



Citizens' Assembly on “How the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change”



Summary

In 2017, a citizens' assembly of 100 participants, chosen to be representative of the Irish population, engaged in a deliberative process. Following impartial and factual advice from experts, they were tasked with discussing the question, “How can the state make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change?”. The process resulted in a report comprising a series of recommendations for the attention of the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

The Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change represents the institutional context for effective participation by individual citizens in the area of climate and energy. It underlines that energy citizenship in its public form is not limited to a singular act of voting but can involve participation in a distinct and deliberative process.



HOLISTIC



INDIVIDUAL



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



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

grⁱⁿdependent
Institute

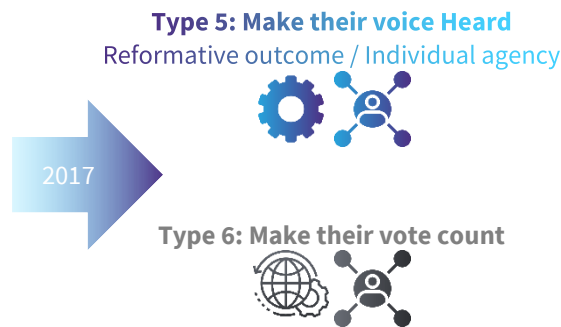


Goals

1. Allowing a cross-section of the public to hear presentations from experts and civil society groups and to engage in rational and reasoned discussion, following the principles of deliberative democracy.
2. Formulating recommendations to the Irish Parliament on how the state can move forward in addressing climate change
3. Contributing to wider public engagement and national debate on the issue according to recommendations

The story and the typology

The perspective of energy citizenship Citizens' Assembly on “How the state can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change” is one of public agency. The main ideal type of the case is more reformative (Type 5, “Make their voice heard”), but it also has some transformative features (Type 6, “Make their vote count” indicated as secondary).



Case history summary



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



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



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

grIndependent
Institute

The climate assembly as a case was a one-time event in 2017. It is not ongoing.

The general topic of the Assembly was determined in the mandate of the Parliament, yet setting the agenda for the specific issues to be addressed was a pivotal issue. In preparation for the Assembly, a Steering group consisting of ten elected members of the Assembly was formed, which, in collaboration with the Secretariat, prepared a draft work programme. Submissions made by the public prior to the event also fed into this process.

At the event itself, the plenary of all participating citizens was again asked for input, thus giving them considerable say in the framing of the discussion and substance of the Assembly. The preparation of the draft recommendations on which the Assembly would eventually vote featured a similar iterative process between the Secretariat and Assembly members. Moreover, this process was supported by an Expert Advisory Group.

A major part of the deliberation involved refining the exact wording of the recommendations while ensuring that the deliberation was fair, informative and evidence-based – key principles of deliberative democracy.

Overall, participating citizens had considerable agency in the agenda-setting related to climate change in Ireland. And although the recommendations of the Assembly were not formally compulsory, they could hardly be ignored by the Parliament in the subsequent shaping of energy policy. Thus, from the perspective of energy citizenship, the case is one of public agency. The main ideal type of the case is more reformative (type 5), as it was not compulsory. Still, it has some transformative features (type 6, indicated as secondary), as there was real citizen involvement and a substantial impact on results.

	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: Make their voice heard
Reformative outcome / Public agency

Secondary type: Make their vote count
Transformative outcome / Public agency



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



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

grIndependent
Institute



The aspects of energy citizenship

The participating citizens had considerable agency in agenda-setting related to what they wanted to deliberate about. **The resulting recommendations had strong legitimacy and were hard to ignore, although not formally compulsory.** A key issue was ensuring the quality of deliberation according to the principles of deliberative democracy that guided the Assembly. It was important to structure a discussion that was “fair, informative and evidence-based based.”

It is a core concern of the Citizens’ Assemblies to give citizens more voice in policymaking – in this case, on the matter of climate, including energy. **The case adhered to the principles of deliberative democracy.** Although the recommendations are not formally compulsory, they increased the pressure on the government but also increased the legitimacy to act on climate-related governance.



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

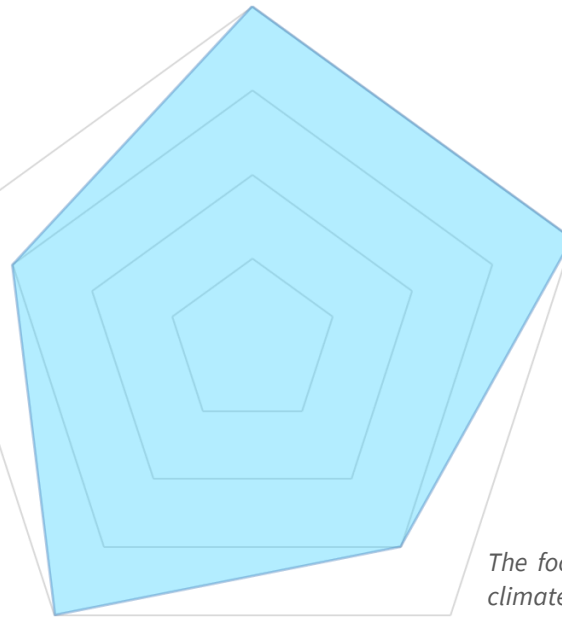
Although access to the assembly was randomised and thus limited for most citizens, it was designed to accurately represent the Irish public in relation to the factors of age, gender, social class and regional distribution. The deliberation itself adhered to the principles of deliberative democracy, which includes transparency, mutual respect and the equality of voice. Issues related to **fairness, climate justice and social justice made up a considerable portion of the public submissions prior to the event.**

Citizen power/control

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



Due to its focus on climate change, carbon emissions and the necessity of meeting the 1.5 °C target were the central issues of the case. **Recommendations on how the state could reduce carbon emissions covered the transport, energy and agriculture sectors due to their key role in Ireland’s carbon emissions.**



Equity and justice
Involvement is fully open

The focus of the assembly was on how the state should address climate change. **This was approached in a holistic manner, including the (governing of) the transport, energy and agriculture sectors.** Energy nevertheless remained a central aspect, even if not exclusively.

Carbon limit

Explicit recognition with mention/objective of reaching the max. carbon footprint



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



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



OILSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

grIndependent
Institute

Further information



twitter.com/CitizAssembly



2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie



info@citizensassembly.ie



References

- Devaney, L., Torney, D., Brereton, P. & Coleman, M. (2020a). Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change: Lessons for Deliberative Public Engagement and Communication. *Environmental Communication*, 14:2, 141-146.
- Devaney, L., Torney, D., Brereton, P. & Coleman, M. (2020b). Deepening Public Engagement on Climate Change: Lessons from the Citizens' Assembly. *Environmental Protection Agency*, Report No.314.
URL: https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/climate-change/Research_Report_314.pdf (Accessed 11.3.2023).
- The Citizens' Assembly (2018). Third Report and Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly 'How the State Can Make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change'. URL: <https://2016-2018.citizensassembly.ie/en/How-the-State-can-make-Ireland-a-leader-in-tackling-climate-change/Final-Report-on-how-the-State-can-make-Ireland-a-leader-in-tackling-climate-change/> (Accessed 11.3.2023).
- Interview with one people involved in the case
- Vadovics, E., Szóllóssy A., and Vadovics K. (2023). Introduction and Methodology for the EnergyPROSPECTS Detailed Case Summary Reports. EnergyPROSPECTS (PROactive Strategies and Policies for Energy Citizenship Transformation). Zenodo.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10075408>



Source of images

twitter.com/CitizAssembly



Case study authors

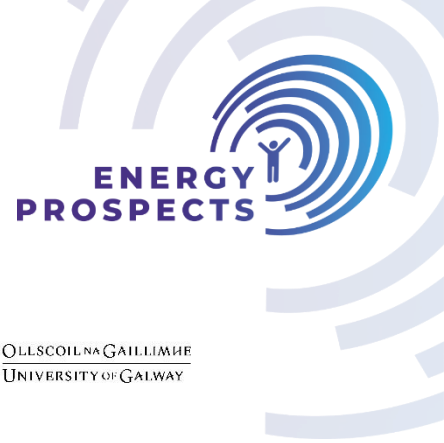
Mapping and detailed case research by:

Benjamin Schmid, University of Galway

Case study summary prepared by:

Anita Szóllóssy & Edina Vadovics, GreenDependent Institute

Proofreading by Simon Milton



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



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



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

