European Commission

CITIZEN ENERGY ADVISORY HUB

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WHY AND HOW TO HOST A CITIZEN ENERGY PANEL

Value, process, and guidance for Municipalities

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document is aimed to guide municipalities in fully understanding the opportunity of hosting a citizen energy panel by providing an overview of the relevant activities and of the benefits that could be gained by hosting such an initiative. The guide is organised as follows:

- **What is a citizen energy panel under CEAH?**
- **Key actors in a citizen energy panel**
- **Why host a citizen energy panel**
- **What is expected from you and how CEAH will support you**
- **What does the application process look like**
- **See what others say about past panels, assemblies, & councils**

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2 WHAT IS A CITIZEN ENERGY PANEL UNDER CEAH?

Within the scope of this project, a citizen energy panel is a one-day event, preceded by preparatory webinars and materials, designed to actively involve citizens in discussions about climate and energy challenges facing their community. It combines expert presentations with group discussions and deliberative activities. It has several goals:

- **Raise awareness** among citizens on the energy transition and climate action.
- **Gather public input and ideas** to help municipalities shape future strategies and policies.
- **Build local ownership of the energy transition** by including marginalised, youth, or underrepresented voices in deliberation processes.

A typical panel will begin with expert talks on a set of predefined thematic areas, followed by a Q&A session for participants to engage with the speakers. After the plenary, attendees divide into smaller breakout groups and focus on the thematic areas. In these groups, participants deliberate, exchange perspectives, and co-develop concrete recommendations, with the help of trained facilitators. The day concludes with a final plenary session, in which key outcomes from the group work are shared and discussed, with the goal of establishing local policy recommendations.

The **CEAH team** will help you organise a one-day citizen energy panel for your municipality. This will include support on a technical level for executing the panel and deriving insightful policy outcomes specific to your local needs.

3 KEY ACTORS IN A CITIZEN ENERGY PANEL

An example of the type of actors you would expect to see involved in a citizen energy panel supported by CEAH are included, with high-level overviews, in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: Overview of actors and responsibilities

ACTOR	RESPONSIBILITIES
MUNICIPALITIES	**Municipalities lead the organisation of citizen energy panels.** They submit the application, identify local facilitators and experts, **select the panel topic, recruit participants, and secure a suitable venue**. The CEAH team provides support throughout this process.
CEAH TEAM	The CEAH team is responsible for providing **technical and logistical support** to municipalities before, during, and after the panels. This includes promoting the open call, guiding the application phase, and supporting post-panel reporting to the European Commission.
CITIZENS	Citizens are the central participants in the panels. Through structured dialogue and deliberation, they will **co-develop recommendations** for energy policy at the local level.
FACILITATORS	Facilitators are individuals identified by the municipalities during the application phase as well as CEAH experts. Their responsibilities include **moderating the Panels**. They will receive training in the form of a written briefing note (the Facilitator Handbook) and a webinar held prior to the panel. Their role is to guide discussions impartially and ensure all voices are heard.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) EXPERTS	TA experts are professionals with expertise in fields relevant to citizen energy (e.g., finance, renewables, climate policy). They **prepare and present content during the panels, support Q&A and group discussions**, and contribute to post-panel analysis and reporting. TA experts can also play the role of a facilitator. Local experts should be provided by the municipality.

4 WHY HOST A CITIZEN ENERGY PANEL?

Citizen energy panels are a powerful opportunity for municipalities to move citizens from passive consumers to active participants in the energy market by involving them in local energy decision making processes. They bring together a diverse group of citizens to discuss energy topics with the municipality. Through these panels, municipalities can gather diverse perspectives on issues and local needs related to energy, help to inform local energy plans, and even contribute to the formulation of local policy recommendations.

On the other hand, they can provide information on the benefits of the energy transition for citizens, such as the financial advantages of regional Renewable Energy Systems projects.

In the shift from top-down governance to a bottom-up transformation, such panels offer the opportunity for citizens to become co-creators in designing energy policies.

Citizen energy panels are a practical instrument which serve to create transparency between citizens and institutions, raise awareness of sustainable energy, and narrow down the informational gaps.

As a municipality hosting a citizen energy panel, you take a citizen-centred approach to the energy transition and help empower your citizens to contribute towards local energy policy.

1 REVEAL LOCAL NEEDS

As a municipality, a panel lets you gather input through direct discussions with your community, helping you design energy plans that reflect the needs and concerns of your citizens.

2 BUILD TRUST & ENCOURAGE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP & ACCEPTANCE

When residents are involved in shaping policies and feel their concerns are heard, they are more likely to support and comply with them. Citizen Energy Panels help to build trust and greater public support for energy policies, which become more transparent and socially acceptable.

3 ACTIVATE AN INCLUSIVE ENERGY TRANSITION

Designed to involve a diverse representation from the local community, Citizen Energy Panels are intended to provide a platform for all citizens, including from marginalised or lower-income groups. This helps ensure your energy planning is just and better aligned with the needs of those most affected by the energy transition.

4 SHOW LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE ACTION

By hosting a citizen energy panel, you demonstrate leadership on climate action in response to climate change and send a strong signal of your municipality's commitment to inclusive governance. This could strengthen your case in funding applications for EU, regional or national funding by showing clear community engagement.

5 LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

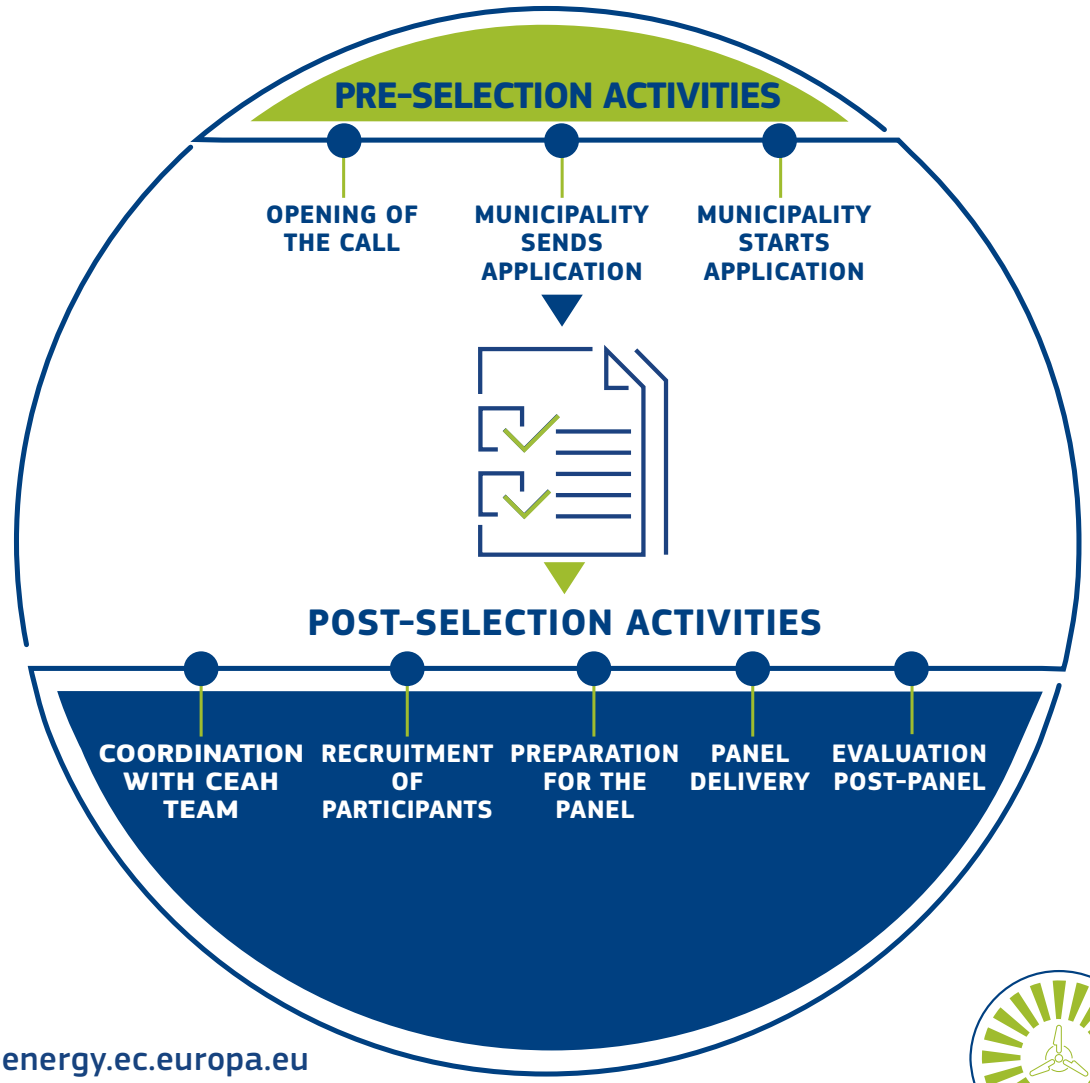
Panels can serve as a starting point for you to initiate further action such as follow-up workshops or support for setting-up a local energy group. These can help overcome political deadlocks or policy inertia.

5 YOUR ROLE IN THE PANEL AND HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU

Under the CEAH project, one municipality per EU Member State can apply to host a citizen energy panel. The panels will then be carried out from January 2026 until July 2027. We invite local authorities and municipalities based within the EU to apply for support to host a citizen energy panel in your local community. Figure 1 provides an overview of the main activities to be carried out, starting with the opening of the call and concluding with the evaluation following the panel delivery.

As a participating municipality, you will be responsible for organising a one-day panel. Tables 2 and 3 outline the main tasks expected from you and the support provided by CEAH, covering both the pre-selection (application) phase and the post-selection phase.

FIGURE 1 Citizen Energy Panels main activities



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5 YOUR ROLE IN THE PANEL AND HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU

TABLE 2: Pre-selection activities

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES	HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU
APPLICATION	
You need to apply to the open call issued by CEAH. You will use the materials provided by the CEAH team and you will collect all the relevant information for the application (e.g., references on the current uptake of citizen energy projects in the municipality, endorsement letters by the municipality leadership, etc).	• **Clear timelines and agenda to help you plan for the application phase.** • **Provide guidance in the form of an application guidance and a webinar to explain the application process.**
PRELIMINARY PLANNING	
During the application process, you should start planning on matters such as the venue for the panel and the experts to be involved, based on the panels key themes. Additionally, you should choose which participant selection method to use, provided that more rigorous selection will receive a higher score in the application.	• **Clear timelines and agenda to help you plan for the application phase.** • **Provide guidance in the form of an application guidance and a webinar to explain the application process.**

TABLE 3: Post-selection activities

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES	HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU
PLANNING AND COORDINATION	
Define the number of participants and secure a suitable venue for the panel or integrate it into an existing event. You need to coordinate with the CEAH team to align on timelines, procedures, and necessary materials. Internally, you should encourage municipal staff to be involved in the process and be ready to support the event's organisation and delivery.	• **Clear timelines and agendas to help you plan and deliver the panel.** • **Guidance on the panel's objectives.** • **Briefing notes and webinars to support you during the entire application process and execution of the panel.** • **Access to an online resource library with relevant tools to host the panel.** • **Support from a dedicated expert to help facilitate the panel.**
RECRUITMENT	
Your role is to recruit local technical experts and community leaders to support the panel discussions. You will be responsible for selecting citizen participants, defining both the number of participants (we suggest 20–40) and the recruitment method during the application phase. The goal is to ensure the group reflects the diversity of the local population (e.g. age, gender, education, employment, geographic and economic background). To account for potential dropouts, municipalities are encouraged to prepare a small reserve pool of participants. More detailed guidance on recruitment strategies and sampling methods will be provided in the **Citizen Energy Panel Application Guidance**	We will provide guidance on different sampling methods, as well as key population characteristics to consider when defining quotas (e.g. age, gender, education, employment, geography, economic background). If your municipality is selected, we will support you in refining your recruitment strategy. However, the actual participant selection process will be carried out entirely by the municipality. We will provide a promotional toolkit for you to promote the panel through your local networks and channels.

5 YOUR ROLE IN THE PANEL AND HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES APPLYING	HOW CEAH WILL SUPPORT YOU
PREPARATION FOR THE PANEL	
You must organise catering for participants and arrange all necessary logistics. Using the promotional toolkit we will provide, you are also expected to disseminate information on the panel across your municipality through local communication channels, such as newspapers, social media, or networks. Ahead of the panel, you should assign staff to manage the roles, including logistical coordination, participant assistance, note-taking, photography, and data collection during the event.	We provide capacity building activities by training TA experts and facilitators as well as preparatory webinars for selected citizens to inform them about the panel programme and expectations. We will provide standardised materials to assist you in organising the panel, such as facilitator guides, agenda templates, presentation slides etc. Before the panel, we will share orientation materials, detailed instructions, and the final agenda. Furthermore, we will suggest relevant topic ideas for the panel, which can be adapted to your local needs and priorities.
FINANCING	
Your municipality will be responsible for all associated costs of hosting the panel, including catering, as well as any in-kind and financial support (e.g., travel expense reimbursement).	
PANEL DELIVERY	
On the day of the panel, your municipality is responsible for managing the event and ensuring it is delivered in a clear, structured, and inclusive manner. You will also monitor and document the contributions and outcomes.	We will provide on-site or remote support during the panel (as a minimum, one member of the CEAH team or TA expert) and supply digital tools such as live polls in order to enhance citizen interaction during the panel.
EVALUATION POST-PANEL	
Following the event, you need to submit all relevant data, documentation, and materials from the panel to the CEAH team. If necessary, you may be asked to support translation or clarification on the outcomes. You should share the results of the panel and the report we will produce with the citizens that participated and the wider municipality. You are expected to consider how to incorporate the recommendations derived from the panel into your local energy initiatives and action plans, that form part of your policy development.	We will collect and summarise your panel's data in a report that you can share with participants and citizens. We will also share the results and best practices across municipalities and EU networks, and help you exchange experiences and connect with other municipalities.

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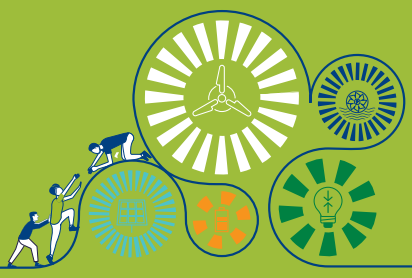

6 WHAT DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

When the open call appears on the website, you are invited to apply to host a citizen energy panel in your municipality. You will be asked to include details on your capacity to do so and the local context (e.g., list existing energy initiatives), possible venue or joint venue options, translation service, and indicate whether you are willing to adopt random selection of citizens. More information can be found in **Citizen Energy Panel Application guidance**. It is recommended to review this document before applying to host a citizen energy panel.

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7 SEE WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT PAST PANELS, ASSEMBLIES, & COUNCILS

Examples show that citizens' assemblies have directly influenced policy development, demonstrating positive instrumental impact. For instance, **Luxembourg's Climate Citizens' Council** (Klima-Biergerrot) was convened in 2022 to review the country's existing commitments and formulate recommendations for the updated National Energy and Climate Plan. In the final submission to the European Commission in 2023, Luxembourg incorporated new measures based on those Council recommendations.

Other examples further highlight how citizens' assemblies have strengthened institutional capacities, by creating lasting pathways for citizen involvement in governance. **The Citizens' Assembly on climate change in Ireland** prompted the formation of a permanent Joint Parliamentary Committee on Climate Action. This embedded continuous public engagement into the parliamentary decision-making framework and enhanced democratic accountability.

Citizens' assemblies have also influenced broader societal perceptions of climate governance. For example, a member of Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss expressed how the assembly experience deepened their awareness and motivation to actively engage with biodiversity issues in a more informed and constructive way. Find more examples at KNOCA's map of climate assemblies.

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