



Berlin Energy Citizen

GERMANY

Summary

BEB - BürgerEnergie Berlin eG - is a cooperative that brings citizens together to work for a sustainable, climate-friendly, citizen-owned energy system in Berlin. It is a free cross-party association of citizens.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

BEB is focused on citizen's empowerment regarding the energy system at the city scale. It aims at developing involvement in citizen energy in Berlin and at empowering citizens in the energy transition, first by fostering citizen commitment in the management of the publicly owned electricity network and second through renewable energy generation, notably tenant electricity (*Mieterstrom*)



DIRECT ENERGY
PRODUCTION /
CONSUMPTION



COLLECTIVE



URBAN



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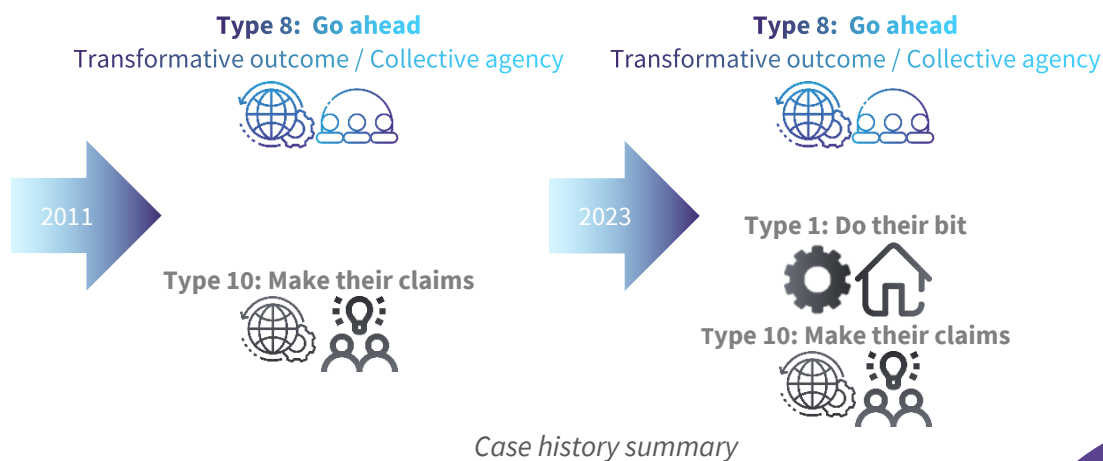
Bürger Energie Berlin

Goals

1. Putting the energy supply in Berlin in the hands of its citizens with the help of the cooperative;
2. Furthering the energy transition in Berlin by phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy sources;
3. Setting an example with their cooperative and its role in empowering citizens to engage actively in the energy system and its transition.

The story and the typology

In the beginning, BEB aimed to buy shares in the energy grid in Berlin so that direct citizen participation would be possible, which can be seen as a very transformative goal. After the “re-municipalisation” of the grid, the cancellation of municipal elections, and the respective new voting process, this became less possible, at least in the immediate future, so BEB focused on being a platform for citizen participation and tenant electricity projects. This was more aimed at working with the current system and thus had a more reformative purpose regarding the overall goals, whilst the initial plans were very transformative. This shift is mainly reflected in the changes in secondary energy citizenship ideal types.



For the summary methodology, click [HERE!](#)

Phase 1: Creation of the case, 2011

The main goal of the BürgerEnergie Berlin (BEB) cooperative is to transform Berlin's energy industry into a decentralised, sustainable and socially oriented industry.

BEB was founded in 2011 as a cooperative by individual citizens and took part in the concession procedure as a bidder for the electricity grid in Berlin but lost to the Berlin state, which was still an outcome that BEB supported. However, as a result, BEB has not been able to establish citizen participation either in the decision-making processes regarding the electricity grid in Berlin or in terms of citizens' ownership of shares in the power grid, which were central goals for the initiative.

In August 2021, the co-founder Arwen Colell became part of the supervisory board of the now re-municipalised Berlin energy grid, which BEB sees as a step toward its original goal.

Until now, BEB has contributed significantly to drawing attention to the issue, and it is still an achievement for the initiative that the energy grid is now back in the hands of the city government. The cooperative has emerged as a nationwide example of an energy cooperative trying to gain ownership of public infrastructure and as a player in the re-municipalisation campaign.

	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: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary type: Make their claims

Transformative outcome / Social movements agency

BürgerEnergie Berlin



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Phase 2: Last state, since 2021-

In 2021, they did not successfully achieve one of their main founding goals, acquiring the electricity grid in Berlin, because the state of Berlin won the bid. Changes in the case are mainly connected to growth and maybe fields of action because the initiative’s initial aims did not seem to be achievable in the near future.

In the beginning, their activities were exclusively directed at achieving direct citizen participation in the decision-making process regarding energy infrastructure in Berlin, namely the electricity grid. This is still their primary goal, but they have further developed into a bigger platform for informing citizens about these topics.

They also started to actively initiate citizen energy projects such as balcony plants and tenant electricity in cooperation with housing associations, for example. Generally, they have grown significantly in terms of members to 1,500 in 2023, established themselves as a reliable partner for cooperation and information platform and expanded their networks.

However, their legal form as a cooperative, which is the main characteristic of the initiative, has not changed at all. Their focus on democratising the

energy infrastructure and furthering the energy transition is still the main focus that shapes their activities. In this sense, the ENCI collective ideal-type “Go ahead” and the kind of actors who are involved have stayed the same. However, it could be argued that the initiative’s goals have become less transformative over time (But the secondary ideal type has also remained the transformative and collective “make their claims”, as it is still transformative, notably through the social movement lens). The new focus of the case's activities has also led to the emergence of new secondary types (Type 1).

	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: Go ahead

Transformative outcome / Citizen-based and hybrid agency

Secondary types:

Do their bit (in the household)

Reformative outcome / Private in the household agency

Make their claims

Transformative outcome / Social movements agency



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The aspects of energy citizenship

Citizens can participate by becoming members of the cooperative; **every member has one vote, no matter how many shares in the cooperative they have.** There is a possibility to share membership and the cost of shares and people can contribute by volunteering. **The decisions that are reached during this process are binding;** they are especially valued because citizens make them.

Citizen control
Citizens exert effective control, and their votes have to be taken into account



There is no explicit mention of the ecological limit of atmospheric carbon emissions or sustainable carbon footprint. But **despite the lack of formal references to either, the case is involved in activities to reduce the consumption and/or emission of carbon.**

Carbon limit
Implicit recognition of the carbon limit



A more democratic energy future is literally the core of BEB's goal, specifically for Berlin, but they also want to set an example for other regions. The power grid in Berlin was owned by Vattenfall, but **BEB wanted to bring ownership back to the city of Berlin so that citizens could influence the decision-making process regarding the power grid more easily.** They see their role in this as having made the process related to the Berlin power grid and the importance of this infrastructure for the energy transition more public and transparent.



Democratic energy future
A more democratic energy future is a core concern of the case, and is part of the vision



FOCUS ON DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Access is rather open, but to be involved, individuals have to buy at least one share. Issues related to energy poverty and inclusivity are not explicitly addressed, but **there are options for people who cannot afford to pay for shares on their own to obtain cooperative membership,** and the chance to participate in the cooperative through volunteer work.



Equity and justice
Equal access is granted, but limited by various criteria

Environmental sustainability is the main reason why the cooperation wanted to take the energy grid in Berlin into the hands of citizens. **The transition to renewable energy can be carried out simply by giving citizens' votes in the first place but also, for example, by citizens initiating energy production themselves such as by using PV on roofs or balconies.**



Environmental sustainability
Environmental sustainability is a core issue, and is considered in goal setting



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Further information



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www.buerger-energie-berlin.de/



info@buerger-energie-berlin.de



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Saskia Uppenkamp ©



Case study authors

Mapping and detailed case research by:

Claudia Buse & Ariane Debourdeau, Technische Universität Berlin

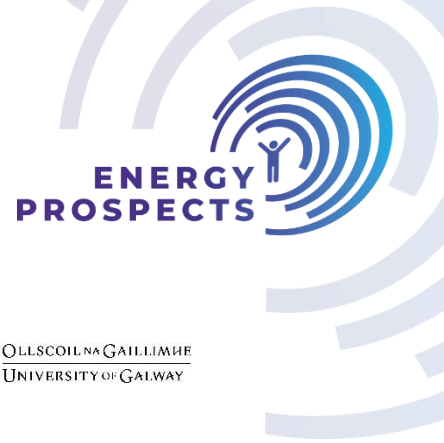
Case study summary prepared by:

Anita Szöllőssy & Edina Vadovics, GreenDependent Institute

Proofreading by Simon Milton / **Reviewed by** case participants



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EnergyPROSPECTS partners

University of Galway (GAL)
University Road, H91 TK33, Galway, Ireland



Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB),
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50-1050, Bruxelles, Belgium



GreenDependent Institute (GDI),
2100 Gödöllő, Éva u. 4., Hungary



Universiteit Maastricht (UM),
Minderbroedersberg 4-6, 6200 MD, Maastricht, Netherlands



Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund),
Alexander Zhendov Street 5, 1113, Sofia, Bulgaria



Notre Europe – Institut Jacques Delors (JDI),
18, rue de Londres 75009, Paris, France



University of Latvia (UL),
Raiņa bulvāris 19, LV-1586, Riga, Latvia



Technische Universität Berlin (TUB),
Straße des 17. Juni 135, 10623, Berlin, Germany



Universidade da Coruña (UDC),
Rúa da Maestranza 9, 15001 A Coruña, Spain



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