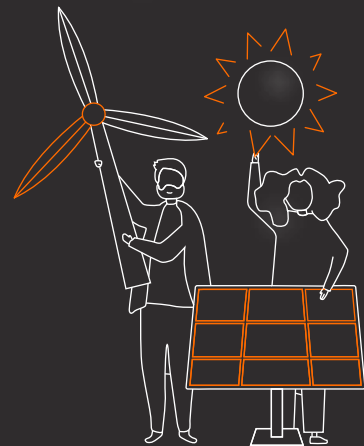


Factsheet

▄▄ Becoming an Energy Citizen – Motivators and Barriers

The concept of Energy Citizenship refers to citizens' active and responsible participation through individual and collective actions to enlarge energy access and achieve the energy transition. This concept has recently gained prominence and broader usage.

DIALOGUES' public report "[Comprehensive, interdisciplinary report on energy citizenship](#)" provides comprehensive and interdisciplinary research on energy citizenship, revealing a set of motivators and barriers to the concept.



Energy citizenship research provides an opportunity to link the Energy Union's strategic objectives towards:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| i) Decarbonising buildings; | iv) Sustainable mobility; |
| ii) Renewables uptake; | iii) Energy storage; |

and the various contributions of citizens under one conceptual framework, focussing on broad trends in citizen engagement with energy topics, awareness of GHG impacts of their choices, equity, and justice.



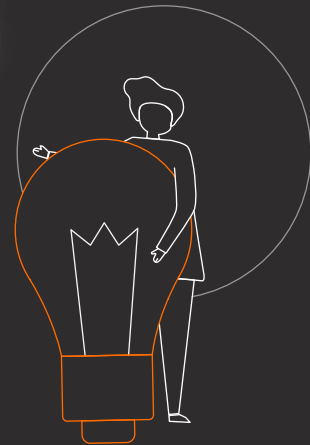
Energy citizenship results from a combination of various factors at the individual, collective and institutional levels. Some of these factors assist the development of a stronger sense of involvement in energy matters, while others deter from this involvement.

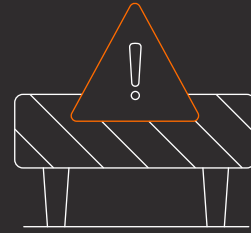
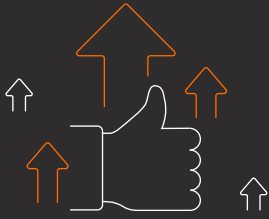
There is no single factor with uniform explanatory power for citizens' engagement with the energy transition.

Individuals have different values and concepts on making energy-related decisions, and those depend on their **responsibilities** or **economic status**. They may respond differently to diverse conditions – some may react with resistance, while others may welcome the same situation.

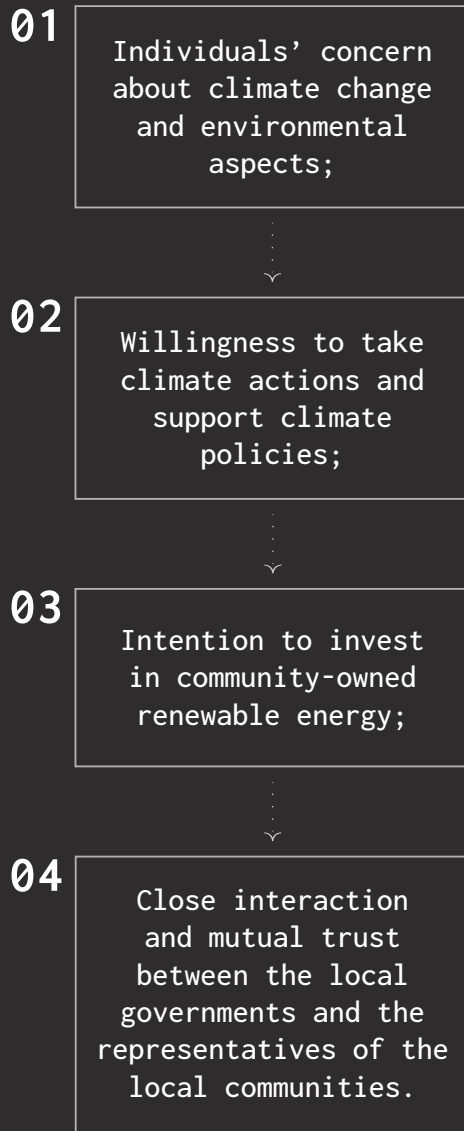
DIALOGUES accepts humans' natural heterogeneity and value systems and creates impact by facilitating a **new understanding** of such factors, their interrelation, synergies and contradicting effects.

In this context, **DIALOGUES** identified different motivators and barriers that influence energy citizenship considering individual, collective and institutional factors.

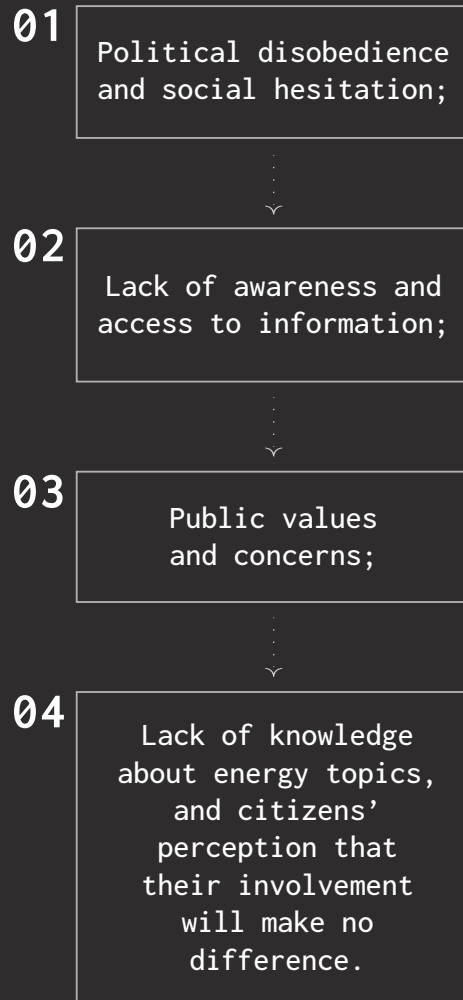




Main **motivators** for energy citizenship:



Main **barriers** for energy citizenship:



Motivators

01

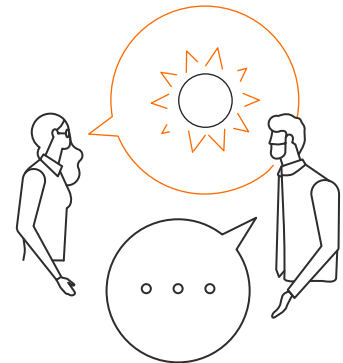
Individuals' concern about climate change and environmental aspects

The first motivator, the individual concern about climate change and environmental issues, refers to the awareness and belief of the reality of climate change, which is observed in the share of people who believe climate change is happening – above 70% for most European countries. Climate change awareness increases the willingness to take climate action and support climate policies, enabling citizens to become active and engaged in the energy system.

02

Willingness to take climate actions and support climate policies

Another motivator is related to the (perceived) responsibility and the willingness to take action, which appears to be linked to climate concern. The notion of shared and mutual responsibility is a driver for engaging in pro-environmental behaviour.



03

Intention to invest in community-owned renewable energy

Collective action is considered in the literature as one of the central dynamics enabling energy citizenship to emerge, however, the collective dimension of citizenship has become residual and should be placed back at the centre of the energy citizenship concept. Collective dynamics are often captured by the idea of “participation” in the energy system. For example, the intention to invest in community-owned renewable energy shows the importance of the belief that such a project will benefit the community. Working with and for a community encourages active citizen participation. Besides, environmental concerns and energy independence play a key role in citizens' willingness to engage in local energy communities.

Working with and for a community encourages active citizen participation.

04

Close interaction and mutual trust between the local governments and the representatives of the local communities

Energy-related policy and its implementation may influence whether and how citizens become active in an energy system. Systematically and multi-dimensionally designed energy policy and its implementation foster energy citizenship by creating inclusive collective spaces. In addition, close interaction and mutual trust between local governments and representatives of the local communities further contribute to design policies considering the needs and expectations of all segments and provide an inclusive decision-making process encompassing all individuals; thus, in turn, encouraging them to become active energy citizens.

Barriers

01

Political disobedience and social hesitation

There is a wide range of framework factors varying from regulatory and financial to infrastructural and socio-political aspects. For example, political disobedience and social hesitation are critical barriers to energy citizenship, leading to lower willingness to participate in an energy system.

02

Lack of awareness and access to information

There are also several obstacles to citizen engagement and participation, including financial restrictions, lack of awareness, lack of access to, or inability to make sense of the information provided regarding technology alternatives. Furthermore, low social cohesion creates barriers to stimulating collective actions and citizen involvement.

Low social cohesion creates barriers to stimulating collective actions and citizen involvement.



03

Public values and concerns

There are diverse and interconnected forms of public participation, ranging from individual behavioural change and social acceptance practices to citizen-led, grassroots action. However, a lack of accounting for public values and concerns can create resistance and barriers to public involvement in the low carbon transition.

04

Lack of knowledge about energy topics, and citizens' perception that their involvement will make no difference

A general lack of knowledge about energy topics and citizens' perception that their involvement will not make a difference are additional barriers to engagement in energy-related discussions and decision-making processes.

Other influencing factors

Geo-Demographic:

Specific aspects such as age, socio-economic status, and geographic isolation also influence energy citizenship.

- **Age:** It is observed that younger and older people behave differently when dealing with environmental and energy-related issues. Furthermore, people of different ages might be driven by different motivations. For example, households with younger people are more likely to enact energy-saving practices. They are generally mainly driven by environmental motivations, while older people are more driven by economic reasons, such as money-saving.
- **Social Status:** The socio-economic status of individuals could also impact energy citizenship-related behaviours, in the sense that citizens with insufficient financial resources have fewer means and opportunities to act and to promote energy transition.



- **Geographical location:** In the conceptualisation of energy citizenship, geographic location and isolation should also be considered. The supply and access to energy significantly differ between global North and South and between differently developed countries, leading to significant “energy inequalities and inequities”.

Education:

Interestingly, education also seems to influence energy transition behaviour. In fact, households characterised by low educational levels are primarily driven by economic motivations, and those with higher educational levels, by environmental reasons. Those with college or university education are more likely to invest in renewable energy projects because of better access to financial resources, which is also linked to their socio-economic status.

Gender:

Gender may also impact various aspects related to energy citizenship. For example, women, especially older women, are more likely to incur energy poverty than men. On one hand, as compared to men, women show a more sustainable consumption behaviour, which might be expressed, for example, by being more likely to buy ecological products. Furthermore, women are more likely to modify their behaviours in favour of sustainability measures and to adopt more energy-efficient travel modes, such as public transport. On the other hand, the persisting gender stereotypes on energy and technology are perceived as more masculine domains, obstructing women’s participation in energy decisions.

Political System:

It has also been argued that in more democratic countries, there might be a more vital link between climate concern and perceived climate responsibility. Both national affluence and democracy could support citizens in promoting individual action.

References: Comprehensive, interdisciplinary report on energy citizenship. Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu (IUE), Muhittin Hakan Demir (IUE), Berfu Solak (IUE), et al. (2021)



Access Document →

