



EirGrid Public Consultation: Shaping Our Electricity Future

IRELAND

Summary

EirGrid, the state-owned electric power transmission operator in Ireland, has been tasked by the Irish government with preparing the electricity grid in anticipation of 80% of Ireland's electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030, as envisioned in the Government's Climate Action Plan (2019). Addressing this challenge has been outlined in the 'Shaping Our Electricity Future' strategy, which presented four different approaches to grid development. Due to the high level of impact and transformative nature of this transition, EirGrid implemented a nationwide consultation process in the form of several online workshops and an online consultation platform to improve engagement with the public and all stakeholders.

Why is it a case of energy citizenship?

The case involves energy citizenship as the consultation process run by EirGrid allowed individual citizens to voice their opinions and views on grid development as a key energy topic. Although not formally compulsory, the results of the consultation process have been taken into account in planning the development of the grid.



DIRECT ENERGY
PRODUCTION /
CONSUMPTION



INDIVIDUAL



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



OLLESCOIL NA GAILLIUMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

gr²Independent
Institute



Goals

1. Understanding stakeholders', including citizens' and communities', views on and preferences for four approaches developed by EirGrid concerning how to develop Ireland's grid to meet the 2030 clean electricity target.
2. Understanding what influences these views, including the underlying assumptions, risk profiles associated with the proposals, and trade-offs in stakeholder preferences.

The engagement activities were designed to answer four key research questions:

- What do stakeholders think about the proposals for each workstream?
- Which proposals do they prefer, and why?
- What is the conditionality of their views?
- What values, motivators, and messaging influence their views, and how?

The story and the typology

As part of the Shaping our Electricity future, the consultation process was conducted in 2021, after having been prepared by EirGrid since 2020. During this time, there were no fundamental changes to the chosen approach. As the initiative was started within the organisation, it first took the form of organisationally embedded energy citizenship. As the emphasis shifted to consulting and involving citizens, the agency became public.



Case history summary



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



OILScoil na Gaillimhe
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

grIndependent
Institute

Phase 1: Preparation of the consultation, 2020

This first phase in the preparation of the consultation was characterised by intensive reflection on the design of the process. A key aspect of this was collaboration with several partner organisations (e.g., Irish Rural Link, National Youth Council) to obtain external expert knowledge and ensure that the different consultation events could be implemented with sufficient independence.

The main form of energy citizenship in this phase can be understood as organisationally embedded within EirGrid itself (as reflected in the main ideal type, type 3), expressed by the engagement of persons within EirGrid who advocated to expand

and consequentially implement meaningful citizen engagement. This fostered a shift in attitude within the organisation of EirGrid towards more openness to input from public consultations.

	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 bit (within hybrid organisations)

Reformative outcome / Organisationally embedded agency


Phase 2: Implementation of the project, 2021

In the implementation phase, EirGrid partnered with several organisations over a period of 14 weeks, including:

- engaging over 30 local authorities;
- holding six rural community workshops (with over 300 attendees);
- holding a national youth assembly and seven regional youth events, in addition to...
- two national civil society forums;
- a deliberative dialogue/citizens assembly in Ireland, and
- a youth event with TEDxStormont in Northern Ireland.
- In addition, they received over 500 submissions through an online platform.

Gathering this feedback was done at an unprecedented scale and was the largest public consultation and engagement programme undertaken in this sector in Ireland.

The main form of energy citizenship agency associated with this second phase is classified as individual public, as expressed by citizens participating in the various consultation formats.

	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



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



OLLESCOIL NA GAILLIUMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

gr^{id}Independent
Institute

Phase 3: Follow up, 2022-2023

According to EirGrid, the consultation proved successful as they were exposed to broad perspectives and views from society and industry that helped clarify a way forward. This fed into the development of the Shaping Our Energy Future Roadmap.

In response to key feedback from the consultation, EirGrid has made greater recognition of the role of communities and sustaining post-project participation integral elements of the roadmap.

To continue this involvement, EirGrid has organised a series of energy citizen roadshows to inform local

communities and citizens about the roadmap as an outcome of the consultation.

The ideal type of energy citizenship has not changed during this phase.

	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



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



OILSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

gr^{id}Independent
Institute



The aspects of energy citizenship

External experts have shaped the consultation process, e.g., by highlighting the role of energy communities. Participants in the consultation emphasised that **they would like more engagement beyond this particular project and generally more public involvement in key decision-making about Ireland’s energy future.**

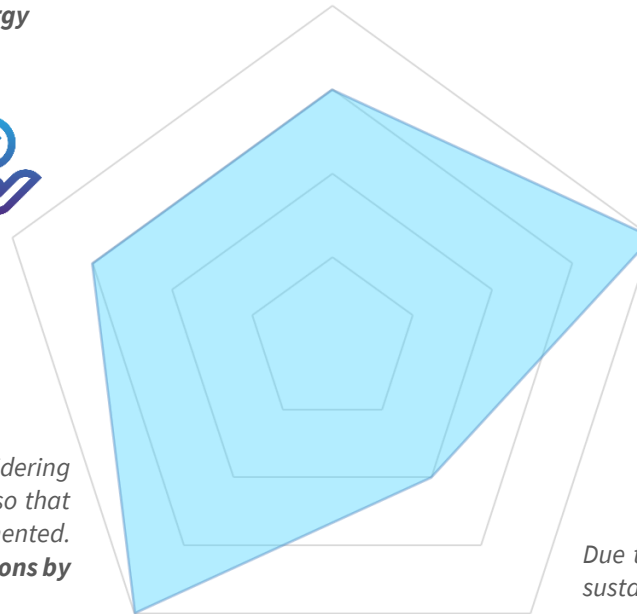
Although participation in the consultation was only on “invited” basis, **it was a key concern to increase the voice of citizens, communities and other stakeholders.** Significant consideration went into ensuring that citizen participation was widespread, and had meaningful impact. This included partnering with external actors, both in the presentation of viewpoints and in the organisation of consultations with a variety of stakeholder groups.



Democratic energy future

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

Citizen power/control
Citizens can express their views, but their views are not necessarily taken into account



EirGrid paid significant attention to making the consultation open and accessible. **Anybody could participate through the online consultation platform, with no barriers.** Widespread inclusion was promoted by 1) collaborating with the National Adult Literacy Agency to ensure that language was accessible to all audiences, 2) partnering with Irish Rural Link to ensure the representation of rural communities and with the National Youth Council of Ireland to ensure the representation of young people.



Equity and justice
Involvement is fully open

The background of the consultation process involved considering how EirGrid should approach the development of the grid so that the Government’s Climate Action Plan could best be implemented. **This includes meeting the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.**

Due to the focus on the electricity grid development, environmental sustainability was not a major focus. **No indicator was used to represent environmental sustainability in the characterisation of the four scenarios used as a basis for the consultation process.** In the rural community workshops, attendees remarked on environmental issues related to windfarms, which were portrayed as disastrous for the bird population in some regions.

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



Environmental sustainability
Environmental sustainability issues are not explicitly taken into account



Further information



consult.eirgrid.ie



consult@eirgrid.ie



References

- EirGrid, SONI (2021a). Shaping our electricity future - A roadmap to achieve our renewable ambition. URL: https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Shaping_Our_Electricity_Future_Roadmap.pdf (Accessed 11.3.2023).
- EirGrid & SONI (2021b). Shaping our electricity future - Key Consultation Documents Technical report. URL: <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Full-Technical-Report-on-Shaping-Our-Electricity-Future.pdf> (Accessed 11.3.2023).
- Flynn, M., Condell, K., Fraser, M., & Bollen, A. (2021). Shaping Our Electricity Future - Consultation and engagement report. Traverse. URL: https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/Shaping_Our_Electricity_Future_EirGrid_Consultation_and_Engagement_Report.pdf (Accessed 11.3.2023).
- Interview with one of the leaders of 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

consult.eirgrid.ie



Case study authors

Mapping and detailed case research by:

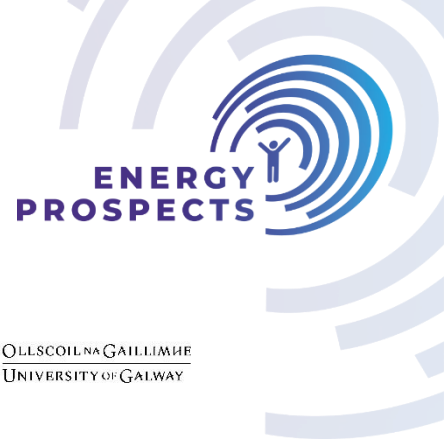
Benjamin Schmid, University of Galway

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

grün dependent
Institute