



European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency

Summary of Session 1

[23-25 February, 2024]



Identifying challenges and enablers to energy efficiency: a milestone weekend in Brussels

This first weekend of the European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency has ended. 150 randomly selected citizens, some travelling for up to 24 hours, convened and discussed the challenges and enablers of energy efficiency and set the stage for the next two sessions.

The session was structured with a dual objective: to identify the key challenges and potential enablers for energy efficiency. It was divided into four blocks, which focused on:

- Block I: Participants getting to know each other.
- Block II: Strengthening a shared understanding of the energy system and the interconnections between its various actors.
- Block III: Identifying key obstacles and enablers to energy efficiency.
- Block IV: Prioritizing the most relevant enablers and articulating knowledge needs for the next sessions.

The participants explored various aspects, including financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic hurdles among many others.

Session 1 : Day-by-day

DAY 01 - Plenary

Welcome words by Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica: “We want to hear your voices and we are determined to make them heard”

Joint interview of Dana Spinant, Director-General, Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) and Colin Scicluna, Head of Cabinet of Vice-President Dubravka Šuica

Experts clarified energy efficiency as achieving the same outcomes with less energy, simplifying the energy system's complexities, actors, and dynamics.

The mandate and remit of this panel was explained in depth: to inform the European Commission's work on the Energy Efficiency First Principle, with concrete recommendations from the participants.

DAY 02 - Working groups

Participants were divided into the working groups, where they began to get to know each other over discussions about their energy consumption and production. Each group put together a visual ‘mapping’ of the energy system, its actors, and dynamics, to identify the main challenges to energy efficiency.

From these challenges, obstacles to energy efficiency were selected through a deliberative and voting process in each group. The diversity of the participants enriched the debates, ensuring representation of different viewpoints with up to 5 different languages spoken within each working group.

DAY 03 - Plenary

After a day of discussions and an evening cocktail event with participants of the Belgian Citizens' Panel on Artificial Intelligence, organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the positive energy in the room was still palpable in Sunday's plenary, where the main challenges were presented by a member of each working group. One representative of each group presented a key obstacle they had prioritised in view of achieving an efficient energy system.

Feedback discussions in plenary

Experts and other participants responded to the obstacles presented. They developed multiple arguments focusing on three main sectors where energy efficiency must be achieved: transport, buildings and industry. The high quality of the debates was acknowledged.

Session 1 Agenda

DAY 01	
12:30 15:00	Arrival, lunch, welcome and introductory speech by Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica
15:00 17:00	Icebreaker: getting to know each other The Panel's Remit: what, why and how? Understanding the Panel Coffee break
17:00 18:45	Learning about Energy Efficiency with the Knowledge Committee Getting ready for deliberation Break
18:45 20:00	Walking dinner in Charlemagne Foyer

DAY 02	
09:00 11:00	Block I: You, me & energy efficiency Coffee break
11:00 14:00	Block II: Mapping the energy efficiency system & its actors Lunch break
14:00 16:00	Block III: Obstacles & Enablers Coffee break
16:00 18:00	Block IV: Prioritising & gathering knowledge needs

Evening: Joint Social Gathering with Participants of the Belgian Citizens' Panel & Diner at Albert Restaurant, Mont des Arts 28, 1000 Brussels

DAY 03	
09:30 09:55	Assessment of the previous days
09:55 12:05	Facilitated Exchanges between Panellists, Knowledge Committee Members & Officials from the European Commission Coffee break
12:05 13:15	Communication strategy & presentation of the hyperfair platform

13:15
14:00

Wrap-up & Next steps
Distribution of lunch packages

Q&A with Betina (19), from Estonia

Why is it important for you to participate in this Panel?

“The Commission members emphasized in the plenary that youth represent the future. Even though I don't own a house, car, or washing machine, the information is still relevant to us. We can provide unique insights and address our specific issues. We're also considering future generations; our efforts are for them too. I'm curious to see if our ideas will reach the Commission and be utilized. A key topic in our panel was energy usage transparency. I hope it gains attention because detailed information enables people to make more informed decisions.”

What do you expect from the next session?

“Energy efficiency is crucial to me because, as we know, climate change has long been a pressing issue, often overwhelming due to its complexity. I appreciate how this panel enables us to focus on specific topics like energy in smaller groups, allowing for a more detailed examination of the problem. Engaging in conversations with experts, which isn't always accessible in everyday life (despite what Google offers), is incredibly valuable. It ensures we don't overlook details and can formulate practical recommendations for the Commission.”

What's the highlight of your weekend?

“It has been an amazing weekend.

I think the visualization, with the map was very useful, because you can connect and see the problems or plans out. I found sweet that at the beginning of Saturday, we introduced our neighbor and not ourselves. I think that it made us feel more connected and open and more understanding towards each other.

I want to express my gratitude for this panel, because in university, we also talk about engaging the people in democracy making and it is so great to see that it's not only in theory but actually in practice.”

Expert interventions during the plenary

Yves Marignac, Energy Expert and Senior Advisor, Association négaWatt, France

Arianna Vitali Roscini, Secretary General, The Coalition for Energy Savings, Italy

Camille Defard, Head of the Jacques Delors Energy Center, France

Claudia Canevari, Head of Unit Energy Efficiency: Policy and Financing, Directorate-General for Energy, European Commission

Jan Rosenow, Director of European programmes, Regulatory Assistance Project, Germany

Claire Roumet, EU Policy and Strategic partnerships, Energy Cities, France

Two expert views from the plenary

Camille Defard

“The EU has technical tools to train and address Member States' questions. Energy Efficiency requires significant investment, but not all Member States have the same capacity to invest. European funding is available, notably through the "Plan de Relance" at the European level, launched after the Covid crisis, to equalize the possibilities for Member States to apply these mandatory regulations.”

Claudia Canevari

“Energy is one of the policies of shared competence, meaning that both the EU and the Member States are responsible. Member States can also legislate at a national level. The European Union adopts also directives that must be transposed - thus adapted - by national legislators. The European Commission makes proposals in energy policy, but legislative decisions are made by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The first directive on Energy Efficiency dates back to 2012 and has been revised in 2018 and 2023 to meet climate objectives. This directive covers all sectors of the economy, including buildings, industry and the public sector...”

[Click here to watch the recording of Friday's plenary!](#)

[Click here to watch the recording of Sunday's plenary!](#)

Key insights on the Citizens' Engagement Platform

“Restriction or prohibition of heavier, larger, and high-consumption SUV vehicles in densely populated urban areas.”

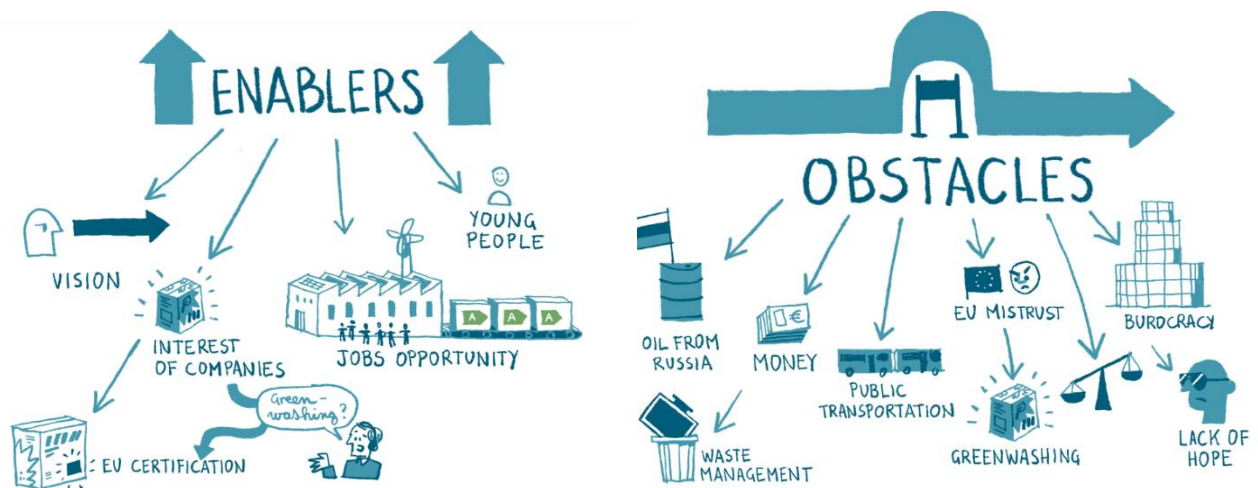
“We need an open and respectful debate at all levels - local, national and European - on how to achieve these targets without anyone left behind.”

“Reduce car traffic by creating more pedestrian-friendly and tranquil streets and spaces, and drastically reduce the use of concrete for city streets and areas. Instead, plant grass and trees to decrease urban warming and reduce the reliance on cooling devices, especially in summer.”

“Implement mandatory smart meters. Old energy meters offer only night and day tariffs. The new smart meters can report the current energy tariff/price, enabling consumers to decide when it is expensive or cheap to use electricity. This, in theory, should flatten the demand curve and thus reduce dependence on peaking plants.”

Check out the Citizens' Engagement Platform

The weekend through Sylvain Mazas's perspective



Sylvain Mazas presented the evolution of discussions with graphics. Above is a glimpse of his work, showcasing how he captured the plenary's proceedings in a visually engaging way, greatly enriching the session's dynamics.

Reminder: Objectives of all 3 sessions

- **Session 1 23-25 February 2024:** Citizens' experiences with energy efficiency and their understanding of the main challenges for the entire energy system.
- **Session 2: 15-17 March 2024:** Focus on going from challenges to solutions
- **Session 3: 12-14 April 2024:** Consolidating, debating and endorsing recommendations