive access to these hubs and should be included as **a key priority of future EU funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Social Climate Fund.**

By establishing Integrated Energy Citizenship Hubs, we can empower citizens with the knowledge and resources they need to actively participate in the energy transition.



Case study example:

Natural Gas-Free Living in the Netherlands

The Netherlands aims to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 49% by 2030 through, among other things, transitioning to natural gas-free living. 66 pilot neighborhoods, subsidized by the government, act as examples for this transition, in which municipalities work together with residents and other stakeholders (like housing corporations) to accelerate the local heat transition.

The case study focuses on the transition towards natural gas-free living in the Netherlands. **It highlights the importance of available public funding and access to information for citizens to accelerate the shift towards green alternatives in households, such as the installation of solar panels or heat pumps.**

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. GRETA particularly highlights the crucial role of policies in facilitating and empowering these activities.

Based on empirical research, the project offers various policy recommendations in a set of six policy briefs to facilitate the engagement of citizens in current energy transition efforts.

The empirical research draws on data from a multinational survey with approximately 10,000 participants across 16 EU countries, as well as six case studies conducted in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and the Netherlands.

FURTHER READING:

<https://projectgreta.eu/>



European JRC (2018):

<https://e3p.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/one-stop-shops-energy-renovations-buildings>