European Commission

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL

On Energy Efficiency

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On Energy Efficiency

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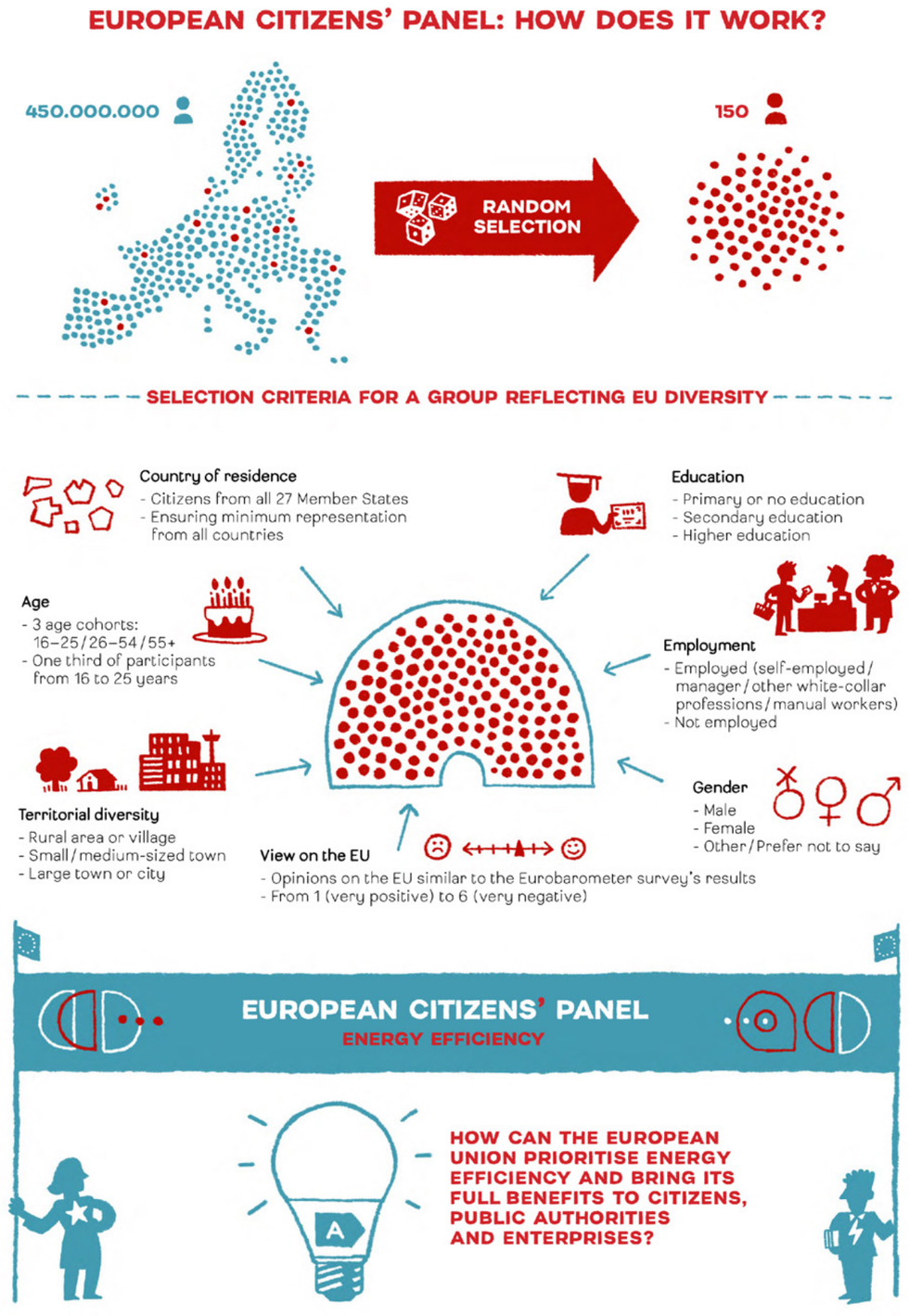
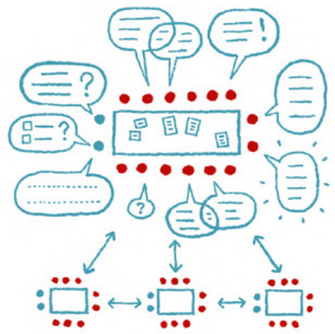


CITIZENS' PANEL: THE SESSIONS

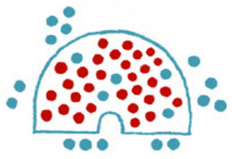
PLENARY

WORKING GROUPS



FACILITATORS AND MODERATORS

- Guided citizens through discussions in all 3 sessions
- Moderated discussions in small groups and plenaries



STEERING BOARD

- Composed of the European Commission, a Deliberation Team (professionals accompanying the design, methodology and deliberation) and teams in charge of practical organisation
- Designed, organised, oversaw and managed the Citizens' Panel

INTERPRETERS

- Covering all 24 official EU languages

KNOWLEDGE COMMITTEE

- Around 8 external experts and one Commission expert
- Shared knowledge and expertise
- Contributed to the drafting of an Information Kit and to fact-checking
- Helped to structure the deliberations and identify speakers

OBSERVERS

- Some researchers, journalists, and representatives of organised civil society observed the panels' work

HANDING OVER

- Citizens hand over their recommendations to the European Commission

FOLLOW-UP & FEEDBACK

- European Commission integrates the recommendations in its policy making

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Empower consumers to become energy efficient

2 Finance a fair right to energy related home renovation

3 Increase energy independence and efficiency, becoming a global example

4 Achieve energy efficiency targets by strengthening everyone's ability to act

5 Manage and monitor the implementation of EU directives

6 Improve the state of skilled labour in the EU in the energy efficiency sector

7 Secure the future through green education

8 Optimise and develop the grid system from producer to the end-user in favour of renewable energy sources

9 Help EU citizens to develop energy communities focused on energy efficiency by providing information and financial support

10 Develop energy-efficient communities for responsible consumption and increased local energy production

11 Expand the implementation of energy efficiency in buildings

12 Increase the attractiveness of public transport for passengers

13 Deliver the most energy-efficient transport across Europe: Get goods off the road, get people out of planes, and introduce a 'railway first principle'

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency was convened in the first half of 2024 against the backdrop of a preparatory work for a policy initiative to be adopted by the European Commission later in 2024 on the "Energy Efficiency First" principle ([1]). The panel was envisioned as a key opportunity to inform the Commission of the citizens' perspective and get their recommendations in this field.

'Energy Efficiency' refers to using less energy to perform the same task, thereby eliminating energy waste and reducing energy costs. Today, energy efficiency is a vital component of sustainable development and a key strategy for combating climate change, enhancing energy security, and promoting economic growth. However, there are still significant challenges in making energy efficiency accessible, inclusive, and effective for all sectors and communities across the European Union.

Recognising these challenges, the EU has taken an active role in promoting energy efficiency and supporting Member States in their efforts to increase implementation. The Commission's 2025 strategy for the European Green Deal, for example, sets ambitious goals for making energy efficiency a reality for everyone and for the widespread adoption of energy-saving technologies. However, to achieve these goals, complex policy challenges related to financing, technological innovation, regulatory frameworks, and public awareness need to be addressed. The EU plays a critical role in facilitating cooperation and coordination among Member States and other stakeholders to tackle these challenges and develop effective solutions.

In this context, the Commission invited the citizens participating in the Panel on Energy Efficiency to answer the following question: "How can the European Union prioritise energy efficiency and bring its full benefits to citizens, public authorities and enterprises?".

Supported by information material, experts' inputs and discussions in plenaries and working groups, the citizens participating in this panel identified possible policy actions and relevant players to be involved at different levels to make the EU more energy efficient. The European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency eventually produced and adopted 13 recommendations, which are presented in full in the Annex of this report.

Following the panel's sessions, participating citizens were asked to fill out a feedback survey as part of the evaluation of the process. Parts of these survey results are outlined throughout this report.

The follow-up steps to these 13 recommendations will be further described in a Citizens' Report, an official document which will be adopted by the College of Commissioners, alongside future policy initiatives. A feedback event will also be organised to explain these steps to the panel's participants. In the meantime, this report aims at summarising the main features of this European Citizens' Panel and to shed light on its methodological framework, the way the debates were facilitated, the outputs of the three sessions, as well as the assessment of the process made by the citizens.

([1]) https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-first-principle_en

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2. Methodological framework

2.1. Random selection and demographic composition of the panel

In order to ensure a fair, consistent and reliable approach that mirrors to the highest extent the representativeness of the diversity of European society, random selection methods were used for recruiting the participants in the European Citizens' Panel.

The recruitment was carried out by Harris Interactive. Harris conducted the recruitment of participants using random digital dialling. 228 people agreed to take part in the panel from which 150 were randomly chosen to be part of the panel based on diverse criteria (as described below), while 50 of them constituted the first reserve list of citizens, in case of dropouts.

Table 1: Demographic composition of the panel – national origin

Country	Target Participants	Actual Participants		
		Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Austria	4	3	3	3
Belgium	5	6	6	6
Bulgaria	4	3	3	2
Croatia	2	3	3	3
Cyprus	2	2	2	2
Czechia	5	5	4	4
Denmark	3	3	3	3
Estonia	2	2	2	1
Finland	3	4	4	4
France	15	15	15	13
Germany	19	18	18	16
Greece	5	5	5	5
Hungary	5	5	5	5
Ireland	3	4	4	4
Italy	15	15	15	15
Latvia	2	2	2	2
Lithuania	2	2	2	2
Luxembourg	2	2	2	2
Malta	2	2	2	2
Netherlands	6	6	6	6
Poland	10	8	8	8
Portugal	5	5	5	5
Romania	7	8	8	8
Slovakia	3	3	3	3
Slovenia	2	1	1	5
Spain	12	12	12	12
Sweden	5	5	5	1
Total	**150**	**149**	**148**	**142**

The table above provides an overview of the desired number of citizens across EU Member States (country quotas) as well as the actual participants per session. A representation of Member States proportional to their population size was aimed at but balanced by a minimum of two citizens per country. In other words, high targets were set for countries with large populations such as Germany (19 citizens), while 2 citizens from Malta and Luxembourg were invited, applying the principle of degressive proportionality. Generally, attendance was good and broadly reflected the set targets. For 23 out of the 27 Member States, the goals were met while the other Member States were very close to the targets. Overall, out of the 150 recruited citizens, 149 took part in at least one of the three sessions.

To ensure that the Panel would reflect as much as possible the diversity of the EU population, and to enable the representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, target quotas for participants were defined according to the following socio-demographic characteristics the actual shares of participants refer to the 147 citizens who attended at least one of the sessions).

Figure 1: Results of the feedback survey for the question "Have you ever participated in a citizens' participation process before?" (n=114)

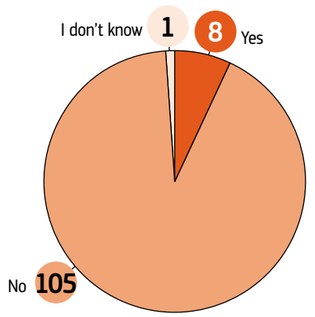


Figure 2: Target numbers and actual Panel participants over five socio-demographic criteria

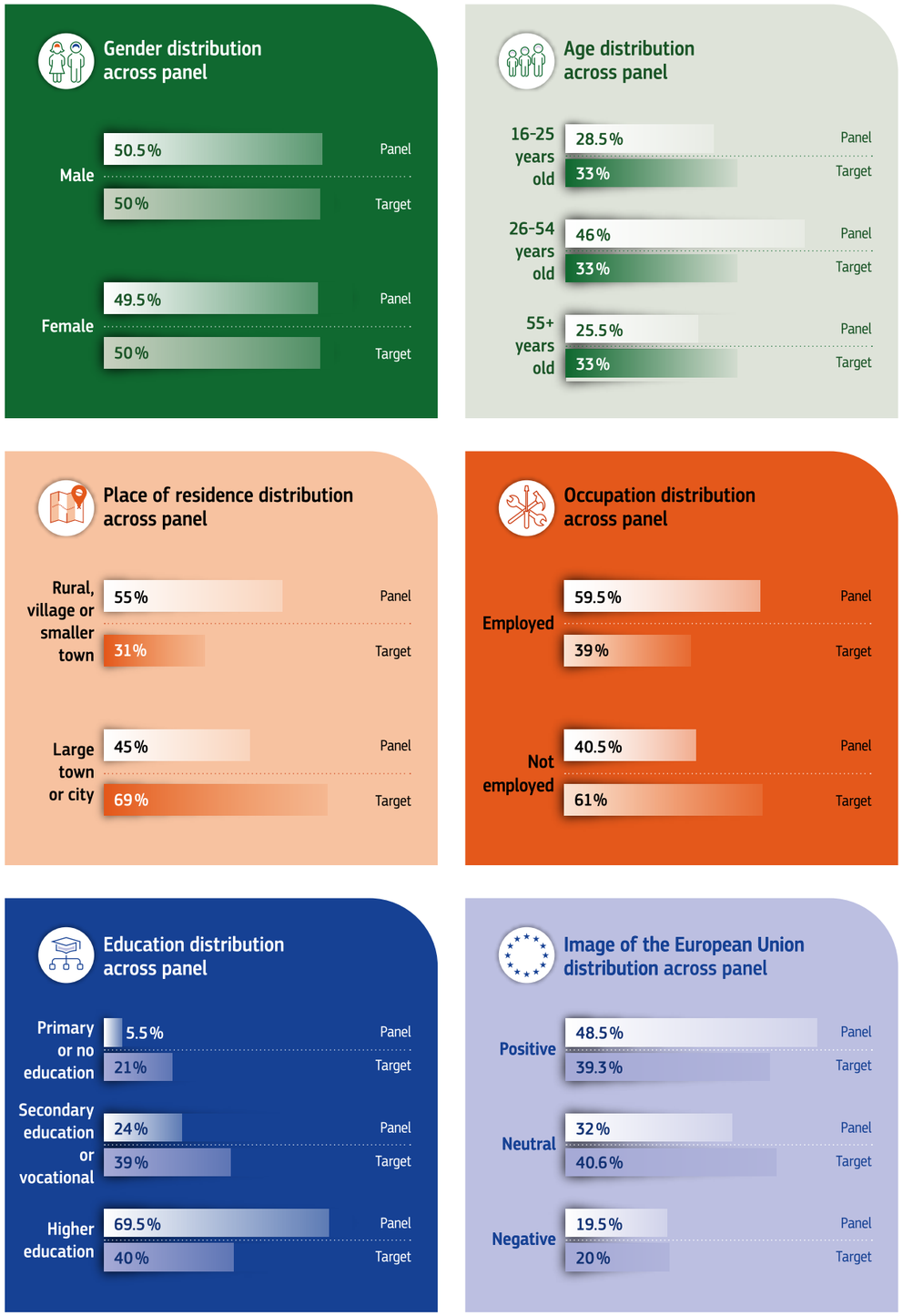
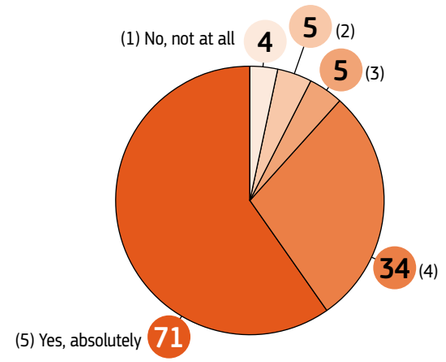


Figure 3: Results of the feedback survey for the question **"Do you think that the Citizens' Panel represented the diversity of the EU population well?"** (n=119)



2.2. The panel's journey

The European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency consisted of three sessions with different goals – each building on the work of the previous session with a view to producing by consensus a set of recommendations to submit to the European Commission.

In the first session (23-25 February 2024, on-site in Brussels), participants were introduced to the issue at hand and were able to get to know each other and build a sense of communityand trust. They received initial expert inputs simplifying the energy system's complexities, actors, and dynamics. Presenting key obstacles they had prioritised in working groups each group received feedback from experts on this first output.

The second session (15-17 March 2024, online) gathered participants on the virtual conference Center Hyperfair. Focusing on three main sectors the citizens had identified to improve energy efficiency (transports, buildings and infrastructure) and developing on cross-cutting issues, this second session deepened the exploration of the subject. Its main goal was to encourage the exchange of ideas and perspectives among participants, identify areas of consensus and disagreement, and mapping out promising recommendations to start being more energy efficient.

The third and final session (12-14 April 2024, on-site in Brussels) was dedicated to refining the recommendations based on the ideas and insights gained in the first two sessions and supported by further external inputs. The participating citizens eventually developed 13 recommendations for a more energy efficient Europe, which were handed over to the European Commission. They are presented in full in the Annex of this report.

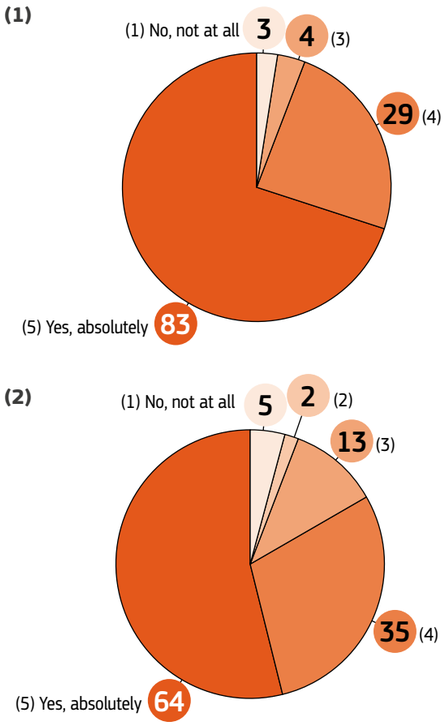
2.3. Participatory methods

2.3.1 From plenary to working groups

The structure of the sessions was designed to encourage interactions among participants and to ensure that all voices were heard. Building on a tried-and-tested methodology developed throughout previous European Citizens' Panels, the European Commission, supported by a team of experts from the field of deliberative democracy (hereafter "the deliberation team"), reaffirmed the importance of offering different formats of deliberation.

In plenary settings, citizens were able to hear experts' inputs and could present to all participants the results of their working group discussions, in 24 languages. Sub-plenary settings provided participants with an opportunity to share their insights with a smaller group of 50 to 75 participants and to receive specific feedback from various experts. Working groups, usually gathering 12 participants, were composed in a way which allowed sufficient geographical diversity, with a mix of larger and smaller countries and a maximum of five different languages. Such smaller groups encouraged interactions and helped citizens to get to know each other better and build trust. Following a core principle of the European Citizens' Panels, all participants were able to speak in their mother tongue, facilitated by interpretation.

Figure 4: Results of the feedback survey for the questions "In working group discussions I felt very respected" (1) (n=119) and "Overall, do you feel your voice mattered in your working group?" (2) (n=119)



2.3.2 Moderation and facilitation

Three main moderators guided citizens through all sessions and steered the plenary discussions. They provided information on the general goal of the panel and the methodology of the sessions, along with organisational aspects. They also facilitated debates between speakers, ensured that knowledge was provided fairly and impartially during the discussions, and facilitated Q&A between experts and citizens. Furthermore, they brought together all results in the final plenaries of each session. The main moderators were:

- Julia Hoffmann (ifok)
- Antoine Vergne (Missions Publiques)

Citizens worked in 12 working groups, each facilitated and assisted by two members from the deliberation team: one experienced facilitator and one assistant facilitator. The facilitators' role was to lead the discussions in the working groups, in their mother tongue or in English, and to enable a smooth workflow by:

- setting a friendly and mutually respectful atmosphere to promote a balanced contribution from all participants;
- ensuring that all citizens were informed about the overall process and guiding them in the group work;
- making sure that the objectives of the working group sessions were reached, i.e., facilitating the identification of disagreements and conflicts between citizens, promoting the emergence of debate and consensus among them;
- timekeeping, note-taking and consolidating deliberation outputs in multilingual and interlinked working documents;
- linking requests made by the citizens in the working groups to the support team or the experts, e.g., by collecting pending remarks or questions;
- participating in debriefing sessions with the deliberation team.

All facilitators and assistants followed common instructions provided in a facilitation guide and a roll-out document (one per session). They engaged in three dedicated briefing and training meetings prior to each session.

2.4. Collective Results

Over three sessions the citizens developed 13 recommendations for an Energy Efficient Europe. These results are fully displayed in the Annex of this report. For a better reading flow, the recommendations are presented in 7 thematic blocks:

- Information and behaviour change;
- Fair and equal opportunities;
- EU's global role and Member States;
- Jobs and education;
- Infrastructure;
- Buildings;
- Transport.

Figure 6: Results of the feedback survey for the question "Do you think that the Citizens' Panel included the perspectives of all panel members in its final recommendations?" (n=119)

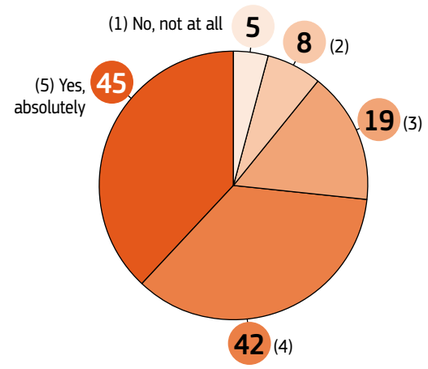


Figure 7: Results of the feedback survey for the question "Do you think that the recommendations of the Citizens' Panel will have an impact?" (n=118)

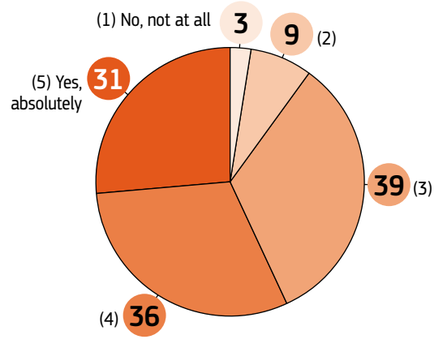
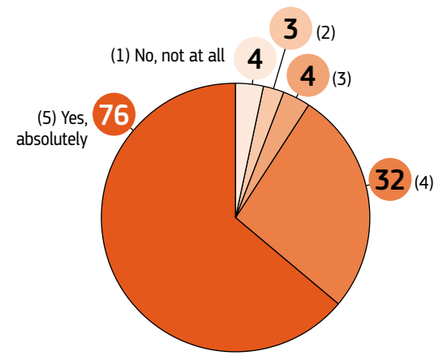


Figure 5: Results of the feedback survey for the question "Overall, are you satisfied with your experience on the Citizens' Panel?" (n=119)



2.5. Governance and knowledge

2.5.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee designed, organised, and coordinated the European Citizens' Panel. It met once a week to decide on conceptual and organisational matters, including methodological, communication, logistical and budgetary aspects, while ensuring that the deliberative process would have an impact on policy-making. The Committee was composed of representatives of the European Commission and a consortium of contractors.

The consortium of contractors worked together to design and implement this new generation of European Citizens' Panels. In particular, it brought together experts to help to design and facilitate the deliberative process, pulling their know-how to conceptualise the panel's remit as well as overall participatory process and the methodology for each session and to set up the advisory Knowledge Committee.

2.5.2 Knowledge Committee

he involvement of a Knowledge Committee made up of experts in the field of energy efficiency enhanced the integrity of the deliberative process by guaranteeing the quality, objectivity, diversity, and comprehensibility of the information provided to citizens. They also helped to look at the results and ensure that the transition from one session to the others would be structured in a way that would make the deliberations progress meaningfully and based on citizens' inputs.

Their responsibilities included drafting an information kit for participants, collaborating with the Steering Committee on factual policy inputs, identifying weak signals and blind spots in discussions, fact-checking, responding to citizens' questions and sharing their expertise on the topic of energy efficiency during plenary and sub-plenary settings. The Knowledge Committee also recommended several external speakers to complement their knowledge throughout the sessions.

The Knowledge Committee was composed of eight members selected by the Steering Committee, based on the following criteria: expertise covering a wide variety of knowledge fields; broad recognition of their know-how and experience in the field, both amongst stakeholders and peers; ability to understand, acknowledge and communicate diverse views on the topic; and diversity in terms of gender, nationality and affiliations. Additionally, one representative from the European Commission contributed to EU policy insights.

The members of the Knowledge Committee were:

- **Arianna Vitali Roscini** – Secretary General, The Coalition for Energy Savings
- **Camille Defard** – Head of the Jacques Delors Energy Centre
- **Claire Roumet** – EU Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Energy Cities
- **Goda Perlaviciute** – Associate Professor for Public Acceptability of Sustainable Transitions, University of Groningen and Wytse Gorter, Junior Researcher for Environmental Psychology, University of Groningen
- **Jan Rosenow** – Director of European programmes, Regulatory Assistance Project (RAP)
- **Reinhard Six** – Independent Consultant, Expert on energy efficiency financing
- **Yves Marignac** – Energy Expert and Senior Advisor, Association négaWatt
- **Claudia Canevari** – Head of Unit, Unit of Energy Efficiency: Policy and Financing, Directorate-General for Energy, European Commission

2.5.3 Knowledge and Information Centre

A Knowledge and Information Centre (KIC) was set up to reply to questions and clarification requests formulated by citizens throughout their deliberations. The KIC included experts from European Commission who were asked to provide responses on their respective policy areas, along with members of the Knowledge Committee. Throughout the three sessions of the European Citizens' Panel, the KIC provided written answers to over 40 questions raised by citizens and elaborated a written briefing for the third session. The KIC also made short interventions in the twelve working groups to clarify issues in the process of drafting recommendations.

2.5.4 Speakers

In addition to the members of the Knowledge Committee, several stakeholders and experts were invited to present different aspects and perspectives related to energy issues in Europe and answer citizens' questions. The Knowledge Committee made sure that the knowledge presented to citizens was balanced, relevant for citizens' needs and requests and sufficiently representative of the main positions of policymakers and stakeholders in the EU. All the speakers are listed below.

Table 2: List of speakers during the three sessions

	Names and affiliation	First session	Second session	Third session
European Commission	**Maroš Šefčovič,** Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal, Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations			YES
	Colin Scicluna, Head of Cabinet, Cabinet of Vice-President Dubravka Šuica	YES		YES
	Ditte Juul-Jørgensen, Director-General, Directorate-General for Energy	YES		
	Dana Spinant, Director-General, Directorate-General for Communication	YES		YES
	Julia Mechthild Wörsdörfer, Deputy Director-General, Coordination of the just and green energy transition, Directorate General for Energy		YES	
	Richard Kuehnel, Director for Representation and Communication in Member States, Directorate-General for Communication	YES		YES
	Paula Pinho, Director for Just Transition, Consumers, Energy Efficiency and Innovation, Directorate-General for Energy	YES		YES
	Pierre Schellekens, Director, Energy policy, Strategy and Coordination, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Claudia Canevari, Head of Unit Energy Efficiency Policy and Financing, Directorate-General for Energy	YES	YES	
	Joachim Ott, Head of Unit Citizens Dialogue, Directorate-General for Communication	YES	YES	
	Robert Nuij, Deputy Head of Unit for Energy Efficiency Policy and Financing, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Deputy Head of Unit Citizens' Dialogues, Directorate- General for Communication	YES		
	Achilles Hannoset, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Harry Panagopulos, Legal Officer for Democracy, Union Citizenship and Free Movement, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers			YES
	Martin Sacleux, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers			YES
	Rados Horacek, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Veronika Jirickova, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Madis Laaniste, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Edyta Nowak, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Margot Pinault, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
	Thibault Roy, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			
	Eduardo Soares, Policy officer, Directorate-General for Energy			YES
External speakers	**Camille Defard,** Head of the Jacques Delors Energy Centre	YES	YES	YES
	Dorin Hell, former participant of the Conference on the Future of Europe	YES		
	Victor Laymand, make.org		YES	
	Yves Marignac, Energy Expert and Senior Advisor, Association négaWatt	YES	YES	
	Hendrik Nahr, make.org			YES
	Jan Rosenow, Director of European programmes, Regulatory Assistance Project (RAP)	YES		YES
	Claire Roumet, EU Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Energy Cities	YES		YES
	Reinhard Six, Independent Consultant, Expert on energy efficiency financing	YES	YES	YES
	Linda Steg, Professor of Environmental Psychology, University of Groningen		YES	
	Arianna Vitali Roscini, Secretary General, The Coalition for Energy Savings	YES	YES	YES

2.6. Observers

A number of observers were allowed to follow the work of this European Citizens' Panel. The aim was to provide transparency and visibility for this innovative democratic format whilst preserving a safe space for participating citizens, which is crucial for a trustful debate environment. Observers were permitted to attend and witness the discussions in the plenary sessions and working groups. The maximum number of observers allowed for each working group was three.

Some internal observers also came from the organising partners and institutions (e.g., internal staff from the European Commission or other EU institutions and bodies). External observers comprised researchers (from universities or think tanks), civil society actors, and other stakeholders. With the consent of the citizens concerned, external observers could conduct interviews with them for research purposes only, if it did not impede the proceedings of the panel.

BROADENING THE ENGAGEMENT

3. Broadening the engagement

3.1. The Citizens' Engagement Platform

The Citizens' Engagement Platform is an online tool which allows the general public to have a say on the issue addressed by the members of the European Citizens' Panel. This tool was put in place to maximise the citizens' participation on the topic and feed both the Panel's work and the related future policies. This platform based on the open-source software Decidim invites citizens to submit their contributions in all 24 EU languages, offering ideas and solutions. Additionally, the platform fosters interactive discussions through a comment feature, allowing users to engage with each other's proposals, provide feedback, and collaboratively refine ideas.

The European Commission launched on 9 February 2024 the online debate on the topic of energy efficiency ([2]). During the sessions, the European Citizens' Panel had the opportunity to hear about the main contributions made on the platform. Contributors have shared their insights on various aspects such as awareness raising, energy retrofit, mobilities, renewable energies or energy-saving's initiatives throughout the EU ([3]). Inspiring or reinforcing their work, the participation of a broader audience of EU citizens through the platform helped take into considerations other points of view into the discussions. All contributions made on the platform were fed into the deliberations of the Panel and taken into consideration in the preparation of future policies.

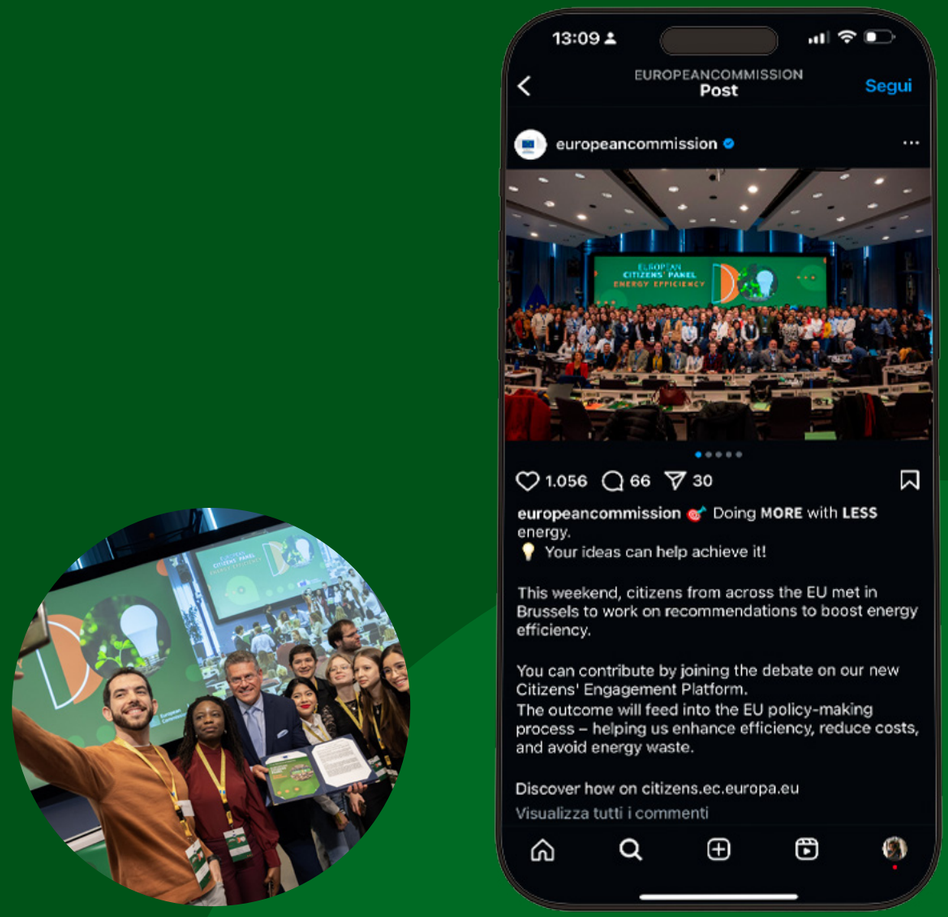
3.2. Communication

The communication strategy for the European Citizens' Panel on Energy Efficiency was designed to maximise awareness and engagement through a multifaceted approach, combining media campaigns, influencer and journalist outreach, direct outreach at events and the making of a documentary.

The social media campaigns focused on driving traffic into the new Citizens' Engagement Platform (CEP), as well as raising awareness about the ongoing panel sessions. Additionally, 15 influencers and journalists were invited to create and share content, thereby broadening the campaign's reach and fostering greater public engagement with the panel's work.

A central component was the documentary, which aimed to provide a personal and engaging narrative of the European Citizens Panel's activities.

([2]) The Citizens' Engagement Platform can be consulted here(
([3]) The final report can be consulted here



CITIZENS' RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Recommendations

4.1. Recommendations for an Energy Efficient Europe

Information and behaviour change
Recommendation 1

Recommendation 1
Empower consumers to become energy efficient

We recommend that information provided to consumers be made more accessible, transparent, and usable, to empower households and organisations to become more energy efficient. We therefore recommend an online portal with a self-audit function to help consumers assess their needs regarding transport, home improvements, and low-costs tips. It would provide them with a solutions package, including next steps and contact information, a network of physical one-stop-shops at municipal level (city halls, libraries) where independent experts are available to follow up. The network should not discriminate between rural/urban areas, and social groups. The one- stop-shop should provide advice on legislative, financial, technical aspects, and local service providers. Local actors are called upon to spread awareness of the service, more accessible energy efficiency labels on products, understandable to everybody, including information on products' lifespan, and reference to the one-stop-shop-network

Justification:

This recommendation is important, because appropriate decisions can only be taken if we have proper information to base our action on them. This information must be understandable and accessible to all. While there might already be a lot of information available, it is often not known, let alone understandable by all. Consumers should be aware of their energy consumption and own their data, the options available to them, the costs of these different options, and the services and support available to them to help them become more energy efficient.

Fair and equal opportunities
Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2
Finance a fair right to energy related home renovation

We recommend the introduction of a more advantageous tax system for small property owners, so that tenants are not seen as an obstacle to renovating their homes. This should be achieved through tax relief on work and materials depending on people's income. The lowest incomes should receive the most help. Subsidy mechanisms should be provided in advance of the work or in instalments as the renovation work progresses. Governments need to invest in social housing using energy-efficient and sustainable materials. CO2 tax revenues should be earmarked, in part, for energy efficiency (including renovation work). Multinational companies that pollute more, should be taxed accordingly. Banks should facilitate access to credit for energy renovation with an interest rate tailored to income.

Justification:

Social justice means having equitable access to energy and housing. Today, we face unacceptable situations: some people are living in severe energy poverty, and small homeowners from the middle class do not benefit from the aid and subsidies to renovate either their own homes or the properties they rent out. Tenants feel powerless to make a change. We find it intolerable that efforts are not equitably distributed and that for some, living in thermal comfort is inaccessible.

Equitable access makes energy efficiency more affordable for everyone and will thus contribute to the collective fight against climate change.

EU's global role and Member States
Recommendations 3 to 5

Recommendation 3
Increase energy independence and efficiency, becoming a global example

We recommend that the European Union invests in research and development of new energy technologies, including renewables, to achieve higher energy efficiency. This includes the areas of:

1. Energy production (hydrogen, nuclear fusion, etc.);
2. Energy storage (batteries);
3. Energy transfer; and
4. Reducing energy consumption

We also recommend that the EU promotes using country-specific competitive advantages in energy production, while facilitating the exchange of best practices and knowledge between Member States.

Furthermore, we recommend prioritising the actions within the Energy Efficiency First Principle framework which contribute the most to energy independence.

Justification:

Politically, the recommendation is important because it protects Europe and its citizens from potential geopolitical crises. It also helps protect European values and democracy by allowing the EU to cut ties with corrupt governments. At the same time, it can help EU legislation move quicker, as Europe would have more freedom to set its own standards. Knowledge exchange between Member States would also help improve relations between them. Socio- economically, it would increase the EU's competitiveness and enable redirecting the money used to pay the 61 % in energy imports (data from 2019) to internal investments that generate more value for the EU and its citizens. Less energy imports from third countries would also result in reducing exposure to price fluctuations and disruptions in the global energy markets, as well as creating more jobs within the EU.

Environmentally, it could lead to reduced energy consumption, green growth, and climate neutrality, which are all connected to the Energy Efficiency First Principle and the EU's sustainability pledges.

Recommendation 4
Achieve energy efficiency targets by strengthening everyone's ability to act

We recommend that the EU encourages support measures for the implementation of energy efficiency standards, either directly or through strong incentives to Member States. This will help to ensure that efforts are shared fairly between individuals and businesses, but also between regions, so that no one is left behind.

Key principles:

- Developing a culture of energy efficiency through better information to help us use less and better energy;
- Conditional incentives, help companies to integrate energy efficiency into their production, distribution, and sales, taking care not to weaken SMEs;
- Guaranteeing a minimum energy amount for decent living conditions and dedicating a large proportion of aid to the most vulnerable (e.g.: negative interest rate loans). The aim is to reduce social inequalities rather than perpetuate them;

Provide incentives for all individuals, but in inverse proportion to their income, especially through progressive energy pricing and dependent on energy sources.

Justification:

This recommendation is important because while energy efficiency standards exist, their accessibility and implementation remain limited. Today, numerous energy efficiency standards exist on a European scale (construction and renovation of buildings, eco-design of products and appliances, fight against programmed obsolescence, right to repair, etc.).

They are ambitious, and are helping the market to evolve, but their implementation varies from one member country to another. They set technical requirements that have a financial impact, may exclude certain groups (not everyone can have their home energy-retrofit, or buy the most efficient household appliances), or give rise to situations of unfair competition (between European companies that respect these standards in their production processes and companies outside the European Union).

Energy efficiency shouldn't be a luxury, or an option that some can avoid. The EU could play a major role to ensure that energy efficiency improves the daily life of people, especially the most vulnerable households. We are aware that some of our local authorities and administrations can play a major role in setting an example and driving the market forward.

We are aware that certain elements of our recommendation do not depend solely on the European Union and require strong alignment with the Member States. But a Citizens' Panel is the time to be bold, isn't it?

Recommendation 5 **Manage and monitor the implementation of EU directives**

We recommend that the EU ensures the implementation of energy efficiency directives in Member States, as they are currently implemented differently. Aspects to improve implementation are information, funding, and sanctions.

Information needs to be accessible and audience-specific, e.g., addressing youth through social media or elders through television, and easily visible in public spaces.

The EU only finances compliant Member States based on measurable progress. The financing needs to be just, proportional, and fair, considering the different capacities of Member States.

The sanctioning mechanisms already exist, and the Commission can bring governments of non- complying Member States to court.

To increase transparency, there should be a ranking of Member States according to their implementation efforts. Lastly, the EU should incentivise national governments to establish a "ticketing system" so that citizens can report energy waste and local authorities can act accordingly.

Justification:

This recommendation is important because ensuring implementation of directives in all countries would impact all EU citizens and even offer them the possibility to contribute directly to the monitoring process. Furthermore, if there is more harmonisation among Member States, it will be easier to decide on new measures in the future. Specifically on information, finding new ways to include different strata of the population could enhance accountability of both the EU and the national governments.

Only with effective implementation at Member State level, the transformation in the energy sector and advancing energy efficiency can be achieved at the necessary speed and intensity. If efficiency standards in every Member State are met, more EU citizens can enjoy the multiple benefits of energy efficiency.

Jobs and education
Recommendations 6 and 7

Recommendation 6
Improve the state of skilled labour in the EU in the energy efficiency sector

We recommend an increase in training in occupations related to energy efficiency. The EU could issue the following measures:

1. Member States could provide subsidies for individuals to be trained in skilled green labour. The state should incentivise the worker to stay and work in the country for a certain amount of time afterwards.
2. The EU could support short-term exchange or rotation programmes like ERASMUS programmes for students and workers in the field of energy efficiency (skilled and in training).
3. Until the lack of skilled workers around energy efficiency is solved, visas should be issued for skilled, non-EU workers to come work in the specific Member States that issue said visas.

Justification:

This recommendation is important because having skilled workers on all levels of energy efficiency implementation is crucial for the success of all other recommendations that the European Citizens' Panel have worked on. Without a skilled workforce, Member States cannot hope to achieve the energy efficiency goals. We propose three measures, each answering to a different need connected to qualifications of workers and the job market.

Measure 1: This measure is targeted at individuals who want to upgrade or get skills in areas connected to energy efficiency. National governments, by providing subsidies for training, can make them more accessible to everyone, especially people from poorer backgrounds, who otherwise might not be able to invest their time in upskilling or reskilling. However, we also propose that Member States take into consideration the risk of brain-drain (workers moving abroad for better pay). The workers who go through subsidised training should be encouraged in some way to use their new skills in the country that invested in their training. Accessible financing would make the courses more attractive, which could lead to more people seeking employment in the field. That means more experts who can plan, implement, and audit energy efficiency related investments.

Measure 2: This is an incentive for Member States to share their skilled workforce on short- term projects and make sure Member States lacking specialists can also develop energy efficient initiatives. This could lead to a cross-border exchange of information and skills through which green skills will be promoted.

Measure 3: We acknowledge the fact that not all areas in which skilled workers are needed can be quickly filled by the local workforce. It will take time to create a market of skilled workers in Europe, so in the meantime it would be useful to find ways to invite qualified individuals from outside of the EU.

In summary, the baseline condition is that without skilled workers, people cannot make the changes to become more energy efficient.

Recommendation 7
Secure the future through green education

We recommend more education on green and Energy Efficiency issues. This could be done by introducing the following measures:

1. A European certificate for energy efficiency, modelled after the International Computer Driving License (ICDL), to encourage a basic level of knowledge in energy efficiency.
2. Member states should ensure that a certain number of skilled green workers graduate from courses connected to energy efficiency each year to increase the number of green skilled workers in the country. This concept was adopted in previous years in the case of students attending universities.
3. The EU should introduce public awareness campaigns organised to emphasise the value of green skilled workers and show that these are the jobs of the future. It could be targeted especially to young people to show that manual work can be as attractive as an office job.

Justification:

Quality education is the base of any meaningful change. We propose three measures, each answering to a different need connected to education: lack of general knowledge on Energy efficiency, young people not going into vocational training needed to support energy efficient initiatives and changing the perception on careers needed to support the energy transition, to make them more attractive.

Firstly, the group agrees that more knowledge on energy efficiency is needed in general. Knowledge lowers the threshold to make Energy Efficiency choices on an individual and national level. This could work as a school subject, a required professional course or a university course. In general, we advise the course to be connected to an incentive for every level at which you can take the course.

Secondly, in the past European university targets have shown that European targets incentivise Member States to put more attention on certain areas in education. Such targets in the field of Energy Efficiency training will eventually lead to an increase of the number of people that go into vocational training. In other words, by setting targets for Member States, the EU pressures them to increase the amount of people in Energy Efficiency related areas. This way the governments are directly responsible for developing a skilled workforce.

Lastly, this recommendation is important because the way people perceive working in manual labour and technical areas needs to be changed for the better. The campaigns could show what different areas of work look like, showing that physical work is crucial, gives good future perspectives and does not have to be less interesting than work in an office.

Infrastructures
Recommendations 8 to 10

Recommendation 8
Optimise and develop the grid system from producer to the end-user in favour of renewable energy sources

We recommend that the EC prioritises the optimisation of the grid:

1. Improve energy security and reliability through investment in renewables, research on energy storage and implementation of smart management.
2. Draft an investment plan including guidelines for Member States towards improving the grid at the local and cross-border level.

3. Develop the grid considering possibilities and advantages of centralisation and decentralisation. The most energy-efficient option should be implemented on a case- by-case basis.
4. Implement mechanisms that monitor the adequate use of funding and enforce EU rules so that the end user can experience the full benefit of the investment and companies can comply.

Encourage Member States to assist citizens in using smart metres and energy-efficient sources, as well as implement financial incentives for suppliers and consumers to utilise energy-efficient practices; consider the possibility of creating the framework for citizens to store and produce energy.

Justification:

This recommendation is important because optimising the grid to accommodate renewable energy sources yields numerous benefits for both producers and end users. Optimising the grid systems enhances energy efficiency and promotes the adoption of renewables. Efficient energy transport, storage, and usage are ensured through this approach. Additionally, grid development fosters stable energy prices, encourages the use of smart appliances, and facilitates smoother energy supply.

Consumers and suppliers benefit from grid optimisation and development through smart management systems. Consumers can access valuable information about energy consumption, suppliers can better monitor demand and production efficiency, and storage systems can complement the modernisation process.

By incentivising energy efficiency and minimising energy loss, grid optimisation not only reduces costs but also promotes environmental sustainability. Empowering consumers and integrating them into the energy system helps to level the playing field and diminishes the influence of corporations. Shifting our mindset towards energy efficiency is imperative for widespread implementation and citizen engagement.

Moreover, modernising grids aligns with EU objectives of reducing emissions, combating climate change, and transitioning to a decarbonised energy sector. By implementing this approach, we will be producing more energy, be more efficient within Europe and less dependent on foreign sources. Finally, this new sector will lead to new job opportunities and improve the EU's position as a global player in a fairer energy system.

Recommendation 9
Help EU citizens to develop energy communities focused on energy efficiency by providing information and financial support

We recommend:

1. To encourage information on energy efficiency and visibility of current energy communities. Specifically, we could make the information about energy communities understandable and accessible to all EU citizens or we could share good practices concerning energy communities within the EU.
2. To value economically energy savings achieved through the development of efficient energy communities. Precisely, we could develop currently inexistant mechanisms, or a system of energy efficiency certificates.
3. To help the local public authorities to financially support the development of energy efficient communities' initiatives. More specifically, they could use the funds that are coming directly from the EU (e.g., FEDER fund).
4. Once these communities are operational, the priority would be to make energy efficiency the main principle of the community. Specifically, we could insulate buildings, introduce new technologies, and develop communal heating and cooling systems.

Justification:

This recommendation is important because an energy community is based on citizens' or local initiatives. However, the lack of precise information regarding the functioning and the funding of energy communities could discourage some citizens from developing such communities. Moreover, the existing energy communities are not de facto efficient and the geographical and financial circumstances of EU Member States are sometimes very different. Therefore, we need to make the relevant information accessible to everyone, as well as to enhance the cooperation between Member States, to eventually develop energy efficient communities.

One of the principles of an efficient energy community is to avoid energy waste. Today, the absence of energy distributors in the energy community systems is an obstacle to achieve zero waste. We need to make sure that private actors are encouraged to join energy communities. For example, the European Commission could encourage the Member States to deliver energy efficiency certificates to private companies if they are working with energy communities. We also need to focus on the economical positive impact of not consuming energy. We also consider that we need to fairly price the excess of the energy produced by the communities.

We consider that local public authorities are the most suitable actors to invest some of the EU funds they receive to support the energy communities, as we consider that citizens will trust more their local public authorities, than the national government. However, local public authorities should keep in mind that energy communities must remain financially accessible to everyone, by distributing the funds to citizens based on their income. Moreover, the funds managed by the local authorities could help citizens access expertise to ameliorate the energy efficiency of their communities, instead of investing their own or the community's savings. Furthermore, we should also give power directly to the citizens within the energy communities to obtain direct access and manage those EU funds.

Finally, once these three previous elements can be provided, we should ensure that energy communities place the energy efficiency first principle at the centre of their development, by insulating buildings and developing heating and cooling systems that could help reduce the amount of energy wasted.

Recommendation 10
Develop energy-efficient communities for responsible consumption and increased local energy production

We recommend incentivising energy communities across Member States.

The European Union and member states should collaborate to provide funding and expertise to support energy communities. Local authorities could be the drivers of this change.

A key aspect of incentivising energy communities is the establishment of clear targets in the European Energy Efficiency Directive of 2030. Compulsory monitoring of energy production in energy communities can provide valuable data for monitoring progress and identifying areas for improvement, new legislation, and policy objectives. It is essential to diversify energy sources in each Member State based on their unique characteristics and resources. We recommend reducing consumption by using smart technology (e.g., LED lights, efficient heating systems).

The EU should also focus on:

- Systemic changes that enable people to apply the Energy Efficiency First Principle.
- Promoting local and renewable energy.
- Incentivising awareness raising, education from an early age and citizen engagement.

Justification:

This recommendation is important to protect our environment and preserve our planet, not only for us, but future generations. Relying on local energy communities will increase energy security and energy independence within Europe, fostering a different paradigm of production and consumption.

This recommendation can ensure that everyone in Europe has the means to fight energy poverty with the help of energy communities. This recommendation could serve not only as an energy efficiency solution, but also as a way of flourishing life in local communities, fostering social participation and democracy for everyone included.

Buildings Recommendation 11

Recommendation 11
Expand the implementation of energy efficiency in buildings

We recommend that the EU supports Member States to ensure that significantly more buildings undergo energy-efficient refurbishment. Focus should be on residential buildings.

Member States should be supported to facilitate the renovation of residential buildings, in which low-income people live. Competitions at national level could help to find good transferable solutions (model projects). EU Member States should be asked to offer tax relief for owners in which most of the tenants are below a certain income. This would be a good incentive to have houses renovated. It must be ensured that it is in the interest of both tenants and landlords. In particular, it must be avoided that tenants are evicted in order for higher rents to be charged. Every EU citizen (whether tenant or owner) should have the opportunity to obtain free advice on the specific energy situation in their home (a one-stop agency). The recommendation also includes support and subsidy options to improve the energy situation.

Justification:

This recommendation is important, because:

- There are already numerous EU directives for public buildings (EED), for non-residential buildings (recently adopted EPBD) and for new buildings of all kinds (EPBD). Hence the focus on residential buildings.
- The EU directives can only be effective if there is also national and local implementation that reaches individual homeowners.
- In many EU Member States, people with low incomes often live in houses with particularly poor energy standards, poor structural conditions, and high energy costs.

Transport
Recommendation 12

Recommendation 12
Increase the attractiveness of public transport for passengers

We recommend that the European Commission conduct regular studies to enhance the energy efficiency of urban and suburban passenger transport systems across all Member States.

This study should include a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the electrification and attractiveness of public transportation systems. This approach shall enable the identification of gaps and shortcomings in existing systems and shall highlight exemplary practices that could be adopted by Member States.

Based on the study results, the European Commission could establish a range of subsidies for Member States to invest in improving the attractiveness and electrification of their transport systems as needed. The study should serve as a benchmark for the current state of affairs and will assist the European Commission in setting targets for Europe as a whole. Regular monitoring shall facilitate continuous improvement of system performance and increases in energy efficiency.

Justification:

This recommendation aims to enhance the quality of life by optimising public transportation, which is essential for daily activities and is more energy efficient than individual cars. Through this study, we anticipate practical outcomes that will facilitate the implementation of energy efficiency principles. Although public transport is more efficient than individual cars, its underutilization suggests that there are barriers that need to be addressed. The European Commission must investigate the reasons behind this underuse.

By making public transport more efficient, convenient, and accessible, we can improve the quality of connections and reduce economic and CO2 impacts, thus encouraging more people to choose public transport over private vehicles. Additionally, considering the high population concentration in urban areas, the study could propose tailored transport combinations for the future that would improve energy efficiency that is urgently needed in face of climate change. The added value of this approach is that it considers individual and collective transport, as well as future evolutions of modes of transport. It offers insights into specific cases observed in different EU Member States.

Recommendation 13
Deliver the most energy efficient transport across Europe: Get goods of the r oad, get people out of planes, and introduce the "railway first principle"

We recommend incentivising companies and people to use the train to be more energy efficient. For this, we recommend to:

1. Electrify train lines to reduce carbon emissions;
2. Modernise the rail infrastructure;
3. Digitise journey planning and buying tickets to optimise the customer experience;
4. Standardise railways between Member States and integrate with local transport systems;
5. Adapt timetables to ensure faster journey times
6. Promote train travel to compete with short-haul airlines and buses:
   - Faster journey times with high-speed rail.
   - Better facilities, e.g., dining cars, wi-fi, sleeping wagons, etc.
   - Allow larger pieces of luggage and bicycles in all trains.
7. Fill trains using affordable pricing:
   - Special ticket type promotions: tickets for families, students, senior citizens, people with disabilities, low-income groups.
   - Make freight pricing affordable.
8. Open decommissioned rail lines: closed lines lie abandoned
9. Connect EU peripheries
10. To facilitate the implementation all these suggestions, we recommend increasing investment and subsidies:
    - Encourage short-term private investment while maintaining overall public ownership and control.
    - Tax fossil fuels, including aviation fuel.

Justification:

This recommendation is important, because train travel and freight movement are key areas in which quick energy efficiency gains can be made. The future of our ecology, economy, and technology requires us to act. Therefore, we recommend making passenger and goods transport more attractive and efficient. To achieve this, we need to act at the European level.

4.1.1 Assessment of the recommendations

On the last day of the panel, participating citizens were asked to provide their assessment of each of the 21 recommendations. Here is an overview of the results of this vote, with recommendations sorted according to their level of support.

RANK	N° of the recommendation	Title of recommendation	Level of support (average note from 1 to 6)	Approval rate (share of vote)
1	8	Optimise and develop the grid system from producer to the end-user in favour of renewable energy sources	5.25	96 %
2	3	Increase energy independence and efficiency, becoming a global example	5.18	92 %
3	9	Help EU citizens to develop energy communities focused on energy efficiency by providing information and financial support	4.96	91 %
4	11	Expand the implementation of energy efficiency in buildings	4.89	90 %
5	4	Achieve energy efficiency targets by strengthening everyone's ability to act	4.87	87 %
6	12	Increase the attractiveness of public transport for passengers	4.83	91 %
7	2	Finance a fair right to energy related home renovation	4.73	87 %
8	1	Empower consumers to become energy efficient	4.71	84 %
9	10	Develop energy-efficient communities for responsible consumption and increased local energy production	4.64	84 %
10	13	Deliver the most energy-efficient transport across Europe: Get goods off the road, get people out of planes, and introduce a 'railway first principle'	4.55	84 %
11	6	Improve the state of skilled labour in the EU in the energy efficiency sector	4.49	82 %
12	7	Secure the future through green education	4.48	82 %
13	20	Manage and monitor the implementation of EU directives	4.19	72 %

4.1.2 Overview of the sessions

The agenda and summary of each session can be found here.

4.1.3 Consortium of contractors

Consortium of contractors

The contractors worked together to support the European Commission in the design and implementation this European Citizens' Panel.

- Harris Interactive: Recruitment of citizens.
- VO Europe: Communication, assistance and all organisational aspects of the three sessions.
- Communication team - Been There Done That, WaterBear and Scope: Communication strategy, including the creation, translation and dissemination of diverse contents on social media and the production of a documentary.
- Deliberation team - ifok and Missions Publiques: The deliberation team partners pooled their know-how to help conceptualise the overall participatory process and the methodology for each session, and conducted the moderation and facilitation.

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