



# Summary of the Expert Workshop

13.11.2023 | Sofia, Bulgaria

The workshop was organised by the [Citizen-led renovation initiative](#) together with the energy community [Izgrei](#). The support service for Citizen-led renovation is an EU initiative aiming to empower energy communities to put citizens in the driver's seat of energy-saving renovation projects. The initiative supports pilot projects, of which Izgrei is one.

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Reviewers: Workshop participants.

This document does not necessarily reflect the views of all workshop participants.

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## Background

Bulgaria has the highest energy poverty rate across the EU countries. In addition, Bulgaria's electricity and heat demand from buildings is highly dependent on coal-fired generation. Therefore, energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations are crucial to achieve a decarbonised and energy efficient building stock in Bulgaria. Despite specific renovation targets and funding schemes, the renovation rate in Bulgaria remains low.

Citizens, especially homeowners, can take a key role in driving building retrofits. Renovations can provide multiple benefits to people, among others:

- increased heating and cooling comfort
- clean energy production and thus improved people's health
- potentially lower bills (if accompanied with changed heating behaviour)
- reduce (city) noises from outside the building

Thus, the workshops addressed ways to empower citizens, specifically homeowners, to take the lead in energy efficient renovation.

## Objective and structure of the workshop

The workshop had the objective to strengthen cooperation between different organisations and projects working on energy-efficient renovation and to discuss ideas and perspectives for supporting citizens in carrying out collective energy renovations.

## Workshop participants

The workshop brought together 12 actors working in the field of energy efficiency, renovation, community energy and sustainable housing. The full list of participants is provided at the end of the document ([Workshop participants](#)).



*Workshop participants.*

The workshop started with an introduction to the Citizen-led innovation initiative, followed by a “initiative market” with introduction of the attending organisations and their projects. Relevant projects included:

- [DESMEE](#)
- [UP-STAIRS](#)
- [MultiHome](#)
- [SHEERREnov+](#)
- [TANDEMS](#)



*Participants during the introduction round.*

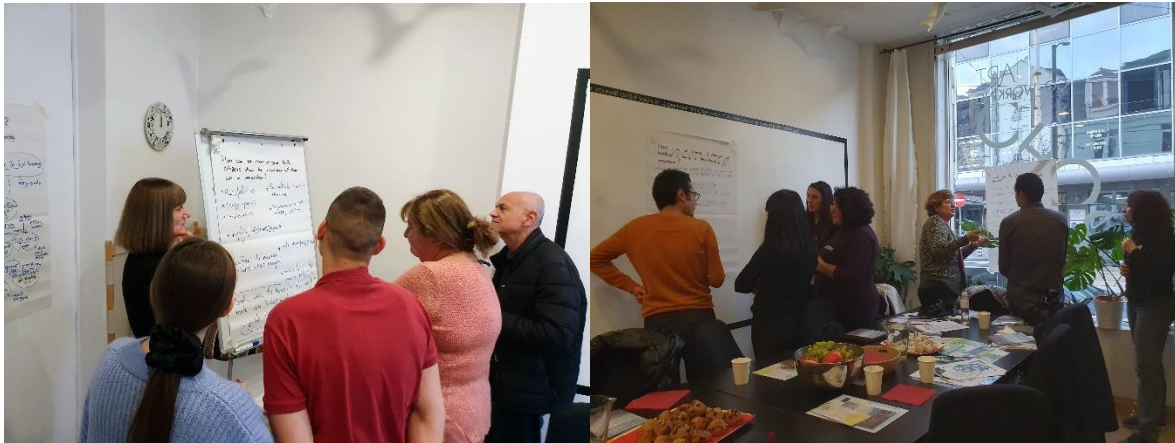
This introduction sessions were followed by an interactive discussion to four guiding questions:

- How can we create a change of mindset / build a new narrative for renovation?
- How can we communicate with citizen their importance of their role in the renovation (beyond 100% renovation funding)?
- Who would be the actors to engage with the people?
- What are the financial instruments needed?

The questions were written on white sheets of paper which were placed in different corners of the room. The participants were divided into 3 smaller groups to facilitate discussion among the participants. Each group had 10 minutes to discuss each question. Participants rotated around the room adding perspectives to the flipcharts.

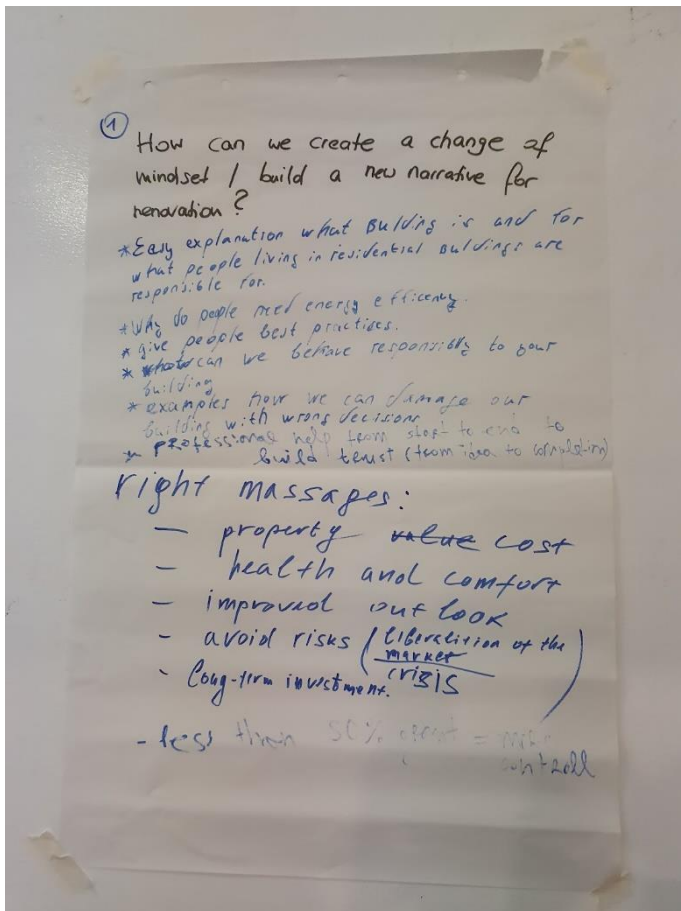


*Impressions from the discussion rounds.*

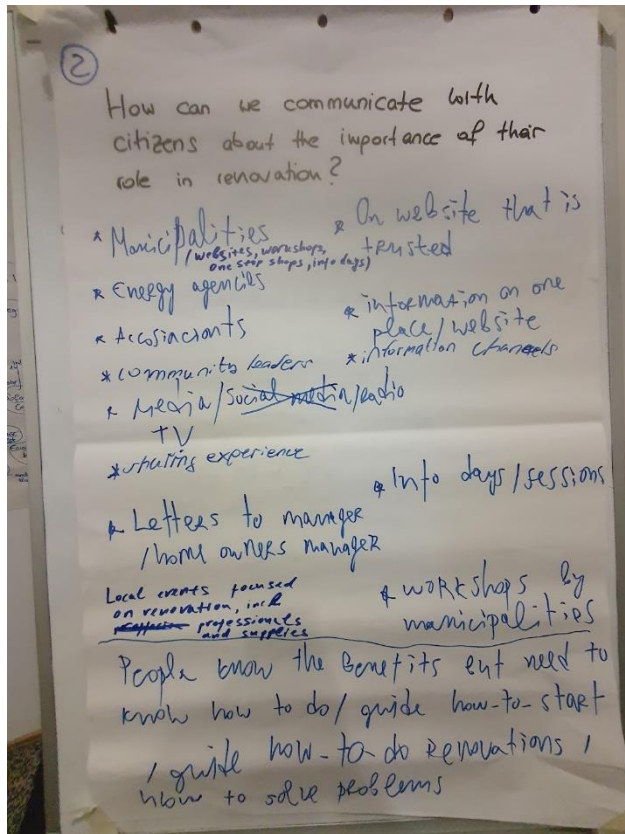


Impressions from the discussion rounds.

## Results from the discussions: Actions to accelerate energy-efficient renovation

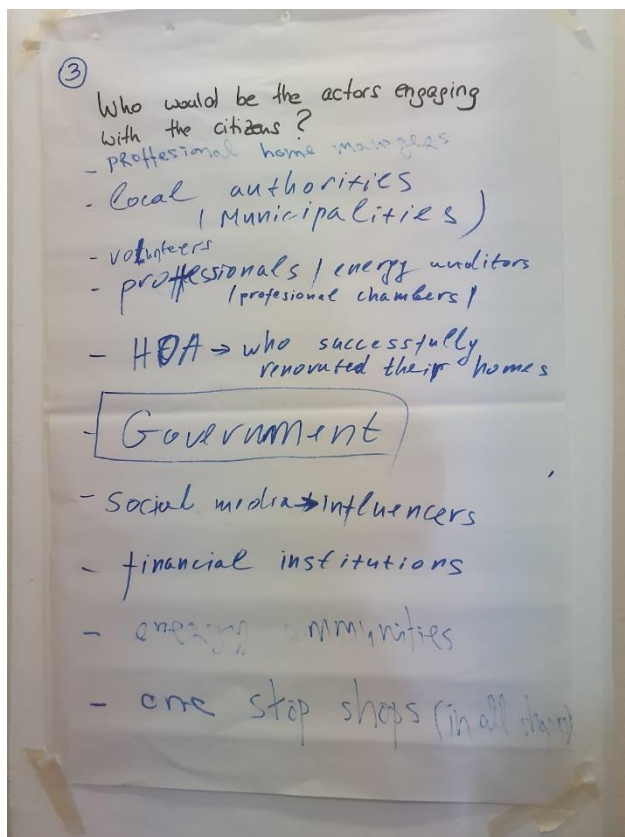


Key findings were that the right message is crucial when communicating with citizens, especially homeowners. It is important to communicate why energy efficiency measures are relevant, what the benefits are and what the homeowner's responsibilities are. Participants agreed that energy efficiency renovations are long-term investments that can reduce housing risks. It was also discussed that experts are needed to help homeowners make decisions about renovations. Best practice can help to show how it can be done and what the benefits of action can be.

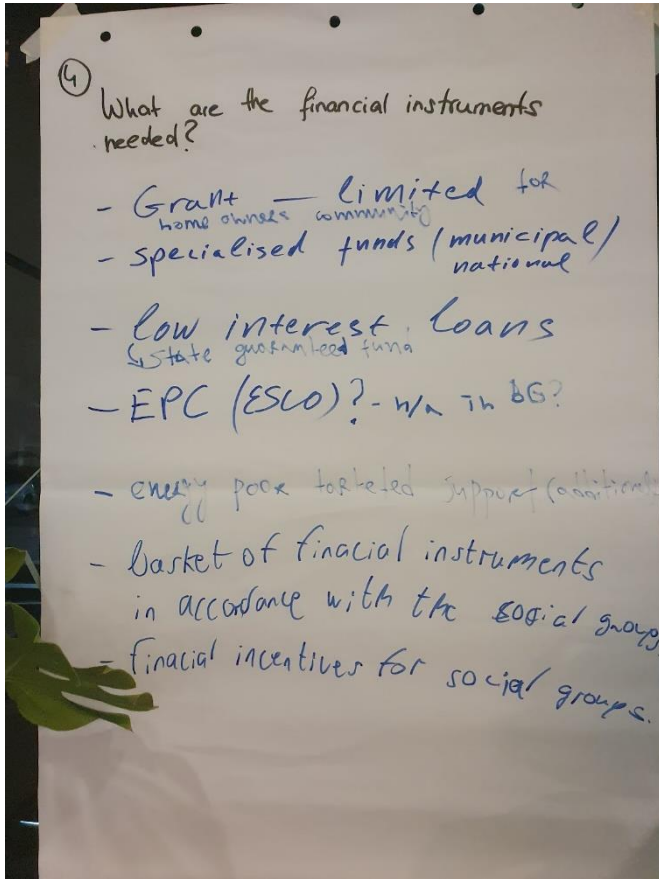


The discussion identified different communication channels and actors that are relevant to engage homeowners in renovation discussions. There was broad agreement that direct communication with homeowners is crucial, and the idea of offering info days or "match-matching" sessions between renovation professionals and homeowners emerged. Promising online challenges included television, radio and websites.

There was also a need for guidance on how to renovate, including where to start and the benefits of different renovations.



There are several relevant actors to engage with citizens/homeowners, including governments, homeowners' associations and energy efficiency professionals. Local authorities have a crucial role to play and awareness needs to be raised among them.



The experts identified a number of financial instruments. There was general agreement on the need for a basket of financial instruments containing incentives and support mechanisms for different social income groups.

During the discussions, several challenges and barriers emerged that need to be overcome:

- Communicating funding programmes: people are sceptical about high levels of renovation funding (100%, 80%)
- Communicating the crucial role of energy savings: Renovation measures do not always lead to energy savings if they are not combined with behavioural changes.
- Energy poverty needs to be tackled across all income groups
- Energy is a subsidy and therefore some investments are not profitable
- Financial support targeted at different income groups is needed
- Energy efficiency measures are often "invisible" and need to be made visible to citizens
- Lack of pilot projects to show how collective renovation can be successfully carried out

## Outlook

The Citizen-led renovation initiative will support the energy community Izgrei energy community over the next year to drive collective energy efficient renovations in Sofia. Further workshops are planned to bring together citizens/homeowners, renovation experts, local/regional governments and energy agencies to drive energy efficient renovations with and for the people.

## Workshop participants

Name	Organisation
Stanislav Andreev	EnEffect
Eleonora Gaydarova	Union of Homeowners' Associations (CAC)
Snejinka Georgieva	Izgrei
Mihail Georgiev	Izgrei
Tsvetan Georgiev	Izgrei
Georgi Georgiev	CAC Centre for Sustainable Housing
Milena Goneva	European Center for Quality Ltd.
Snejina Nacheva	Skysolar Bulgaria, Th!nk Europe
Tsveta Nanyova	Bulgarian-Austrian Consulting Company (BACC)
Evelina Stoykova	Sofia Energy Centre (SEC)
Diana Süsser	Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (IEECP)
Krassimira Zapryanova-Vasileva	Bulgarian-Austrian Consulting Company (BACC)



## About the energy community Izgrei

The energy community Izgrei<sup>1</sup> is a limited company established in 2021. The energy community currently has three founding members. They define themselves as a "family energy community".

Izgrei completed its first pilot project in August 2023. The pilot project is located outside of Plovdiv and included the renovation of a house owned by one of the community members and the installation of nine solar panels total capacity 4kW on the roof of the garage. The renovation activities included new roof, new windows and work on the façade of the house. Also, the solar panel is connected to the grid for self-consumption and feeds electricity into electricity system to generate some income from the excess.

Based on the experiences, Izgrei has developed a guide together with Greenpeace Bulgaria on how to set up an energy community<sup>2</sup>. They have done advocacy work and given interviews on national television and in newspapers about the activities of the energy community. **Error! Reference source not found.** provides a summary of the pilot.

*Summary of the pilot IZGREI.*

Pilot information	
<b>Location</b>	Plovdiv
<b>Legal form</b>	Limited company
<b>Established in year</b>	2021
<b>Members</b>	3
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renovation and solar installations for one single-family house</li> <li>• Co-development of a How-to guide for setting up an energy community in Bulgaria</li> <li>• Advocacy work for community energy in Bulgaria, including interviews given to national television and newspapers</li> </ul>
<b>Future perspectives/ aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing new pilot project outside of Plovdiv</li> </ul>

After the finalisation of the pilot, Izgrei aims to setup up a new pilot project in Sofia. **In short, the aim of the project is to renovate a multi-family house, including the renovation of the façade and the installation of a new, renewable heating and hot water system.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.izgrei.bg/>

<sup>2</sup> [Какви са административните стъпки пред вашата енергийна общност за продажба и собствена употреба на електроенергия? Пример от опита на Изгрей.БГ - „Грийнпийс“ – България \(greenpeace.org\)](#)

## About the citizen-led renovation initiative

The Citizen-led renovation initiative aims to empower energy communities and put citizens at the forefront of energy-saving renovation projects. During the project, four energy communities in four different countries, one of which is Bulgaria, will be supported to implement citizen led energy renovations and renewable energy installations within their energy community. The support service consists of six pillars: 1) overall project management, 2) business case development, 3) ecosystem building, 4) project pipeline and investment plans, 5) technical design preparation, 5) communication and engagement. The support service will be tailored to the needs of each pilot.