ENERGY PROSPECTS

Energy Transition of City of Burgas: Going Smart and Sustainable

HOLISTIC

COLLECTIVE

URBAN

Summary

Fifteen years ago, the Bulgarian town of Burgas was highly energy inefficient, leading to very high energy costs for local authorities and citizens, as well as poor living conditions and environmental inequality. Today, it is a different story. Burgas is a smart, energy-efficient city that implements the most up-to-date energy approaches and measures, demonstrating local authorities' power to drive sustainable change.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

Investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, electric vehicles, efficient street lighting, and smart management systems – implemented with the support of EU funds and state and private resources – have turned the city of Burgas into a smart and sustainable place to live. An important part of this transformation is due to the efforts of the Municipality to motivate citizens to participate in building retrofitting initiatives funded by various programmes.

This project has received funding from the *European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme* under grant agreement No 101022492.

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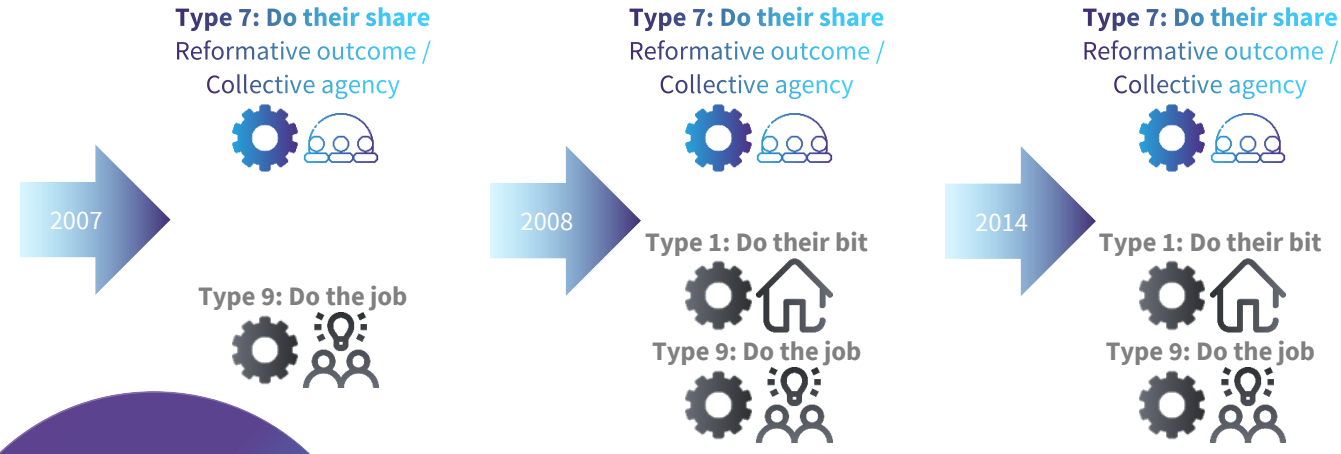
Goals

1. Reducing energy consumption and its respective costs for the municipality and its citizens;
2. Increasing the use of RES and energy-efficient materials, investment in energy efficiency;
3. Alleviating energy poverty and sustainable improvement of living conditions.

The story and the typology

Since 2007, energy efficiency has been one of the priorities of the Municipality of Burgas. As a result, the entire population of Burgas Municipality (232,000 people) has directly or indirectly benefitted from this decision. Burgas municipality is leading the country when it comes to energy-efficient living, with more than 200 multi-apartment residential buildings retrofitted under the National EE Programme, and the number of hybrid and e-vehicles in the city is constantly rising.

The energy transition of the Municipality of Burgas has not undergone any radical changes since it started, so there is no change in the ideal type of energy citizenship enabled by the case. The municipality initiated the programme Going Smart and Sustainable. Thus, it began with a high degree of professionalisation and sufficient resources (see details below).



Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click HERE!

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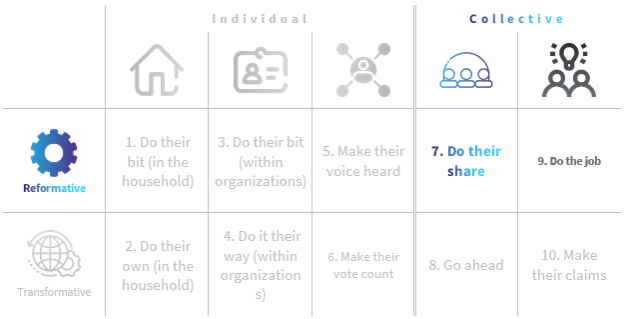
Phase 1: Start of the programme, 2007-2008

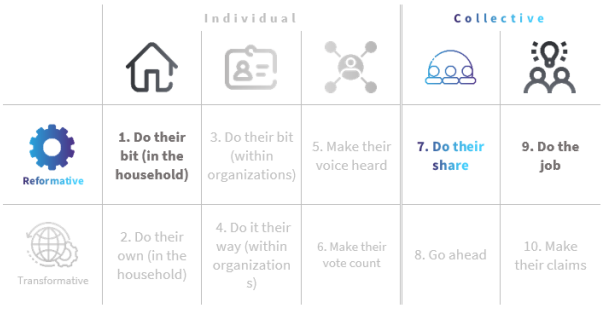
In 2007, the energy transition activities of Burgas began operating under the Operational Programme "Regional Development" and the national "Demonstration project for renovation of multi-family buildings".



Main type: Do their share
Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
Secondary type: Do the job
Reformative outcome / Social movement agency

Phase 2: Broadening of the scope, 2008-2013

In the second phase, the scope of the case broadened: more buildings were audited and approved for renovation, infrastructure and mobility became priorities, and the business potential of the energy transition (investment in materials and human resources, administrative and technical positions, etc.) was considered. Due to the broadening of the case, energy citizenship evolved into a more fundamental component: residents organised themselves into associations to participate in the renovations, public discussions were organised, and the circulation of relevant information increased. However, citizens remained largely inactive participants in the energy system, and their agency in decision-making processes did not increase significantly. Residents' associations acted and communicated with the municipal authorities on their behalf. Very little citizen involvement was required outside of forming an association of residents.



Main type: Do their share
Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary types:
Do the job
Reformative outcome / Social movement agency
Do their share
Reformative outcome / Private in the household agency

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Phase 3: Concluding stage, 2014-2020

The main structure of the case remained the same. The municipality cultivated measures pertaining to energy efficiency, many of which were supported by national and European programmes, and citizens benefitted. The retrofitting programme is reported to have decreased residents' energy bills by up to 30%. The programme concluded in 2020.

	Individual			Collective	
Reformative	**1. Do their bit (in the household)**	3. Do their bit (within organizations)	5. Make their voice heard	**7. Do their share**	**9. Do the job**
Transformative	2. Do their own (in the household)	4. Do it their way (within organizations)	6. Make their vote count	8. Go ahead	10. Make their claims

Main type: Do their share
Reformative outcome / / Citizen-based and hybrid agency
Secondary types:
Do the job
Reformative outcome / Social movement agency
Do their share
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The aspects of energy citizenship

Citizens were invited to participate in discussions before each investment. Public discussions were regularly held in administrative buildings, and citizens could obtain the respective details through local news outlets and social media. ***Public opinion was then studied and taken into account. However, citizens did not comprise the most influential stakeholder group****. Decisions on a local level were taken by local authorities. Thus, involving citizens' voices was not regarded as compulsory in this case.*

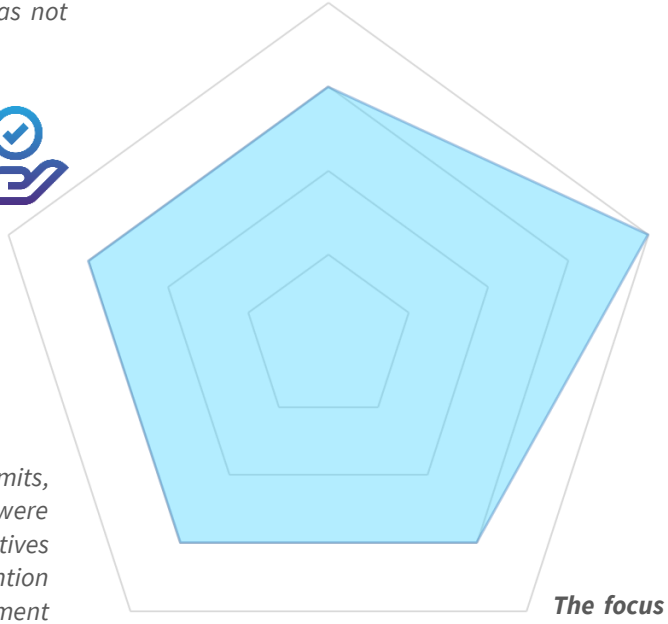
Citizen control

Citizens can express their views, but their views are not necessarily taken into account

The case seeks to alleviate energy poverty and increase the participation of citizens through inclusive measures and distribution of knowledge and information. However, ***citizens in this case did not become active participants in the energy system, nor did their agency in decision-making processes increase significantly****.*

Democratic energy future

Energy democracy is considered a positive value, but it remains limited to formal energy democracy



FOCUS ON DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

*Equity, transparency and informed involvement became core pillars of the case****. Inclusivity and the representation of different stakeholders are priorities in the achievement of energy efficiency.*** *This is displayed through the public discussions held prior to the implementation of investments, the study of public opinion, facilitating discussion, and the creation of administrative units in various neighbourhoods across the municipality, with which citizens could consult concerning the renovation and retrofitting of their housing.*

Equity and justice

Involvement is fully open

The case's focus was not specifically on environmental limits, however, the reduction of carbon consumption and emissions were prioritized, and the expected results of the retrofitting initiatives according to the municipality's documents amount to the prevention of over 640 tons of carbon emissions per year. No overall assessment has been made, but some of the municipality's ***records of renovations of public buildings include details of the expected or achieved amount of emissions that were prevented.***

Carbon limit

Explicit recognition of the carbon limit

The focus of the case itself was not on mitigating the effects of climate change, but rather increasing efficiency and reducing energy-related costs*. No assessment has been made by the case organizers of the impact of the reduction of fossil fuels or the mitigation of pollution.*

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is part of the process, energy remains the main focus

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Further information

facebook.com/Burgas.Municipality
www.youtube.com/c/BurgasMunicipality

www.burgas.bg/en

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Source of images

https://www.burgas.bg/bg/posts/view/44792,
https://transformativecities.org/2020award

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