

Comparative Research Network:

Capacity Building and Local Narrations Report



Empowering energy citizenship among energy-poor people
through joint actions

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I. Introduction

This report (D4.9) summarises the narrations collected in the local community reporting events within our six partner countries. It aims to document the lived experiences of participants who attended events in our POWERINGCITIZENS' project on topics related to energy (energy poverty, feelings, bills, comfort...). The stories were then used for community-led “sensemaking”, which you will also find information about in the report, specifically the methodologies, insights and proposed solutions and actions.

From the six examples, we draw a short cross-country analysis and impact to provide a metanarrative of the findings across the different partners' countries to underline how the problems are interlinked in different countries. We finish with the conclusions and next steps.

II. Methodology

Before the local community events and sensemaking, the partners gathered in Berlin to follow a three-day community reporting methodology training, as part of the project's goal to simulate capacity building on different levels.

Community reporting is a methodology created by People's Voice Media in 2007, where they launched a movement and built a Community Reporter Network (get more knowledge [here](#)). The Network now has more than 50 active partner organisations from different sectors (policy, research, services) and over 2 000 “Community Reporters”.

The methods taught were:

- Narrative collection techniques
- Empathy interviews
- Empathy mapping
- Snapshots and their values
- Ethical consideration
- Sensemaking facilitation
- Introduction to filming methods and editing website

During the Berlin training, the partners had a brainstorming session regarding the potential interview questions and considered:

- Length of the questions
- Format of the questions (open questions)
- Keeping in mind to start with a simple question for the interviewee to open up

The topics were also discussed and agreed upon in Berlin (see Annex 1)



Illustration 1. Berlin community reporting training for project partners.

III. Country summaries

Germany

Partner Organization: **CRN**

Country/Region: **Berlin, Brandenburg**

Event Logistics & Participation

In Germany, the project's local reporting involved different events: a job-shadowing session in Berlin with Portuguese partners working in the sustainability field and a game jam in Luckau, Brandenburg, where stories were collected from local administrators. These sessions engaged a diverse group of participants, including municipality workers focused on environmental sustainability, local citizens, and administrators. Following these events, a sensemaking and editing workshop was held at the CRN office in Berlin, where NGO workers and volunteers analyzed the interviews to identify core themes and refine the narrative findings.

Local Narrations Summary

The stories were collected through 1-on-1 interviews during local events or meetings in Berlin, mostly in the Wedding neighbourhood.

The core themes occurring in the interviews are the following:

- The interviewees all mention the high cost of energy in Germany, especially in Berlin, where these costs are added to the already expensive rents. Individual strategies are implemented to reduce the energy bills: for example, interviewees recognize having consciously avoided turning on the heater or the oven on some occasions.
- Respondents highlighted the role of collective action regarding energy consumption. Through comparison with their countries of origin, which in most cases is not Germany, they noted the different approaches to energy management at the national level and the impact it has on their consumption. The European level was also mentioned regarding the need for energetic independence. Finally, the local or community level was also mentioned as a factor supporting energy efficiency: an environment that is sensitive to these issues and attentive energy suppliers help respondents to have a healthier relationship with their energy consumption.
- The outputs of the interviews also reveal that the respondents are sensitive to energy issues related to climate change. In this regard, they mentioned the need for developing renewable energies as well as reducing their own ecological impact, which sometimes goes along with the need to reduce their bills.

Several interviews were particularly relevant as illustrations of the energy struggles in Germany. The first impactful story emphasizes the experience of an international student in Berlin, which

mirrors a lot of other individual stories. The student attests that the high cost of his energy bills is a poverty factor in his situation, as a young person studying. Therefore, he admits to developing strategies to reduce his energy consumption, but also from an ecological perspective. Indeed, he talks about his case and his close circle as people who are aware of the costs of energy, whether it is financial or ecological, and advocates in his narration for greener and more sustainable energy sources.

The second narration targets the administrative struggles of a young resident in Berlin. She lives in an old building with an overconsuming gas heating system, which is harmful both financially and ecologically. She says that the induced high costs are hard to regulate for different bureaucratic reasons. First, her energy contract is overestimated compared to her real consumption, and this is an issue that she has not been able to solve for two years. She also feels like there is no transparency regarding the energy prices and consumption. This illustrates the administrative struggles and the lack of energy democracy in Germany.

Local Sensemaking Results

International narrations sparked conversation among the participants, who had experience living in different countries and then immigrated to Germany. They continued what was started in the narration by adding their own inputs and comparison between their energy-related experiences.

In this regard, participants were also interested in the national differences of energy issues, especially from a climatic point of view. Indeed, when the participants from Northern/Central Europe (Germany, Poland) were focused on winter and their heating costs in this period, the Portuguese participants raised the issue of air conditioning during the summer, which was becoming increasingly unbearable. This illustrates how complex the topic of energy can be at the European level, particularly in the context of climate change.

The participants found common ground in the fact that they could relate for the most part to the stories they heard. This indicates that energy poverty is a shared topic among Europeans across countries.

Overall, there was no major disagreement regarding the causes of energy poverty. If so, the personal experiences of the participants led them to express remarks that were complementary. This was not conflictual at all, to the contrary, it rather enriched the conversation.

Highlights

Quote 1: *"[Looking at] the bills is always scary and stressful [...] we are always afraid of the numbers."* — Oussama.

Quote 2: *"I think knowing the concepts can help people to [...] have a more conscious consumption"* — Anita.

Quote 3: *"We need more energy democracy"* — Oussama.

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the videos and sensemaking sessions, several recommendations were expressed by the citizens for their local context :

1. Improving the transparency of energy suppliers and educating citizens on energy consumption.
2. Implementing more funding for renovation to improve the insulation of the buildings.
3. Engaging in an energetic transition towards sustainable, renewable sources of energy.
4. Implementing public policies towards reducing and limiting climate change.



Illustration 2. Local events in Germany.

Kosovo

Partner Organization: **BGF**

Country/Region: **Prishtina**

Event Logistics & Participation

In Kosovo, the local reporting and filming took place in November, in Prishtina, engaging a diverse group of participants including architects, students, and citizens from both Istog and Prishtina, primarily within the 18 to 36 age range. This was followed by sensemaking sessions held in November and December 2025, where the collected videos were analysed and edited. These collaborative reflection moments brought together NGO representatives, local residents, and energy activists to determine the core questions and narrative structure of the findings.

Local Narrations Summary

In Kosovo, energy poverty is narrated as a direct threat to the quality of life. Participants describe the cost of energy not just as a financial metric, but as a source of anxiety, stress, and meticulous financial planning. A recurring theme is the perceived unreasonableness of electricity bills compared to household income, with many noting a significant price surge over the last 4–5 years.

The narratives highlight a survival strategy within the home: during winter, residents often heat only one room to avoid unbearable costs, while others spend their days outside the house specifically to avoid using electricity. There is a clear seasonal divide in comfort; spring and autumn are the only seasons where participants feel "relaxed" because temperatures allow them to avoid the financial burden of heating or cooling.

The methods used to collect the stories were one-on-one video interviews and field snapshots using semi-structured prompts regarding affordability, coping mechanisms, and future hopes.

The core themes that emerged from the interviews are the following :

1. **Behavioral Extreme-Saving:** Scheduling heavy appliance use (laundry, dishwashing) exclusively late at night to catch cheaper tariffs and cooking "fast meals" to minimize stove usage.
2. **Structural Barriers vs. Small Fixes:** While citizens turn off lights, pull plugs, and use LED bulbs, they recognize that true efficiency requires home insulation and window replacements which are often financially out of reach.
3. **Low Faith in the System:** A prevailing sense of pessimism regarding the future of the energy system, cited by weak current and a lack of belief that prices will ever stabilize.

One of the stories highlights well the energy struggles encountered in Kosovo. A young professional in Prishtina describes a daily routine dictated by energy costs. To manage expenses, they stay out of their apartment during the day. Upon returning, they confine their entire life to a single heated room, as heating the whole apartment is financially impossible. This narrative captures the essence of "hidden" energy poverty in Kosovo: even for those with employment, the cost of energy dictates where they can sit, when they can eat, and how much of their own home they are allowed to inhabit.

Local Sensemaking Results

The discussions during the local sensemaking sessions provided interesting insights. Indeed, participants were struck by the shared emotional toll of energy costs. Hearing others mention "anxiety" and "stress" validated their own private struggles. There was a realization that saving has moved beyond efficiency into the realm of self-deprivation.

Consensus was reached on the need for renewable energy sources. Participants also valued the informal exchange of saving tips among friends and family, which has become a necessary survival skill in the current economy.

Some opinions expressed led to differences between the participants. A point of contention was the role of government subsidies. While some praised recent subsidies for air conditioners, others noted that this has shifted energy poverty into the summer months due to increased cooling costs, creating a year-round cycle of debt.

Highlights

Quote 1: *"The first thing that hits me is anxiety, then I wonder how much the bills will be and if I'll be able to afford them."* — Erblina Hoti

Quote 2: *"In Kosovo, we wait for late at night to use the appliances that consume the most because the tariff is cheaper."* — Fjolla Avdylaj

Quote 3: *"I try to cook fast meals that don't take much time or use much electricity."* — Dea Morina

Quote 4: *"The cost of electricity is unreasonable... it's a decrease in the quality of life."* — Bardha Isufaj

Quote 5: *"I heat only one room; I can't afford to heat the whole apartment because the cost becomes too high for me."* — Qendrese Deda

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the videos and sensemaking sessions, several recommendations were expressed by the citizens for their local context :

1. **Financial Support for Home Insulation:** The government should provide more grants or subsidies for wall insulation and new windows. Citizens feel this is the only way to stop heat loss and truly lower bills in the long run.
2. **Protection for Tenants:** Many young people and families renting apartments feel stuck because they cannot renovate someone else's property. Rules are needed to ensure landlords provide energy-efficient housing so tenants aren't burdened with high bills due to poor construction.
3. **Better Power Quality and Information:** Residents want an end to "weak current" (low voltage) and more investment in clean energy like solar or wind. They also need simple, practical advice on how to save money without sacrificing their health or comfort.



Illustration 3. Local events in Kosovo.

Italy

Partner Organization: **UNIVPM**

Country/Region: **Ancona**

Event Logistics & Participation

In Italy, the local reporting events took place in September 2025 at the UNIVPM Campus and Piazza Roma in Ancona, where video narrations were filmed with a diverse group including university students (from Bachelor to PhD levels), university staff, and local citizens. These participants also took part in the subsequent sensemaking session held in January 2026 at the UNIVPM Campus. During this final stage, the group analysed the collected footage to determine the most impactful questions and narrative cuts for the project's findings.

Local Narrations Summary

This phase collected first-hand narratives describing everyday experiences with energy use in the Italian context. Rather than depicting situations of extreme deprivation, the stories consistently portray a condition of adaptive or latent energy poverty, where individuals continuously adjust behaviors and routines in response to rising energy costs, housing inefficiencies, and regulatory constraints.

Across the narrations, participants emphasize that essential needs such as cooking, washing, and basic comfort are generally preserved. However, this is achieved through constant negotiation and planning. Energy use becomes a calculated activity, shaped by awareness of prices, timing, and household constraints. Several stories highlight how behavioral strategies are adopted as a first line of response before resorting to technological or energy-intensive solutions.

Thermal comfort management is a recurring topic. Participants describe prioritizing passive or low-cost actions—such as wearing additional clothing in winter, using natural ventilation, or managing solar gains in summer—before activating heating or cooling systems. In parallel, load shifting practices emerge clearly, with household activities scheduled during lower-cost electricity time slots to mitigate bill increases.

Housing characteristics play a central role in shaping these experiences. Older and poorly insulated buildings, especially in the rental sector, limit residents' ability to implement structural efficiency improvements. This results in higher energy demand and reduced agency, particularly for students and young adults living in shared accommodations.

At the same time, the narratives reveal strong trust in electrification and renewable energy as long-term solutions to reduce fossil fuel dependence. This optimism is tempered by frustration with complex bureaucratic and authorization procedures, perceived as major barriers to effective and timely energy transition.

The method used to collect the stories was one-on-one video interviews conducted during an open public event. Participants responded to semi-structured prompts, and the recordings were later reviewed, edited, and thematically analyzed.

The core themes expressed during the videos are the following :

- Behavioral adaptation and self-regulation as primary responses to rising energy costs.
- Structural inefficiencies of the residential building stock and limited tenant agency.
- Confidence in electrification and renewables, constrained by regulatory and bureaucratic barriers.

A representative narrative combines several accounts: an individual living in a poorly insulated home carefully manages heating and appliance use through behavioral strategies and time-based planning. While basic needs are met, there is persistent concern over energy bills. The story concludes with a clear call for building-level efficiency measures, electrification, and simplified administrative procedures to enable a fairer and more effective energy transition.

Local Sensemaking Results

During the local sensemaking event, participants collectively viewed selected video excerpts and discussed their broader implications for the community.

Participants were particularly struck by the similarity of experiences across different profiles. Students, university staff, and local citizens all reported comparable strategies of adaptation, highlighting how behavioral self-restriction and planning have become normalized responses rather than exceptional measures.

A strong consensus emerged around the idea that adequate thermal comfort and access to affordable energy services should be considered fundamental. Participants agreed that individual behavioral effort, while important, cannot substitute for structural improvements in buildings and enabling policy frameworks.

Highlights

Quote 1: *"I don't feel deprived, but I constantly plan when and how to use energy."* — University Staff

Quote 2: *"The technology for the transition exists, but the rules slow everything down."* — PhD Student

Quote 3: *"Before turning on the heating, I try everything else."* — Local citizen

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the video narratives and the sensemaking discussion, participants identified the following priorities for the local and national context:

1. Clearer information and less complex procedures for incentives supporting efficiency, electrification, and renewables were seen as essential.
2. The meetings highlighted the value of informal spaces and local networks for exchanging practical advice on everyday energy management.
3. Participants emphasized the need to address poor building efficiency and limited tenant agency through targeted policy action.





Illustration 4. Local events in Italy.

Albania

Partner Organisation: **ETMI**

Country/Region: **Tirana, Kavaja, and Vlora**

Event Logistics & Participation

In Albania, the local reporting activities centered on a workshop held in December 2025, at the CH.T.E. professional school. This event involved school teachers, students, NGO representatives, and local citizens in the filming of narrations. These participants were also active in the subsequent sensemaking and editing process, which occurred in two stages: immediately following the vocational school workshop to redact and edit the initial footage, and again after community field visits in Vlorë in January and February 2026. These collaborative sessions at the NGO office and in Vlorë ensured that the final videos accurately reflected the shared experiences of the diverse local community.

Local Narrations Summary

The stories were collected through face-to-face interviews (1-on-1) during local events or meetings in Tirana, Kavaja, and Vlora.

Most common themes emerging through the stories are the following :

- **Rising Electricity Prices:** Many people express concern over increasing electricity costs, which make it difficult to afford basic household expenses.
- **Winter Heating Challenges:** Keeping homes adequately warm during the cold months is a major struggle, adding stress and discomfort to daily life.
- **Energy-Saving Adjustments:** To cope, households are making changes such as improving insulation, adjusting appliance use, and shifting activities to times of lower energy demand to reduce consumption and manage costs.

One story that stands out comes from a storyteller who described ongoing difficulties in covering electricity costs because they have family members with disabilities, which adds to the financial strain. Another story is from an elderly pensioner who explained that their pension is very low, forcing them to make difficult choices between paying for electricity and covering other essential expenses.

Local Sensemaking Results

During the sense-making sessions, several participants were surprised by the emotional depth and personal vulnerability in the narratives, which went beyond what they expected from interviews.

Some realized that challenges they assumed were isolated were actually common across multiple households or groups, highlighting systemic issues rather than individual problems.

Everyone agreed that access to reliable and affordable energy is crucial for daily life, health, education, and overall community functioning. Energy poverty is seen not just as an individual issue but as a community-wide concern.

Participants largely agreed on the causes of energy poverty and how it affects the community. There were no notable disagreements or conflicting views.

Highlights

Quote 1: *"I am a pensioner and I can barely pay for electricity"* — Pensioner

Quote 2: *"We can't heat all the rooms; in the bedrooms we can use smaller heaters, but still it's not enough."* — Student

Quote 3: *"I have family members with disabilities, and our energy expenses are much higher"*— Teacher

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the videos and sensemaking sessions, several recommendations were expressed by the citizens for their local context :

1. Provide free energy-efficient appliances, like LED bulbs or small heaters, for households that cannot afford them.
2. Community-led "energy cafes" for sharing efficiency tips.
3. Implementing more fundings for renovation and better insulation on the buildings.

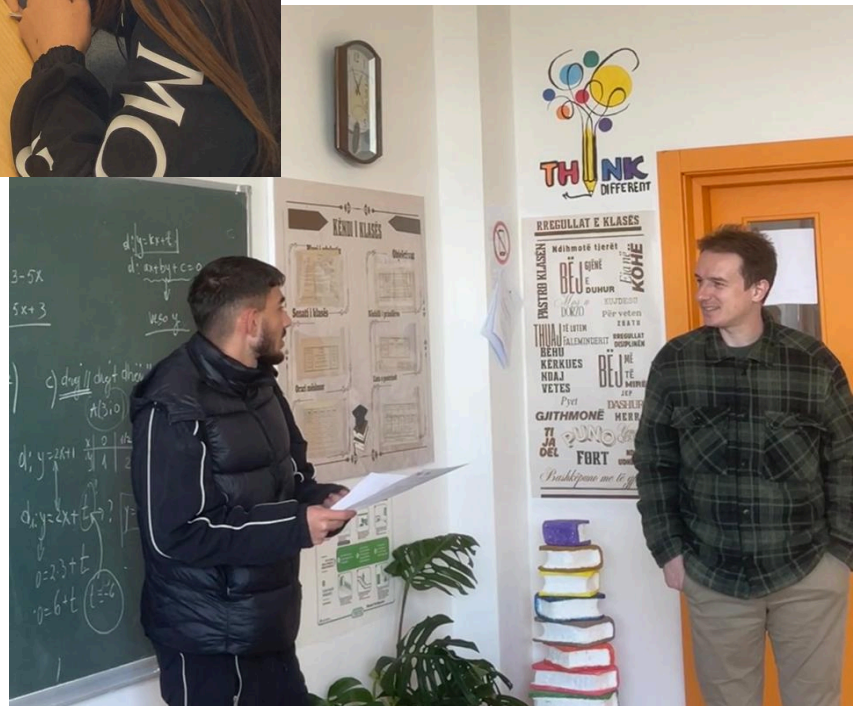


Illustration 5. Local events in Albania.

The Netherlands

Partner Organization: **ECREC**

Country/Region: **The Hague**

Event Logistics & Participation

In the Netherlands, local reporting activities took place over two sessions in The Hague, with filming occurring in October 2025, in the City Center and in November 2025, in a local neighbourhood. These events successfully captured narrations from a diverse demographic, specifically engaging both young people and elderly citizens. During the subsequent sensemaking phase, local residents and citizens collaborated to analyze the footage, determining the final narrative structure and the key questions to be highlighted in the project findings.

Local Narrations Summary

To explore perceptions and lived experiences of energy poverty, one-on-one street interviews were conducted in The Hague with participants from diverse age groups and socio-economic backgrounds. The data collection combined storytelling methods with semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to articulate both practical experiences and emotional responses related to energy use and affordability.

The narrations focused on four thematic areas: reducing energy use and waste, affordability and management of energy bills, awareness and trust in smart meters, and energy-related anxiety. Participants described how energy costs influence daily routines, household comfort, and long-term financial security. Many expressed uncertainty regarding energy billing systems and limited understanding of how technological solutions affect consumption and costs.

Specific attention was given to young adults living with their parents to assess intergenerational awareness and perceived responsibility within households. These narrations revealed that while young adults are often indirectly affected by energy poverty, they are not always actively engaged in energy-related decision-making. However, reflective discussion frequently triggered a willingness to contribute, either financially or through behavioural changes.

An illustrative narrative involved a young woman living in a single-income household with her chronically ill mother. She described ongoing financial pressure and suboptimal living conditions. Through the interview, she recognised her capacity to contribute more actively to household stability, marking a shift from passive awareness to shared responsibility. This narrative exemplifies how citizen-centred engagement can activate agency at household level.

Location-Specific Insights

The urban context of The Hague significantly shaped local experiences. Participants living in older or rental housing reported limited ability to influence insulation quality or appliance efficiency, reinforcing dependency on landlords and institutions. This contributed to feelings of frustration and reduced control.

Neighbourhood-based engagement revealed that social stigma can discourage open discussion about financial vulnerability. However, facilitated local exchanges reduced this stigma and enabled collective reflection. The city-centre setting allowed engagement with a diverse population, highlighting intersections between energy poverty, health, housing quality, and urban density.

Action-Oriented Insights

The narrations and discussions generated the following action-oriented insights:

- Household-level framing is more effective than individual-focused messaging.
- Face-to-face, low-threshold engagement builds trust and supports honest reflection.
- Young adults constitute a strategic target group for energy literacy and behavioural interventions.

Local Sensemaking Results

During the local sense-making sessions, participants were most surprised by the widespread nature of energy-related stress, including among households not formally classified as energy-poor. The discussions challenged assumptions that technological solutions alone are sufficient and highlighted gaps between policy expectations and lived realities.

Across narrations, participants expressed strong shared values around fairness, transparency, and collective responsibility. There was broad consensus that access to affordable energy is a basic necessity and that energy transitions should not exacerbate social inequality. Intergenerational solidarity emerged as a recurring theme.

Several tensions were identified during the sensemaking process. Participants highlighted tensions between individual responsibility and systemic accountability, particularly where structural housing limitations restrict behavioural change. Additional tensions emerged between expectations of smart technologies and lived experiences of mistrust and complexity.

Highlights

Quote 1: *“It’s really important to understand how much impact it has on my living.” — Ben*

Quote 2: *“Looking at the bill, I always get shocked by how high it is, even though I don’t use that much energy” — Markus*

Quote 3: *“I’ve you can’t pay it, don’t use it, and just put on a sweater” — Puk*

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the citizen-centred knowledge exchanges, the following local policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Integrate emotional and experiential indicators into energy poverty definitions**
Policy frameworks should incorporate stress, uncertainty, and perceived lack of control alongside economic indicators.
2. **Strengthen energy literacy and transparency**
Deployment of smart technologies should be accompanied by accessible education and clear communication.
3. **Target households as social units**
Interventions should explicitly include young adults and promote shared household responsibility.
4. **Address structural housing barriers**
Policies must go beyond behavioural change and address insulation quality, appliance efficiency, and landlord accountability.
5. **Institutionalise citizen-centred engagement**
Narrative-based methods such as Energy Cafés should be embedded in policy development and evaluation processes

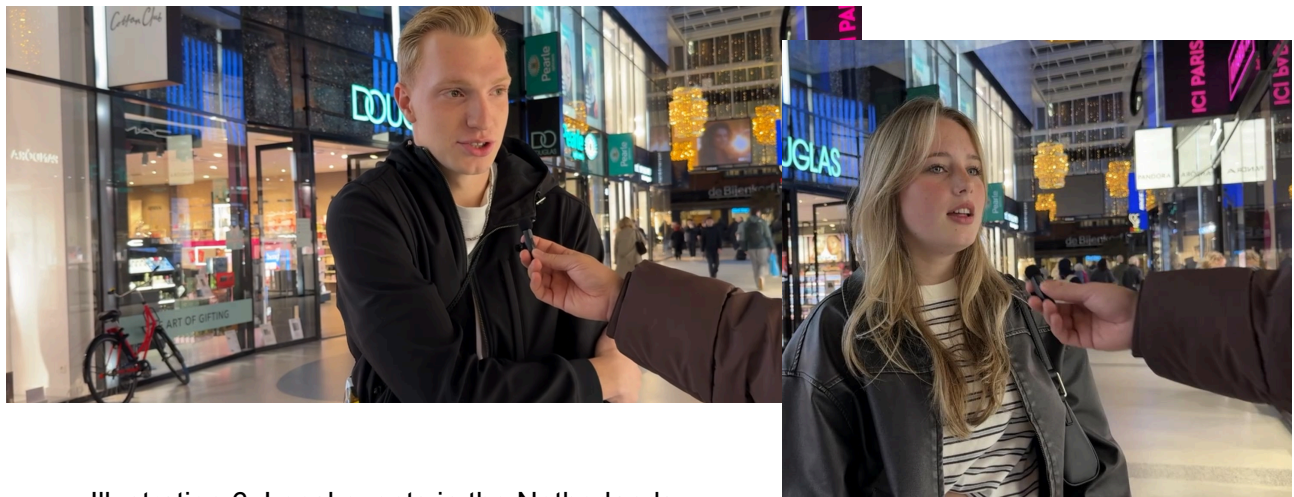


Illustration 6. Local events in the Netherlands.

Greece

Partner Organization: **INZEB**

Country/Region: Kastoria, Herakleion, Chania

Event Logistics & Participation

In Greece, the local reporting and sensemaking activities were conducted across three distinct locations in late January 2026. In Kastoria, local citizens—primarily adult women—and NGO representatives participated in capturing interviews and subsequent sensemaking. The project then moved to Crete, engaging young professionals and students in Herakleion, followed by a final session in Chania, involving a mix of local citizens, NGO members, and students. Across these three sites, a total of in-depth interviews were filmed and analysed to determine the key narrative themes and questions for the Greek context.

Local Narrations Summary

The stories collected through the video interviews provide a grounded and multifaceted picture of the lived experience of energy poverty in Greece. Across different regions (Crete and Western Macedonia), age groups, and household situations, energy poverty emerges not as a marginal or exceptional condition, but as a persistent feature of everyday life. Participants consistently associate energy bills with anxiety, insecurity, and difficult trade-offs, often describing energy costs as a dominant concern shaping household decisions and emotional well-being.

Energy poverty is experienced both as a material constraint and as a moral and social issue. Several narrations frame high energy costs as fundamentally unfair, particularly in areas with a strong renewable energy presence, where citizens perceive a disconnect between local energy production and household affordability. Others describe a quieter, more resigned relationship with energy bills, characterised by acceptance, limited perceived agency, and the feeling that consumption cannot be reduced further without compromising basic comfort or dignity.

Housing conditions and geography play a critical role. Participants living in colder regions or remote areas describe intense winter pressure linked to heating needs, while interviewees in Crete increasingly highlight summer heat and prolonged heatwaves as drivers of rising energy consumption. Seasonal comfort emerges as a key reference point, with spring and autumn repeatedly described as the only periods of relief from energy-related stress.

Stories also reveal differentiated capacities to respond. Some households have accessed energy-efficiency programmes or invested in insulation and photovoltaics, often with support from technical knowledge or professional networks. Others, particularly younger households or renters, rely almost exclusively on behavioural adjustments, postponing life plans or accepting discomfort as unavoidable. Across all stories, energy poverty is narrated not as a temporary

crisis, but as a long-term condition shaping everyday choices, expectations, and perceptions of the energy transition.

Stories were collected through one-to-one video interviews, guided by semi-structured prompts. The approach prioritised personal narration, allowing participants to describe experiences, emotions, and coping strategies in their own words.

Core themes (top 3):

1. Energy bills as anxiety, insecurity, and social injustice
2. Seasonal and climate-related pressure (cold winters and intensifying heatwaves)
3. Limited agency and forced adaptations versus unequal access to solutions

One particularly representative story comes from a woman living in Kastoria, who describes energy bills as a source of fear and uncertainty, especially during winter, when high heating needs make it difficult to afford them in a remote area. While she has participated in an energy-efficiency programme to improve her home, her narrative highlights how climate conditions, geography, and affordability combine to create ongoing stress. The story illustrates both vulnerability and resilience, showing how individual action can mitigate but not eliminate structural energy poverty.

Local Sensemaking Results

When participants and local audiences reflected collectively on the stories, the dominant reaction was recognition rather than surprise. Many expressed that the narrations felt “familiar” and representative of a shared reality, confirming that energy poverty is widely experienced across different social groups, even if it manifests in different forms. What surprised participants most was the extent to which emotional responses – fear, insecurity, resignation, and anger – were shared across age and income groups.

A strong sense of common ground emerged around the idea that energy poverty is not primarily the result of irresponsible behaviour or lack of awareness. Participants consistently recognised that most households already limit consumption and make conscious choices, and that further reductions would directly undermine comfort, health, or dignity. This shared understanding challenged dominant narratives that place responsibility on individual behaviour rather than structural conditions.

At the same time, some tensions surfaced regarding solutions. While there was broad agreement on the need for better protection and support, views differed on the relative roles of individual action and systemic change. Some participants emphasised personal responsibility and incremental improvements, while others argued that no meaningful change is possible

without state intervention and structural reforms. These differences did not lead to conflict, but they highlighted unequal access to resources, information, and opportunities to act.

Overall, the sensemaking process reinforced the perception that energy poverty in Greece is a collective problem requiring collective responses. The stories helped participants move from isolated personal experiences to a shared understanding of energy poverty as a social, climatic, and policy-related issue.

Highlights

Quote 1: *“When I hear the term ‘energy bill’, what comes to mind is anxiety, uncertainty, and fear.”* Participant, remote area, Western Macedonia

Quote 2: *“I don’t want to feel that I don’t have the right to be comfortable in my own home.”* Adult participant, Chania

Quote 3: *“We have so many wind turbines on our island, and yet electricity keeps getting more expensive. This is not social justice.”* Adult participant, Chania

Quote 4: *“Energy costs are a strain on us because we are young. When bills go up, something else in our lives has to wait.”* Participant, young household, Herakleion

Quote 5: *“I reduced my energy use as much as I can. Beyond that, there is nothing more I can do.”* Participant, living alone, Crete

Local Action & Policy Recommendations

Based on the videos and sensemaking sessions, several recommendations were expressed by the citizens for their local context :

1. Simplify and humanise access to support measures in particular regarding subsidy applications

Participants repeatedly stressed the need for clearer information, simpler procedures, and local guidance for energy efficiency programmes and subsidies, particularly for people without technical knowledge or digital skills.

2. Strengthen community-based and local support structures

Citizens highlighted the value of local initiatives, trusted professionals, and peer exchange. Community-led energy cafés, advisory services, and local energy communities were seen as effective ways to build knowledge, trust, and collective capacity.

3. Protect tenants and households with limited agency

Strong emphasis was placed on the need for better protection for renters and households living in poorly insulated buildings, including minimum standards for rental housing and targeted support for those unable to invest in structural improvements.



Illustration 7. Local events in Greece.

IV. Comparative cross-country analysis & conclusions

The local narrations revealed what we have been observing throughout the project: that energy poverty is a shared European experience, yet its manifestation is heavily influenced by regional climate and infrastructure. The process moved beyond simple data collection to uncover a "continuum" of emotional stress—fear, insecurity, and resignation—that persists across various income levels. Some specific country findings have been highlighted below:

1. Comparative Cross-Country Analysis

A. Heating vs. Cooling Stress

A significant geographic divide emerged; while participants in Germany and Poland focused almost exclusively on rising winter heating costs, those in Portugal and Greece (Crete) increasingly highlighted unbearable summer heatwaves and the rising financial burden of air conditioning.

B. Adaptive vs. Extreme Poverty

In Italy, narrations described "latent" or "adaptive" energy poverty, where citizens continuously adjust routines to manage costs. In contrast, stories from Kosovo and Albania revealed "behavioral extreme-saving," such as families confining their entire lives to a single heated room or staying out of their homes during the day to avoid using any electricity.

C. Trust and Transparency

Participants in Germany and Italy expressed deep frustration with complex bureaucracy and a perceived lack of transparency from energy suppliers. Meanwhile, in Kosovo, there is a highlighted "low faith in the system" due to structural issues like weak current (low voltage) and skepticism that prices would ever stabilize.

D. Community and Stigma

In The Netherlands, narrations highlighted that social stigma often prevents open discussion about energy struggles, though community-led exchanges were found to effectively reduce this shame and foster collective responsibility.

Overall, narrations specifically called for "energy democracy," advocating for a transition to renewables that ensures local production translates into local affordability. The stories mentioned in the report are also proof of what has been widely underlined in the narrations of the videos, both the international and local ones (available in English and local languages).

2. Conclusions

The POWERINGCITIZENS project demonstrates, through this report but also the videos produced, that community storytelling is essential for energy justice. By documenting lived experiences—from the "scary" experience of opening bills in Germany to the intergenerational readiness of youth in The Hague—the project has moved the issue from an individual burden to a community-wide concern. These stories serve as a powerful tool to demand systemic change, ensuring that energy transitions are not only technically efficient but also socially just and empathetic to the human reality of energy use.

Our next steps are to disseminate our results and our locally made narrations, as well as a compilation of local narratives, through the international narration movie to the final local dissemination events in the six countries. We will share the results of our different reports made in the project with the participants, especially the policy recommendations.

V. Annex 1