

Energy Democracy challenges.



What challenges might we face when democratising energy?

Enabling everyone to participate in the digital energy transition, includes involving people in the production, management and consumption of energy. However, this requires us to overcome a number of barriers. Let's explore these in turn.



Digital Literacy

The EU Digital Decade Policy Programme aims to have 80% of adults in Europe possess digital skill basics by 2030. In 2024 it was estimated that just over 55% of the EU population currently possess basic digital skills. 8% of adults in the EU currently have no or limited use of the internet [[Sources](#)].

Understanding smart energy systems, digital platforms and concepts like peer-to-peer energy sharing is still limited. There is a recognised need to improve both digital empowerment skills and energy literacy [[Source](#)].

JRC research highlighted “...digital content creation, safety, and problem-solving activities, since these are the areas showing the largest differences between the below-basic and basic digital skills groups” [[Source](#)]



a group of people holding signs in front of a building by Lawrence Makoma is on an Unsplash License

Terminology



Terminology (such as “energy sharing” or “net metering”) can be confusing, or inconsistently used across contexts. How can we support raising awareness and ensure terminology is used consistently?

Empowering individuals and communities to participate



Whilst people may want to participate barriers such as **land ownership** and **zoning restrictions** can limit large-scale installations. The **design of buildings** can also limit installation possibilities, particularly in urban and rental housing. **Permitting processes** can also be opaque, slow and inaccessible to some grassroots organisations.

Example from European energy communities.

Energy communities have a key role to play in democratising energy.

Projects like [Renewable Energy-based Societal Change through Holistic Operation and Ownership of Local energy systems \(RESCHOOL\)](#) aim to empower energy communities in Europe to better support their members and the wider community.

RESCHOOL aims to:

- Use energy communities as the foundation for a more participatory, decentralised energy system.
- Empower citizens to engage with the grid by providing flexibility services—for example, by adjusting their energy usage patterns in response to demand or price signals.
- Support citizen participation in electricity markets, helping them become more than consumers.

Central to energy democracy is ownership and control of energy, who benefits and decision making processes. Energy communities can be supported to better address all three of these challenges, and issues like those noted overleaf.



RESCHOOL supports energy democracy through:

Widespread citizen participation



Broad, grassroots involvement is needed for energy democracy. Education and engagement campaigns are being run by RESCHOOL to raise awareness and build trust in energy community models.

Participatory design and tools



RESCHOOL emphasises co-creation and inclusive and accessible processes. This means working with a wide range of citizens to design the tools and governance structures they will use. How can you understand the needs of different community members?

Digital tools and gamification



Innovative digital platforms and gamified approaches will be developed to help citizens and energy communities understand, manage and influence their energy use.

To ensure that these tools and approaches are meaningful in different contexts, RESCHOOL will pilot these approaches across four different European countries.

