Student Energy Teams

DIRECT ENERGY PRODUCTION / CONSUMPTION

COLLECTIVE

Summary

Ten Bulgarian schools from three urban communities participated in an international consortium comprised of seven EU countries within the project Bridging European and Local Climate Action (BEACON). The in each school (aged 10-12), mentored by their science teachers, were the core actors in the project. They planned and implemented various science-backed activities to educate their peers, teachers, and parents on sustainable energy consumption and production. The Student Energy Teams achieved tangible results, reducing energy consumption in their schools and homes.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

The initiative is a great example of achieving bottom-up holistic civic engagement in sustainable energy consumption by students, teachers, and parents through a large EU project initiative. By making middle-school students the focus, the project managed to bridge and bring together schools, households, and municipalities around a common purpose.

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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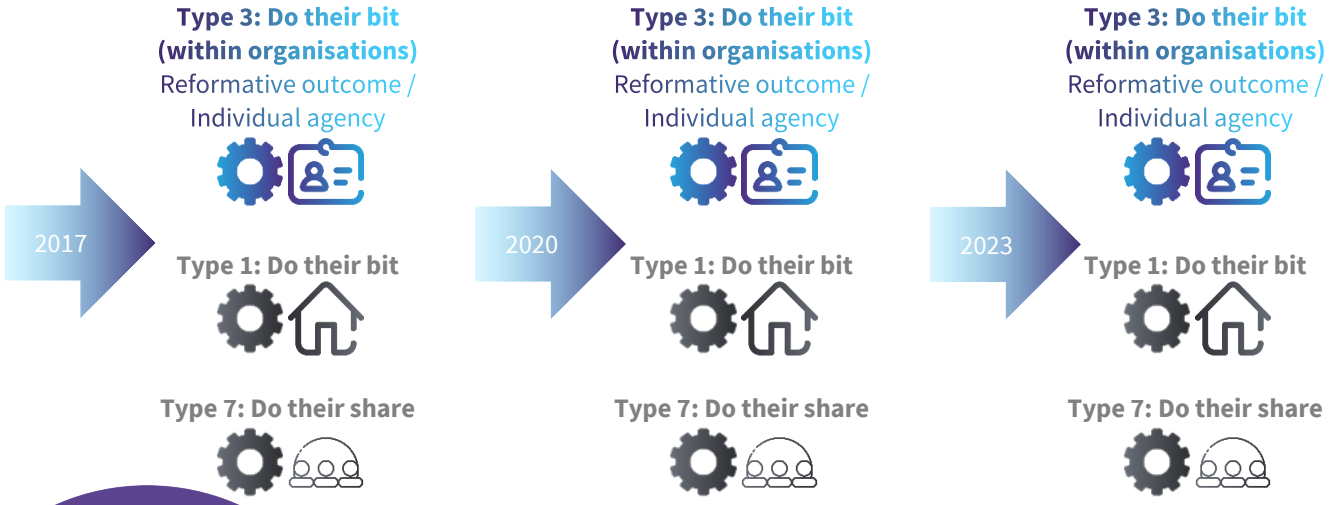
Goals

1. Enhancing international cooperation in climate action and achieving a shared vision for implementing the Paris Agreement;
2. Promoting and enabling climate action as well as energy saving;
3. Reducing the carbon footprint (individual, household, organisational, etc.).

The story and the typology

In the beginning, this case had more of a top-down approach, with teachers being the initiators and main monitoring actors. However, after a few years of the case being active, students became more independent in terms of implementation. They even got more responsibilities, e.g., teaching their younger schoolmates how to apply the skills required to save energy.



Case history summary

For the summary methodology, click HERE!

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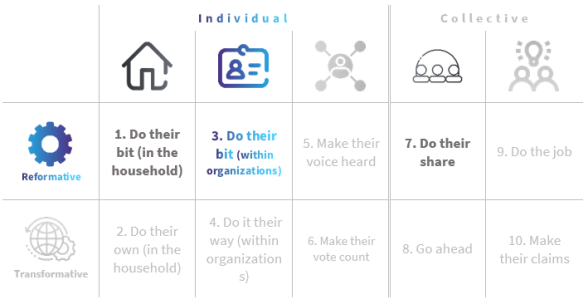
Phase 1: Creation and initial development of the case, 2017-2019

Initially, the case required intense collaboration between the students and the teachers to exchange information and instruct students on how to use the measuring equipment. After the students became familiar with the case's aims and the resources to implement them, they became more independent and proactive. They were given more room to take the initiative without depending too much on the teachers.

Teachers taught students how to save energy and monitor energy consumption at school by gaining knowledge and skills; then, students started applying what they had learned about energy savings at home.

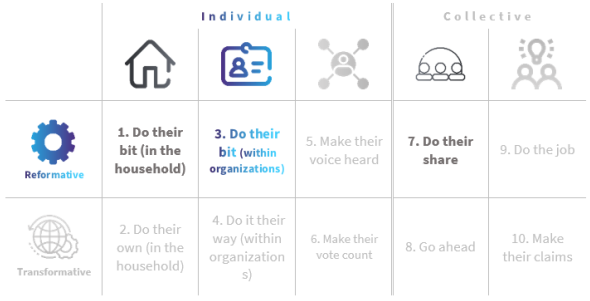


Main type: Do their bit (within organisations)
Reformative outcome / Organisationally embedded agency
Secondary types:
Do their bit (in the household)
Reformative outcome / Private in the household agency
Do their share
Reformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Phase 2: COVID years, 2020 - 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in schools closing, so the Student Energy Teams initiative was stopped. Although the teachers were unable to continue to organise the teams, the students themselves had the interest and desire to continue the case, teaching other students and motivating them to join the teams.

Students became more independent, started sharing knowledge with their peers and younger classmates, and showed them how to monitor energy consumption through out-of-class and online activities. Although the Student Energy Teams were not active at school, students continued to apply their skills at home and even taught their parents how to save energy. The change happened as teachers started trusting the students and empowered them to take the initiative in their own hands and take action as a team, even without the supervision of the teachers.



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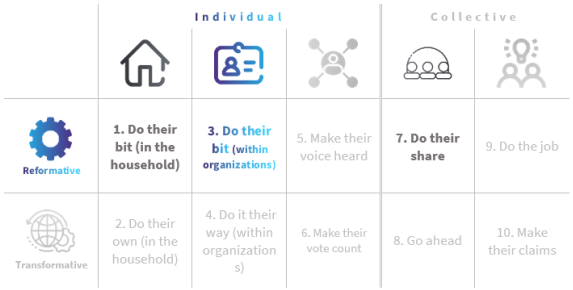
Phase 3: Current state and future, 2023 -

Students are now back at school and have plans to start the Student Energy Teams again. Students who were part of the previous Energy Teams still measure energy consumption at school and pass on their knowledge to other children. A large quantity of informational material is available to all interested students. Students' energy interests have spilled over into other classes as well – for example, Bulgarian language and literature, where students wrote an essay entitled "Man's small steps for the future of the environment".



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The aspects of energy citizenship

Energy democracy has not been referred to as among the main goals of the development of the Student Energy Teams and the BEACON project as a whole. The aim of the teams is more to raise awareness of the importance of mitigating climate change and taking action towards net-zero emissions but not explicitly through achieving energy democracy.

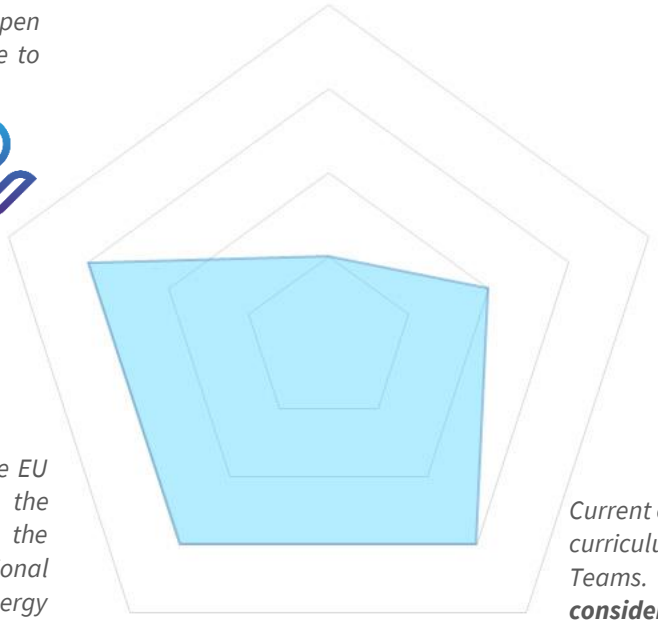
Democratic energy future

Energy democracy has not been among the goals

All students had the right to propose activities, themes, etc. If a decision had to be taken, the students organized a discussion where everyone could argue to defend his/her opinion. The decisions were taken on a consensual basis. It has been an open and deliberative decision-making process, allowing everyone to express opinion and propose solutions.

Citizen control

No effective citizen power/control



The Student Energy Teams involve pupils that take action to mitigate their carbon footprint at school and at home through energy saving. Equity and justice are not among the objectives of the initiative, but rather energy saving at school and at home through awareness raising.

Equity and justice

Justice or equity are essentially out of scope or restricted to access to market

The Student Energy Teams in Sofia have been supported by the EU project BEACON. The aim of the project is to contribute to the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement through the engagement of local actors – schools and other educational institutions. They can play a key role by reducing their own energy consumption but also educating future generations for a climate-friendly world. Also, ***they can be pioneers and drivers of profound decarbonisation and social transformation processes*** *as their activities have considerable potential for increasing energy efficiency and avoiding the emission of greenhouse gases.*

Carbon limit

Explicit recognition of the carbon limit

Current environmental concerns and the need to address them through the school curriculum have been among the drivers for the creation of the Student Energy Teams. ***Stimulating the environmental behaviour of pupils has been considered the area with the greatest potential for schools to advance the energy transition****. The students who are involved consider environmental sustainability as their motivation to participate in the energy teams. However, since the activities are undertaken by children, they are not sophisticated enough to involve the assessment indicators necessary for identifying "high" environmental sustainability.*

Environmental sustainability

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

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Further information

sou90.org/
ecofund-bg.org/bg/programs/bridging-european-local-climate-action-beacon

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Source of images

https://sou90.org/

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