European Commission

CITIZEN ENERGY ADVISORY HUB

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NAVIGATING EU SUPPORT FOR YOUR CITIZEN ENERGY PROJECT

Guidance Document 1

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HOW CAN THIS GUIDANCE SUPPORT YOU AS AN ENERGY CITIZEN?

Citizen energy has the potential to empower communities and individuals to actively engage in the sustainable energy transition, contributing significantly to decarbonisation and energy independence goals. You may be interested in taking action, yet it may not be clear where to begin, what existing opportunities are available, and how the EU can support you.

This guidance document has been created to help you move from interest to action and use the broad range of EU support to start or grow your energy project. It provides a list of EU-level support, explains where to find help and how to design a project that attracts funding and delivers real local impact. To learn more about the concept of citizen energy and energy citizenship, see the CEAH: A Citizens Guide to Energy Citizenship.

The document is organised into two sections that guide you from understanding the landscape to taking action:

1 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FIRST? 5 KEY STEPS FOR YOU TO ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICES

A simple step-by-step guide that helps you define your idea, build partnerships, design your project, explore available support and prepare a strong application.

2 WHAT EU PROJECTS EXIST TO SUPPORT MY CITIZEN ENERGY JOURNEY?

A clear summary of major EU initiatives that offer funding, technical help, training, examples and practical resources.

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WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FIRST? 5 KEY STEPS FOR YOU TO ACCESS EU SUPPORT SERVICES

Getting started with a citizen energy project involves moving from an initial idea to a structured plan that is ready for support and funding. The steps below guide you through this process in a practical way, from shaping your vision and building your team, to preparing a solid project plan and finding the right national or EU-level assistance.

Each step helps you understand what your project needs, which partners to involve, and how to navigate legal, technical and financial questions with confidence. This roadmap provides a straightforward pathway to transform your idea into a credible and impactful citizen energy initiative.

STEP 1

Define your idea and objectives

Start by clearly describing your project idea. What problem do you want to solve? Who will benefit? What outcomes do you expect?

- Write down your **goals**, **target group**, and **project type** (e.g. renewable energy generation, energy renovation, awareness campaign).
- Review **EU priorities** and **eligibility criteria** to ensure alignment.
- Check upcoming **funding deadlines** on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

1. Conception

The idea of creating a citizen energy project takes shape. A shared vision forms, and motivations, needs, skills and barriers are all explored. This stage benefits from support in clarifying the direction, such as peer-to-peer exchanges, introductory training, early legal and technical advice, and examples from other communities. These resources will help you understand what is realistic, allowing you to shape project ideas with greater confidence.

2. Preparation

Your project moves into structured planning. The team is established, clear objectives set, and potential actions mapped. You assess technology options, explore business models, search for suitable funding opportunities and seek feedback from the wider community. Support during this phase often includes feasibility studies, technical assessments, business planning tools, early-stage funding, and advice on permitting, governance and financial planning.

3. Implementation

Your project becomes operational. Technologies are procured and installed, formal agreements are signed, and new members join. Support at this stage often involves legal guidance, contract management, securing remaining funding, technical supervision during installation and coordination with local authorities or grid operators. Practical help with communication, procurement and project management can also be valuable.

4. Maintenance and expansion

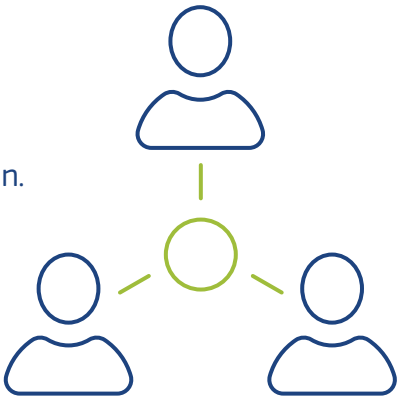
Your project is established and running. The focus shifts to managing day-to-day operations and making improvements. You set up monitoring systems to track economic, environmental and social indicators and adjust as needed. Support at this stage may include training for operations and maintenance, help with data analysis, advice on scaling or replication, and opportunities to join wider networks for long-term impact.

It is important to reflect on your project's current stage of development to help you identify which type of support you would benefit from.

STEP 2

Build your team and partnerships

Citizen energy projects work best when built on collaboration. Whether you are setting up a new energy community, developing a renovation initiative, or planning a local energy campaign, success depends on combining skills, knowledge, and commitment from diverse partners.



HOW TO START

Identify key actors

Map who you need to involve: neighbours, citizen organisations, cooperatives, SMEs, municipalities, NGOs, or regional energy agencies. Each can contribute specific expertise, such as project management, financing, communication, or technical design.

Engage early

Involve potential partners from the very beginning. Early dialogue helps shape a shared vision, clarify roles, and secure long-term commitment.

Use local support structures

Contact regional energy agencies, one-stop shops, or energy hubs in your area for matchmaking and technical guidance. They often maintain databases of active energy communities and municipalities.

Define roles and responsibilities

A clear distribution of tasks avoids duplication and builds trust. Establish agreements early on regarding who will manage finances, technical operations, community outreach, and reporting. You should look to develop a core team of 4–12 people, but the more people involved, the better. It is important that team members work well together, building strong relationships to collaborate towards shared goals.

Engage citizens directly

Citizen involvement should remain at the core. This can involve organising information sessions, distributing surveys to understand local preferences, or delivering workshops to include residents in decisions and to co-create project goals. Also, consider how you can involve those who are most vulnerable in your community to ensure everyone can participate. This could involve adapting communication materials for individuals with visual impairments, selecting accessible venues for those with reduced mobility, or reaching out proactively to underrepresented groups.

STEP 3

Develop your project plan

Once you have identified your idea and built your partnerships, the next step is to develop a structured, credible project plan. A strong plan shows that your initiative is technically feasible, financially sound, and aligned with EU energy and climate goals.

HOW TO PROCEED

Would people be happy to have this technology installed?

Focus on local acceptance by gathering community views early, understanding any concerns and identifying ways to adapt the project so it fits local needs and expectations. Use simple consultations, surveys or information sessions to assess interest and raise awareness.

Will I be able to sell the energy to the local grid or to members of the energy community?

Check your country's regulatory conditions and the rules of your distribution system operator (DSO). Clarify whether energy sharing, collective self-consumption, or selling surplus to the grid is possible, and what tariffs, metering requirements and contractual arrangements apply.

Are there any subsidies or funding for specific technologies?

Explore national and EU incentives for options such as solar PV, heat pumps, or insulation upgrades. Compare available grants, rebates, loans and lump sums, and assess which technologies match your site conditions, community needs, and budget. This helps you choose solutions that are both technically suitable and financially viable.

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What objectives do you want to achieve, and what results do you expect?

Define what you aim to achieve, who will benefit, and how your project contributes to affordable, clean, and inclusive energy. Be clear about the measurable outcomes you expect, such as the capacity of renewable energy installed, energy savings, and benefits for the local community.

In what ways does your project align with EU priorities?

Connect your project to the aims of key EU strategies. Demonstrate how it supports climate neutrality in line with the Fit for 55 framework, accelerates the use of renewable energy in line with REPowerEU, strengthens energy efficiency goals, and helps reduce energy poverty. Aligning with these priorities will increase the eligibility of your application for support services.

Is the project technically and financially feasible?

Present estimates of costs, funding sources, and expected savings or revenues. Consider tools from the InvestEU Advisory Hub or the European City Facility to help structure your business or financial model.

How will you engage stakeholders and citizens throughout the project?

Define how citizens, local authorities, and other stakeholders (like local businesses, farmers, or the local sports club) will be involved in the project. Use participatory methods such as community workshops, surveys, focus groups, drop-in information sessions, and online discussion spaces to ensure citizen participation.

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STEP 4

Explore available support both at a National and EU-level

Energy citizens and local actors can access a wide range of funding to develop their ideas and projects. National programmes and EU initiatives offer grants, lump sums, loans, expert support, practical tools and networking spaces that help groups develop from an initial idea to implementation. Support can include expert guidance on legal or technical steps, training for community organisers, help with business planning, opportunities to meet peers, and access to funding calls.

Understanding the types of financial support

Grants are non-repayable funds for specific projects or investments.
Example: Funding to install solar panels on a community building.
What should I look for? Eligible project types, funding limits, deadlines, and any co-financing requirements.

Lump-sums are fixed amounts to cover early-stage project costs, such as planning or feasibility studies.
Example: Preparing a business plan or feasibility study for a local energy cooperative.
What should I look for? Whether the support is limited to planning or can cover implementation, the amount available, and the reporting required.

Loans are repayable funds, often at favourable terms for renewable energy or efficiency projects.
Example: A low-interest loan to finance a small wind turbine.
What should I look for? Interest rate, repayment schedule, eligibility rules, and whether the loan can be used for the technology or activity you plan to pursue.

HOW TO PROCEED

Which national programmes exist?

Explore what programmes can provide you with grants, loans, or incentives for renewable energy, building renovation, or community-led energy projects. Many of these schemes are co-financed by the EU and aligned with national energy and climate plans, for example, through Horizon Europe or InvestEU. Contact your municipality, regional authority, national energy agency, or One-Stop Shops (OSS) to learn about the available support services, how to apply, and the advisory help they provide to community groups and households.

Which EU programmes exist?

Table 1 provides an overview of relevant EU projects and the benefits they offer. Check out the project websites to see if there are any open application opportunities suitable for you. It is also worth subscribing to the CEAH newsletter, which will share upcoming citizen energy support schemes.

STEP 5

Submit, implement and follow up

After preparing a strong project plan, the final step is to submit your proposal, manage implementation effectively, and ensure lasting impact. Treat this stage as a continuous learning process that strengthens your capacity and builds credibility for future plans.

HOW TO PROCEED

Prepare your submission carefully

Review all application requirements, templates, and eligibility criteria on the relevant National or EU portals. Double-check partner information, budgets, and annexes before submission. Late or incomplete applications are generally not accepted.

Maintain clear communication among partners

Establish regular coordination meetings and progress reviews. Transparent communication ensures trust, keeps everyone aligned on tasks and timelines, and helps address challenges early so the project remains on track.

Share your achievements

Share your results across local and EU networks. Share your achievements with the Citizen Energy Advisory Hub, Energy Communities Repository, or Covenant of Mayors, helping others learn from your experience.

Plan for continuity

Identify opportunities to expand or replicate your project once initial funding ends. Sustainable projects often combine EU grants with national or private co-financing to secure long-term results.

The next section will outline a range of existing EU projects that can help by providing funding, technical support, and knowledge resources.

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WHAT EU PROJECTS EXIST TO SUPPORT MY CITIZEN ENERGY JOURNEY?

Several EU programmes offer **funding**, **technical support**, and **knowledge resources** to help you start, grow, or strengthen your citizen energy project. Tip: Most programmes usually organise webinars or Q&A sessions, which you can join to get informed and receive support for your application. Table 1 presents an overview of these projects and how they can support different types of actors.

TABLE 1: Other EU projects that can help you access support for citizen energy

	EU Project	Purpose	Benefits for stakeholder types
Citizen Energy	Citizen Energy Advisory Hub	EU project that acts as the central hub for citizen energy by offering legal, financial and technical guidance.	It supports **emerging and established citizen energy groups** with tailored advice, guidance material, networking, workshops, citizen dialogues, country insights, and the opportunity for up to 120 projects to apply for free expert support.
Energy Community support	European Energy Communities Facility	EU project which is providing at least 140 emerging energy communities with lump-sum grants to develop viable business plans for their renewable energy projects.	Supports **energy communities with direct financing for business plan development**, with access to experts, skills training, and a network of peers who share solutions for running successful local clean energy initiatives. Grant calls follow phased cycles.
	LIFE EnerGISE	LIFE project that helps emerging energy communities in Central Europe by gathering and adapting know-how on legal, technical, financial and social aspects, and setting up local one-stop-shop centres.	Provides **citizen groups, local authorities, and support organisations** with a practical knowledge hub, advisory services, and accessible tools to start community energy initiatives, build robust business models, and tap into networks that accelerate clean energy uptake.
Citizen-Led Renovation	Citizen-Led Renovation	EU project that helps residents and communities overcome financial, legal and technical barriers so they can plan and carry out home energy renovations in a citizen-driven way.	Offers **community groups, residents and local partners** practical renovation advice and access to skilled enablers and tools to help them plan, finance and manage home energy upgrades. Support cycles from 2025-2028.
	BUILD UP	EU portal that gathers general information, examples and tools on energy performance in buildings across Europe, providing materials that can also inform decisions for individual buildings.	Provides **citizens, building owners, and professionals** with easy access to practical guidance, case studies, and training, so they can make informed renovation choices and connect with others improving buildings. Continuously available online.

TABLE 1: Other EU projects that can help you access support for citizen energy (continued)

	EU Project	Purpose	Benefits for stakeholder types
Citizen-Led Renovation	Renoverty	LIFE project that supports rural regions in designing affordable renovation plans that reduce energy poverty and improve living conditions for vulnerable households.	Helps **rural households, local authorities, and community actors** plan affordable home renovations with clear roadmaps, tools and examples that improve comfort, cut bills and strengthen local capacity. Continuously available.
Citizen Engagement and Awareness	European Climate Pact	EU-wide platform for citizens, communities, and organisations to unite, develop, implement and share actions on climate neutrality.	Equips **citizens, schools, youth groups and communities** with practical climate tips, learning resources, and an extensive peer network so they can take action locally and connect with EU initiatives. Continuously available for all audiences to get involved.
	Young Energy Ambassadors	A programme that selects young people between 18 and 34 years old each year to engage with EU energy policy and inspire their communities through outreach on clean energy topics.	Gives **young people** opportunities to learn from EU experts, grow leadership skills, and engage communities through outreach, events and a supportive Europe-wide youth network. The website has an up-to-date map of sustainable energy days taking place across Europe.
	Citizens' Engagement Platform	Online forum created by the European Commission where citizens share ideas on EU energy and climate issues and contribute directly to policy discussions.	Enables **all citizens** to share ideas via an online forum, discuss them in multi-day deliberation panels, learn from others, and have their contributions summarised and fed into policy consultations. A range of climate-related engagement opportunities is available.
Corporate and Business (SMEs) Support	Enterprise Europe Network	Support service that helps Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SME's) innovate, grow and access international markets with guidance on green and digital solutions.	Supports **SMEs and entrepreneurs** with tailored business advice, access to funding, partnership opportunities, and guidance on green and digital innovation so companies can grow and reach new markets. Ongoing support is available, with partnership opportunities and a list of local contact points for your country.
	Social Economy Gateway	Online entry point that offers easy access to EU funding, resources and networks.	Provides **social enterprises, cooperatives and community groups** with simple access to EU funding options, tools and networks that help them design and scale impactful local projects. With support available for accessing funding programmes.
	European Cluster Collaboration Platform	Collaboration hub that connects clusters of stakeholders across Europe so they can share knowledge, form partnerships and support innovation.	Provides **clusters, SMEs and regional actors** tools, partner searches and knowledge exchange so they can collaborate across borders and strengthen innovation in their sectors. Continuously available and updated with events and funding opportunities.

TABLE 1: Other EU projects that can help you access support for citizen energy (continued)

	EU Project	Purpose	Benefits for stakeholder types
Technical/ Policy Assistance for Local Authorities	Just Transition Platform	EU platform that helps regions shift away from carbon-intensive activities by providing expert advice, examples and links to funding.	Offers **regions, authorities and local partners** expert advice, funding guidance, and peer learning so they can design fair transition plans that support workers and communities. Ongoing support is delivered through working groups and information on accessing funds.
	Coal Regions in Transition Initiative	Support scheme that helps coal and lignite regions plan fair economic transitions through technical assistance and shared learning.	Supports **coal and lignite regions** with technical assistance, peer exchange, and clear information on funding (but does not directly provide funds), allowing local authorities, workers, and communities to plan new economic pathways. This is a great source of information on energy topics and the clean energy transition.
	Covenant of Mayors	Movement of cities that commit to EU climate and energy targets and prepare local action plans to cut emissions and build resilience.	Provides **cities and towns** with planning guidance, training, and an extensive peer network that helps local authorities design and deliver climate and energy actions with citizens. The website holds information on a range of financing opportunities, case studies, and opportunities to join as an active member.
	Public Buyers Platform	Collaboration space where public procurement professionals exchange knowledge and develop joint approaches to sustainable and innovative purchasing.	Enables **procurement officers and public bodies** to collaborate via communities of practice, working groups, and webinars. It provides tools and peer exchange to run green, innovative, and circular procurement processes. Continuously available, with an up-to-date list of public buyers communities available for you to join.
	Mission Implementation Platform on Adaptation	Support service that assists regions and communities in planning climate resilience measures and preparing investment concepts for adaptation projects.	Supports **regional and local authorities** with expert advice, data tools and funding guidance so they can plan climate resilient measures and launch adaptation projects with confidence. Continuous support with up-to-date funding calls and tools for implementing and monitoring climate change adaptation plans.
	Energy Poverty Advisory Hub	Initiative that helps municipalities understand energy poverty and design local actions and investment plans that support vulnerable households.	Helps **municipalities and community groups** with targeted technical assistance, seed funding, and training so they can design actions that reduce energy poverty for vulnerable households. Provides an interactive database of projects reducing energy poverty. Ongoing support with periodic technical support calls.

TABLE 1: Other EU projects that can help you access support for citizen energy (continued)

	EU Project	Purpose	Benefits for stakeholder types
Specialised Regional Support	Council of European Energy Regulators	Network of Europe's national energy regulators promoting fair, transparent, and consumer-focused energy markets across the EU.	Provides **regulators and consumer bodies** with shared knowledge, guidance, and the exchange of best practices so national frameworks improve consumer protection and support fair energy markets. Continuously available.
	Rural Pact	EU partnership that brings rural stakeholders together to support long-term development and better living conditions in rural areas.	Connects **rural communities, local authorities and organisations** with shared learning, guidance and networking so they can develop projects that strengthen rural services and opportunities. Continuously available by becoming a member of the rural pact.
	Clean Energy for EU Islands	EU initiative that helps island communities design and implement clean energy transition plans tailored to their local context.	Offers **island authorities, communities and businesses** technical advice, training, and best practices to help them plan clean energy transitions and develop resilient local energy systems. The islands receiving support have already been selected, with more information available here.
	LEADER/CLLD	EU approach that gives local groups the power to design and fund community projects that reflect local needs and opportunities.	Provides **local action groups, rural communities and small businesses** with flexible funding, networking opportunities, and skills so they can design and deliver projects based on local priorities. Check out good practices, networking opportunities in your country, and upcoming events.
Smart Urban Development and Sustainable Design	New European Bauhaus	EU initiative that combines sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics to promote greener, more liveable, and innovative urban and rural spaces.	Provides **citizens, designers and communities** with grants, co-creation spaces, and guidance so they can create sustainable, inclusive and beautiful places to live. Check out open funding calls, tools and resources, and networking opportunities.
	Open Lab	Horizon project that works with citizens to develop positive energy neighbourhoods in real districts and produce solutions that other cities can use.	Provides **residents, cities and innovators** with hands-on testing, co-creation, and technical solutions so they can develop positive energy neighbourhoods that enhance homes and public spaces. Continuously available.

TABLE 1: Other EU projects that can help you access support for citizen energy (continued)

	EU Project	Purpose	Benefits for stakeholder types
Smart Urban Development and Sustainable Design	Smart Cities Marketplace	EU platform that helps cities shape smart and sustainable projects and match them with technical support and finance.	Helps **cities and urban actors** with project matchmaking, expert feedback, and proven examples so they can finance and roll out smart, clean and digital solutions for residents. For more information on how to apply for support, visit here.
	European City Facility	EU scheme that provides cities with a grant to prepare investment concepts for sustainable energy projects.	Provides **municipalities** with a €60k lump-sum, expert help and simple tools so they can develop investment concepts that unlock larger clean energy projects for their communities. Grant calls follow phased cycles. For more information, check out the application process.

Every successful energy transition begins locally with citizens, neighbours, and communities taking initiative. With the right information, partners, and support, your project can become part of a citizen-led clean energy transition.

Use this guidance as your starting point. Explore opportunities, connect with others, and take your next step with CEAH by signing up for the network and newsletter. Please reach out to us at ceahinfo@ricardo.com if you have any questions.

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