

Enabling framework
of pilot countries:

IRELAND



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Introduction

Buildings are responsible for well over one third of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and energy demand. The entire building stock will need to be highly energy efficient and carbon-neutral by 2050 to achieve the EU's climate objective.¹ In order to meet these ambitious targets, different strategies and potentials have to be explored.



The project [Citizen-Led Renovation](#) aims to empower energy communities and put citizens in the driver's seat for energy-saving renovation projects. In the course of the project, four energy communities in four different countries are assisted to deliver citizen-led energy renovations and renewable energy installations within their energy community. This country factsheet provides an overview of the current enabling framework in the countries and regions of the selected pilots. It starts with a brief overview of the EU policy and financing framework, followed by a more detailed overview of the national policy and enabling framework. It considers the state of play in terms of legislation, regulation and administrative procedures that are relevant to the integration of building energy renovation and energy communities.



↑ Ireland © Photo by Morgan Lane on Unsplash.

1 EU Renovation Wave, COM/2020/662 final, [\[Link\]](#)

EU policy framework



End of 2019, the European Commission launched the **European Green Deal**² setting the 2050 goal for zero greenhouse gas emissions, which became enshrined in the 2021 Climate Law together with an intermediate emission reduction goal of 55% by 2030. Building renovation is a crucial component of the European Green Deal, as the EU recognises that buildings are a significant source of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for about 40% of energy use and 36% of CO₂ emissions in the region.² Building renovations are seen as a key tool to reduce emissions and provide healthy and affordable living and working environment for all. Therefore, the European Commission decided in 2020 to kick off a Renovation Wave as a follow-up to the Green Deal.

The **Renovation Wave**¹ is a strategic communication with the aim to double annual energy renovation rates in the next ten years and renovate 35 million buildings in Europe by 2030. Together with a very ambitious decarbonisation of heating this should enable to cut direct building sector greenhouse-gas emissions by 60% until 2030 (based on 2015 levels) as laid down in the Climate Target Plan 2030 (CTP). The initiative builds on the national long-term building renovation strategies that are part of building-related aspects of Member States National Energy and Climate Plans.

Meanwhile new energy and climate targets have been agreed by the EU's legislators within the framework of the **Fit-for-55**³ package, which was launched in 2021, in order to deliver the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. The Fit-for-55 package includes among others, recasts to the **Energy Performance of Buildings Directive**⁴ (EPBD), **Energy Efficiency Directive**⁵ (EED) and the **Renewable Energy Directive**⁶ (RED) and therefore significantly affects the building renovation sector. The revision of the EPBD targets to set the European building stock on a clearly planned trajectory towards deep renovation to meet the EU 2050 carbon neutrality goals. The EED recast targets to make buildings more energy efficient and boost the use of renewable energies in buildings.

2 EU Green Deal, COM/2019/640 final, [\[Link\]](#)

3 Fit for 55, COM/2021/550 final, [\[Link\]](#)

4 EPBD recast, COM/2021/802 final, [\[Link\]](#)

5 EED recast, COM/2021/558 final, [\[Link\]](#)

6 RED recast, COM/2021/557 final, [\[Link\]](#)

In March 2022, the European Commission launched the **REPower EU**⁷ communication with the aim to reduce the EU's dependency on Russian fossil fuel imports. The REPower EU plan encourages Member States to find the quickest and cheapest ways to address the current energy crisis. The package includes a number of strategies, action plans and recommendations to increase the capacity of renewable energy (e.g. solar PV and heatpump capacity should be doubled) in the European Union and therefore also affects the renovation of residential buildings.

In support of the latest policy packages that were listed above, the European Commission is fostering the use of EU funds for the investment in energy efficiency of buildings and has been further developing financial instruments. The following enumeration lists the most relevant funding streams and programs and financial instruments for the residential building renovation sector:



- **European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF), European Social Fund + (ESF+) and Cohesion Fund (CF):** 330.2 billion Euro, climate share 30%
- **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF):** 672.5 billion Euro (till 2026), climate share 37%
- **InvestEU (“Sustainable Infrastructure”):** guarantee of 26.2 billion Euro (9.9 billion Euro for sustainable infrastructure), climate share 30%. The guarantee aims to leverage private investments of up to 650 billion Euro.
- **Just Transition Fund:** 17.5 billion Euro, climate share 100%.
- **Modernisation fund in the context of EU ETS:** ~14 billion Euro; at least 70% for energy efficiency.

As none of these programs are specifically earmarked for investments in buildings, it is difficult to estimate, how much will actually feed into this sector. It can be assumed that an annual 8-16 billion Euro will be available from these programs for energy renovation of buildings.⁸

7 REPower EU, SWD(2022) 230 final, [\[Link\]](#)

8 A.Hermelink and K.Bettgenhäuser, “The European Commission’s Renovation Wave Initiative for the Building Sector”, Climate Change 53/2021, German Environment Agency

National policy framework Ireland



National Challenges and overview

Ireland has a unique population spread: 34.5% live in cities, 26.3% in towns, and 39.2% in rural areas, differentiating it from other European countries. When it comes to housing, Ireland mainly has detached (40.1%) and semi-detached homes (49.9%). These unique demographic and housing characteristics play into the country's retrofitting efforts. From 2000 to 2019, Ireland realized a remarkable 41.2% energy savings, ranking it third highest in the EU.⁹

This showcases the country's strong potential for positive change in energy consumption. While the country has made significant strides in energy-saving, indicating a dedication to change, there remains an immediate need for more energy-efficient measures in homes. This challenge is not just about retrofitting alone; it's about adopting a comprehensive approach. Such a strategy must consider the unique dynamics of rental situations, the diversity of housing types, and the specific requirements of retrofitting policies.

Retrofitting plays a critical role in enhancing Ireland's building stock, a fact emphasized by the launch of Ireland's National Retrofit Plan in February 2022. This ambitious plan targets the upgrade of 500,000 homes, constituting a remarkable 30% of the housing stock, by 2030. With grants covering up to 50% of deep retrofit costs and the establishment of the country's One-Stop Shops, the plan offers both financial support and streamlined project management.



9 Climate Change Advisory Council, Working Paper No.18, [\[Link\]](#)

Ireland faces the following national challenges related to residential buildings:

- **Fuel Poverty:** In terms of fuel poverty, the research indicates that 3.2% of Irish participants can't afford adequate heating. This places Ireland in the 17th spot among the surveyed EU nations. Notably, Ireland's rate of fuel poverty is lower than the EU average of 6.9%. However, it's worth noting that different criteria can lead to varied fuel poverty estimates.¹⁰
- **Challenges of energy retrofitting:** (a) Barriers to access grants and subsidies: SEAI grants aren't easily accessible for groups like tenants, low-income households, the **traveller community**¹¹, and residents of older homes. (b) High upfront costs: Significant initial costs deter many from considering retrofitting. (c) trust and awareness: A lack of trust in retrofitting processes and minimal awareness about its benefits persist. (d) issues in rental housing: The private rental sector faces challenges like low-quality housing standards, unclear tenant protection from "renovictions"¹², and insufficient financial incentives for landlords to retrofit. (e) Absence of an updated strategy: The government hasn't updated its Energy Poverty Strategy, leading to doubts about the effective targeting of homes most vulnerable to energy poverty. (f) Skilled labour and materials: There's a notable shortage of both trained workers and necessary materials for retrofit projects.^{13,14}
- The challenge of retrofitting tenant-occupied properties in Ireland. Ireland's residential panorama stands out with a robust home ownership rate of 70.1%. Further enriching this landscape, nearly 29.9% of Irish residences are under tenancy. Notably, a substantial segment of these tenant households (18.5%) benefits from below-market rental rates. This intriguing statistic hints at potential challenges encountered when retrofitting properties held under various forms of tenancy.¹⁵

10 Residential Retrofit Review, [\[Link\]](#)

11 The Traveler Community are an indigenous minority population in Ireland with a historical and cultural favouring of a nomadic lifestyle. [\[Link\]](#)

12 "Renovictions" is when landlords evict tenants claiming they need to renovate, but mainly they want to raise the rent for the next tenant. It's a controversial way to bypass rent controls.

13 SEAI, Promoting retrofitting among homeowners in Ireland through a behavioural lens, 2023, [\[Link\]](#)

14 Friends of the Earth Ireland Research Report, An Examination of Blockages to Retrofitting and Heat-pump Installation in Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

15 Residential Retrofit Review, [\[Link\]](#)



Legislation related to renovation

Recovery and Resilience Plan Ireland

Post-pandemic, Ireland’s **Recovery and Resilience Plan**¹⁶ targets fostering a strong recovery and preparing for the green and digital transitions. With a total of 16 investment measures and 9 reforms, the plan will utilize €989 million in grants. Notably, 42% of these funds will bolster climate investments, with 32% accelerating the digital shift. A significant green initiative is the €155 million allocation towards energy efficiency in private residences and public buildings, reflecting Ireland’s drive to curb carbon emissions and promote sustainable environments. The plan, expected to boost GDP by 0.3% to 0.5% by 2026, was endorsed by the Commission in July 2021 and adopted by the Council in September.



↑ Ireland © Photo by Ireland on Unsplash.

16 Ireland RRP, [\[Link\]](#)

National Energy and Climate Plan Ireland

Ireland's 2019 **National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)**¹⁷ aims for a 30% reduction in non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, in line with initial EU goals. However, with the government's more recent pledge of a 7% annual cut from 2021-2030, the NECP is being updated to align with the European Green Deal and Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement.¹⁸ When it comes to energy efficiency, Ireland has enhanced its 2030 goals in the finalized NECP. Yet, it still lags behind the required efforts at the EU level.¹⁹ Ireland aims to: **(a)** Boost its energy efficiency ambitions for 2030, but they're still not on par with EU standards. **(b)** Renovate 500,000 buildings by 2030 and set stricter energy standards for new constructions. **(c)** Implement policies in the public sector to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30%, enhance energy efficiency by 50%, and achieve a B energy rating for public buildings. **(d)** For commercial buildings, achieve a B energy rating for one-third of structures by 2030.

(e) Install 600,000 heat pumps from 2021-2030, phase out oil boilers by 2022, restrict gas boiler installations in new homes after 2025, and fit all houses with smart-ready electricity meters by 2024.

(f) Upgrade 30% of older social housing units in energy efficiency, with local authorities spearheading the initiative. Although Ireland has presented some plans for renewable energy communities, they need elaboration.

On the community energy front, there's a concerted effort to expand and enhance the **Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC)** network and the Better Energy Communities (BEC) programme. This effort enlists a broad spectrum of organizations to deepen citizen participation. The SEC network, funded by the Irish government and bolstered by Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) mentors and grants, helps local groups to collaborate effectively. This mentorship and support enable these groups to tap into grants for projects highlighted in their Local Energy Master Plans. Furthermore, the BEC scheme, also known as the Communities Energy Grant (CEG), channels funds to community initiatives aiming to bolster energy efficiency and sustainability. This scheme, an integral component of the national retrofit programme, endorses projects that explore new partnership models spanning public-private sectors and various types of organizations. Its overarching goal is to elevate the energy efficiency standards of Ireland's infrastructures.

17 Ireland NECP, [\[Link\]](#)

18 SEAI, Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme, [\[Link\]](#)

19 EC assessment NECP Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

A comprehensive record of community energy initiatives and citizen renovation efforts is elaborated in the Climate Action Plan 2023, the Long-Term Renovation Strategy (LTRS), and the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).

Climate Action Plan Ireland

Introduced on 21 December 2022, the [Climate Action Plan 2023 \(CAP23\)](#)²⁰ is an evolution of Ireland's 2019 plan, aligning with the 2021 carbon-focused legislation. It sets a bold trajectory to cut emissions by half by 2030 and achieve net-zero by 2050. To ensure transparency and progress, detailed quarterly reports will be released. Ireland has allocated a significant budget to SEAI to advance residential and community retrofit initiatives from 2023-2025, emphasizing the pivotal role of energy communities in the National Residential Retrofit Plan's rollout.

The CAP23 highlights SEAI's central role, especially within the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) program will continue aiding communities in decarbonization by offering guidance from local mentors, including establishing energy benchmarks and tapping into the Small-scale Generation Support Scheme (SSG). With the SSG, community projects up to 6 MW can receive funding. The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) will facilitate smoother grid connections, bolstering the framework for community energy projects and addressing grid-related challenges.

20 Ireland Climate Action Plan, [\[Link\]](#)

Long Term Renovation Strategy Ireland

The **Long-Term Renovation Strategy (LTRS)**²¹ 2020, presented to the European Commission, highlights Ireland's building sector due to its substantial energy use and CO₂ emissions. This strategy aims to improve thermal efficiency, cut costs and emissions, and reduce reliance on foreign fossil fuels. It integrates existing renovation measures from policies like the Climate Action Plan and the National Energy and Climate Plan, without altering or introducing new policies.

The LTRS 2020 emphasizes cost-effective renovations for both energy and financial savings. Merging energy upgrades with other enhancements is more economical than isolated retrofitting. The Building Energy Rating (BER) guides on maximizing savings via grants. The Retrofit Taskforce's strategy for boosting residential renovations includes: **(a)** Increasing homeowner engagement through one-stop-shops, targeted ads, and enhanced regulations. **(b)** Diversifying financial models, encompassing government funds, grants, private finance, and tax breaks. **(c)** Expanding suppliers by setting standards, encouraging workforce growth, and supporting standardization. **(d)** Establishing a dedicated entity for retrofit targets with strong monitoring. Regarding residential funding, the Government has crafted diverse schemes, each tailoring to specific needs, offering both ongoing and new financial supports (Table 1 →).



↑ Ireland © Photo by Rory Hennessey on Unsplash.

²¹ LTRS Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

Scheme	Description
Better Energy Homes Scheme	Offers financial aid for homeowners to improve energy efficiency, including insulation, heating, and solar panel upgrades.
Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme	Provides funding for energy improvements targeting vulnerable populations, like the elderly, to reduce energy costs and improve living conditions.
Better Energy Communities Schemes	Promotes community partnerships to enhance energy efficiency across residential, educational, and commercial buildings.
Sustainable Energy Communities Network	Equips Irish community groups with skills to lead energy efficiency projects.
Warmth and Wellbeing Pilot Scheme	Focuses on health benefits of energy-efficient improvements for vulnerable groups, like the elderly and children with respiratory issues.
Deep Retrofit Pilot Programme	Experiments with extensive residential energy efficiency renovations to gather insights for larger-scale projects.
Building Renovation Passports (BRPs)	Detailed plans guiding property owners through energy-efficient renovations, ensuring sustainable upgrades.
Retrofit Taskforce (RTF)	Aims to achieve 500,000 energy-efficient retrofits by 2030, supporting Ireland's climate goals.

Table 1 Existing and recent schemes and funding support measures

Implementation of EPBD in Ireland

In alignment with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), Ireland adopted building energy standards via regulations set between 2006 and 2019. The technical guidance document²² helps professionals navigate these standards, particularly in gauging a building's energy use and CO₂ emissions. Benchmarks were set for residential buildings in 2005 and for non-residential in 2008. A pivotal move was the mandatory inclusion of Renewable Energy Sources from 2008, with significant revisions like the 2019 Renewable Energy Ratio. By 2017, non-residential building standards aimed for a 60% energy reduction from previous benchmarks. This drive for efficiency is evident as 97% of new homes from 2015-2020 achieved top energy standards (A rating). While residential structures have seen more frequent regulatory updates, non-residential buildings lag slightly behind in energy-efficient advancements. To ensure consistency, 31 local authorities across Ireland are responsible for enforcing these EPBD-aligned standards.

²² The Technical Guidance Document Part L (often referred to as TGD Part L) is a critical document related to the Building Regulations in Ireland. It provides specific guidance on how to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations related to the conservation of fuel and energy in buildings, both for new constructions and for existing buildings when they undergo certain alterations or extensions.

Implementation of EED in Ireland

The new legislation on the redesigned Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme (EEOS) places a legal requirement on larger energy companies ('obligated parties') to help energy users save energy. This can be achieved by supporting the energy user (financially or otherwise) to implement energy saving practices or to carry out energy upgrades in their property. Obligated parties work with energy users in the residential (including energy poor households), commercial and public sectors to deliver the required energy savings.

The scheme has been redesigned in response to amendments to the EU Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the government's climate priorities. The introduction of this legislation follows on from the publication last October of the Minister's decisions on the design of the new scheme. The redesigned scheme, which will commence on 1 January 2023, will build on the obligation scheme that has been in place since 2014. It will contribute significantly to the delivery of Ireland's energy saving target under the revised EED. The EEOS also plays an important role in supporting the delivery of Ireland's broader climate and energy targets. As such, the scheme represents an important pillar of Ireland's plan to tackle climate change.

Between 2014 and 2020 obligated parties supported energy efficiency actions in more than 290,000 dwellings and over 3,000 businesses. These savings represent an offset in CO₂ emissions of around 1.2 Mt and recurring financial savings of approximately €240 million per year. The success of that scheme contributed to the decision by the Minister to use an obligation scheme once again to help Ireland achieve our 2030 energy saving target. The new EEOS legislation can be found on the [Irish Statute Book](#) website.²³

23 Irish statute book, [\[Link\]](#)

Legislation related to Energy Communities



Renewable Electricity Support Scheme

In 2020, the Irish Government instituted the **Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)**²⁴. This scheme inaugurates so-called community-led projects that are afforded special privileges for renewable generation. These community-led projects must align with the Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) concept, a longstanding initiative in Ireland. SECs represent broader, regional initiatives, contrasting with the more localized, specific nature of community-led projects. A declaration of a community-led project should delineate its correlation with a SEC and clarify the relationship between the applicant and the SEC.

Implementation of RED in Ireland

In 2022 basic EU provision for **Renewable and Citizen Energy Communities** were transposed into Irish law (S.I. No. 76 of 2022), however leaving many details open.²⁵

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme of 2021 (RESS2) has a definition of a “Renewable Energy Community” with many of the requirements, overlapping with the definition of a REC in the Clean Energy Package. The law requires that at least one shareholder or member is registered as a SEC, linking Renewable Energy Communities to the existing system of Sustainable Energy Communities. In progressing the CEP enabling framework for energy communities, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) considered, where appropriate, how existing frameworks could be integrated or adapted into new rules/guidelines. In this context, the CRU engaged with the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications in relation to the proximity criteria for RECs. The CRU has put a proposal in late 2023 for public consultation that the REC has the autonomy to determine the most suitable proximity requirements based on the individual characteristics and needs of their ‘local’ energy community.²⁶

24 RESS Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

25 Roadmap for the Clean Energy Package’s Electricity and Renewables Directives, [\[Link\]](#)

26 Proximity Requirements for Renewables Energy Communities, [\[Link\]](#)

In Ireland, RECs must vest an ownership majority of at least 51%. The primary focus of such a community must be environmental, economic, or social benefits, over financial profit, with a minimum of 51% of all profits, dividends, and surpluses channeled back to the REC. Additionally, Ireland embraced a new grid connection policy in 2020, the ECP, facilitating community-led renewable energy projects by offering preferred connection options. This reduces implementation barriers and is steered by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. The principal aim of this policy is to provide projects poised for implementation with network connection opportunities. For participation in a REC, shareholders or members need to be situated (for SMEs or local authorities) or reside (for individuals) proximate to an ECP project.

RESS 3²⁷ further emphasizes community involvement in Ireland's renewable energy drive. Key elements include the setup of a Community Benefit Fund that is used for the wider economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of the local community. All projects that generate electricity from renewable energy sources must contribute with €2 per Megawatt hour of generation to a Community Benefit Fund. To ensure transparency and local engagement, funds must register before operations and adhere to prescribed management guidelines. Annual promotions inform communities of funding opportunities. With a clear distribution plan, households near onshore wind projects benefit directly. Generators are tasked with sharing annual reports and ensuring compliance with set norms.

In addition to the basic definitions and provisions of RECs, the RED is also a cornerstone in the advancement of renewables within the European Union and notably in Ireland. By 2020, the RED has set two mandatory targets for Ireland: the first demands that a minimum of 16% of Ireland's gross final energy consumption originates from renewable sources. This is often termed the overall RES target. Secondly, there's the RES-T target, mandating that at least 10% of energy utilized in road and rail transport should derive from renewable sources. Beyond these RED benchmarks, Ireland has self-imposed two more national targets for 2020 to further bolster its commitment to green energy.

27 RESS Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

The RES-E target emphasizes that 40% of the nation's gross electricity consumption should come from renewable sources. Similarly, the RES-H target stipulates that 12% of the energy used for heating and cooling should be renewable. However, as of 2018, Ireland is behind on these goals. Renewable electricity has grown significantly since 2000, comprising 66% of 2018's renewable energy, while transport's renewable contribution stood at just 13%.

Implementation of EMD in Ireland

In accordance with the REGULATION (EU) 2019/943 under the Clean Energy Package (CEP), Ireland formulated an Implementation Plan emphasizing the robustness and interconnection of the European electricity market. The Single Electricity Market (SEM), jointly managed by both Irish and Northern Irish authorities, is the pivotal electricity trading platform. The Single Electricity Market Committee (SEMC) oversees its operations. While separate monitoring reports are submitted by both Ireland and Northern Ireland, the shared goal is clear: optimizing electricity markets. The core principle of the SEM is that efficient, unhindered markets, when linked to the EU grid, can fulfil demand proficiently. However, capacity mechanisms should only intervene where market reforms falter. After presenting its draft plan to the European Commission in 2019, Ireland incorporated the Commission's feedback in 2020, particularly focusing on implementing the Clean Energy Package rules rigorously in its wholesale market. Alongside this, a Monitoring Report has been introduced to monitor the plan's application, charting its progress, challenges, and mitigation strategies. It's noteworthy that due to the SEM's collaborative framework, reforms often span both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Administrative Processes for Energy Communities

The SEC Programme, led by SEAI, fully funds communities to craft their Energy Master Plan. Currently, over 750 communities are part of this initiative, with many featured in case studies.²⁸ SEAI provides significant amount of support contact and informative materials through the SEAI mentor programme.²⁹ Once a community joins the programme, SEAI pairs it with a regional mentor. These mentors, representing all Irish regions, work closely with local authorities. They offer tools, workshops, and success stories from the wider SEC network.³⁰ Additionally, communities can select an external consultant. This expert delves into national and local energy data, evaluates the community's energy efficiency, and tailors their efforts to fit the community's unique needs. For an in-depth guide on community involvement, the SEC Handbook is invaluable.

Each county/city council is assigned a mentor from SEAI to guide and support the development and operation of the SECs in this area. As the most populous area, the Dublin region has a dedicated energy agency in their local authority ([Codema](#)³¹) and therefore multiple mentors. SEAI also works with local authorities on public projects and energy policy implementation. For the registration as SEC, cities/organizations/communities have to apply to SEAI.

28 SEAI, CEG guidelines 2023, [\[Link\]](#)

29 SEAI mentor programme, [\[Link\]](#)

30 SEAI, start an energy community, [\[Link\]](#)

31 Codema energy agency, [\[Link\]](#)

National Enabling Framework Ireland



Ireland offers an enabling framework for energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations consisting of subsidies, grants and tax incentives. The SEAI has created a versatile portfolio of grants to make homes, businesses, and communities more energy-efficient.³²

↓ Dublin, Ireland. Photo by. © Luciann Photography on Pexels



32 SEAI, grants overview, [\[Link\]](#)

Subsidies and grants



(A) Home grants

Homeowners and landlords in Ireland can avail of three distinctive SEAI grants:

- The Individual Energy Upgrades enables those who prefer taking charge. Managed by the homeowner or private landlord, this route requires using an SEAI registered contractor and the online grant application system.³³ However, there are some exclusions to this grant, which are worth noting³⁴.
- With the One Stop Shop Service, SEAI manages everything – from the home’s initial assessment (targeting a BER of B2 or higher) to the final Building Energy Rating. Plus, they aid with grant applications, contractor assignments, and even introduce potential financing options.³⁵
- The Fully Funded Upgrade is primarily for houses built before 2006, catering to owners on specific social welfare payments. Like the individual upgrades, this grant too has its exclusions.³⁶

To ensure optimal energy savings, different houses and requirements come with their unique criteria. For instance, to get insulation and heating controls, homes must be built and occupied before 2011. On the other hand, for heat pumps and renewable systems, the benchmark is homes built and occupied before 2021. All homeowners and private landlords can apply without means testing, ensuring a wide reach for these beneficial grants. For island residents, the deal gets even sweeter with an additional 50% grant, albeit with some exclusions.

33 SEAI, grant application, [\[Link\]](#)

34 SEAI, grant exclusion, [\[Link\]](#)

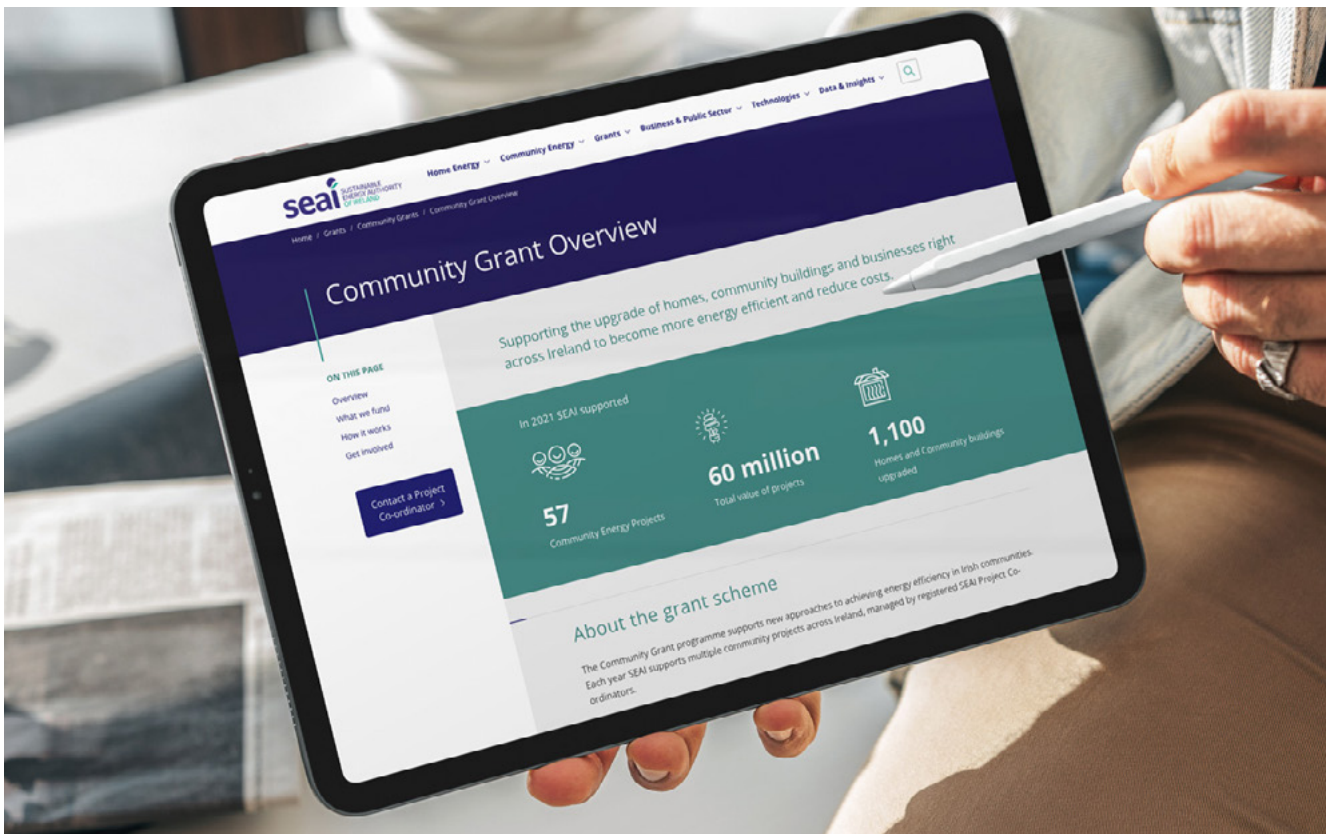
35 SEAI, one-stop-shop, [\[Link\]](#)

36 SEAI, fully funded upgrades, [\[Link\]](#)

(B) Community grants

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has been at the forefront of supporting communities in their journey towards energy efficiency. Their **Community Grant programme**³⁷ embodies this commitment by aiding homeowners, community groups, and both private and public sector organisations in making their buildings more energy efficient. Central to the effectiveness of this programme is the involvement of a registered SEAI Project Co-ordinator.³⁸ These expert shoulders the responsibility of managing the entire project, ensuring that all stages of the energy-saving initiative are executed seamlessly.

↓ The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) website presented on an iPad. © Citizen-led renovation



37 SEAI, community grant programme, [\[Link\]](#)

38 SEAI, community grant project coordinator, [\[Link\]](#)

(C) Business Grants and Supports³⁹

Table 2 presents the business grants and support schemes that are currently available in Ireland. ↓

Table 2 Business grants and supports

Name	Description
Non-Domestic Microgen Grant (NDMG) for Solar PV installation	<p>In a bid to champion the renewable energy movement, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) offers the Non-Domestic Microgen Grant (NDMG) [1]. This initiative targets a diverse range of entities, from businesses and schools to public sector bodies and community centres, encouraging them to adopt solar power as a sustainable energy solution.</p>
Energy Audits: A strategic investment for business⁴⁰	<p>To help businesses better understand and optimize their energy usage, the SEAI offers a €2,000 voucher for a comprehensive energy audit.</p> <p>This assessment will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The energy consumption trends of your business ☑ Equipment and processes that are energy-intensive ☑ Suggested energy-saving measures, complemented with cost estimates and anticipated impact <p>Eligibility Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The business should be registered in the Republic of Ireland. ☑ An annual energy expenditure of at least €10,000 (excluding transportation energy costs) is a must. ☑ The business should be tax compliant. <p>Only non-obligated entities are eligible. These are entities not mandated to conduct an energy audit under the Energy Efficiency Directive (Article 8, transposed into Irish legislation as SI426). Generally, they encompass SMEs or public sector bodies that have a useful floor space under 500m² and an annual energy expenditure under €35,000.</p>

³⁹ SEAI, Commercial Solar PV [\[Link\]](#)

⁴⁰ SEAI, energy audits for small and medium businesses, [\[Link\]](#)

Support Scheme for Renewable Heat [SSRH]⁴¹

SSRH propels two core financial incentives for various non-domestic heat users:

1. Operational Support (Biomass & biogas systems): Renewable energy technologies receive support through a multi-year payment for up to 15 years. This is based on prescribed tariffs, which determine the support level per unit of eligible heat energy consumption. Once fixed, the tariff for a project remains unchanged for the tenure.
2. Installation Grant (Commercial heat pumps): A grant covering up to 30% of installation costs for eligible technologies like air, ground, and water source heat pumps.

Application Essentials:

- ✓ Demonstration of a shift from fossil fuels
- ✓ Verification of eligible heat use
- ✓ Ensuring eco-design standards compliance
- ✓ Heating system design should align with building and relevant regulations
- ✓ Employ qualified designers with the competence for the task
- ✓ Recipients should meet tax clearance requirements

Excellence in Energy Efficient Design [EXEED] Certified Grant⁴²

The EXEED⁴³ Certified offers an approach suitable for organisations in varying scenarios:

- ✓ **Greenfield Design:** New asset design from the ground up
- ✓ **Brownfield Design:** New builds or repurposing of existing assets
- ✓ **Major Renovation:** Upgrades where energy improvement isn't the primary objective
- ✓ **Major Energy Upgrade:** Specific energy-oriented upgrade projects.

41 SEAI, Support scheme renewable heat, [\[Link\]](#)





42 SEAI, Exceed certified grant, [\[Link\]](#)

43 SEAI, Exceed certified grant guideline, [\[Link\]](#)

Support services



SEAI's website hosts a 'Tools'⁴⁴ section that offers guides and calculators, including:

-  Biomass cost indicator
-  NZEB specification tool
-  BER research tool
-  And more

However, SEAI's Solar PV calculator could be more user-friendly. Alternative, more intuitive calculators are offered by [Electric Ireland](#)⁴⁵ and Solar PV installers like [EnergyD](#)⁴⁶ and [My Solar](#)⁴⁷.

Note: Many other energy/installation companies might request personal details.

44 SEAI, Tools, [\[Link\]](#)

45 Electric Ireland solar PV calculator, [\[Link\]](#)

46 EnergyD Solar panel savings calculator, [\[Link\]](#)

47 Mysolar solar calculator, [\[Link\]](#)



Tax incentives

Table 3 presents the tariffing and tax incentives⁴⁸ in Ireland related to building renovation and renewable energy installations. ↓

Table 3 – Tariffing and tax incentives in Ireland

Tariffing and tax incentives	Description
Micro-generation Support Scheme	The scheme targets multiple sectors, including residential, commercial, agricultural, and public entities. One of the key features is the Clean Export Guarantee (CEG) tariff. Beneficiaries can get a tariff for exported electricity at competitive market rates. However, they need a micro-generation connection approval from ESB Networks [DSO].] ^{49, 50, 51}
Landlord Tax Incentive	<p>Announced in November 2022 by the Irish Government, this initiative provides an opportunity for landlords to avail up to €10,000 per property, though there's a limit of two properties per landlord.</p> <p>To qualify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The tenant must not be displaced during retrofitting<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEAI must grant approval for the works<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The landlord must be tax-compliant <p>Registration with the Residential Tenancies Board is mandatory⁵²</p>
Solar Panels VAT reduction	In April 2023, the Revenue Commissioner [the Irish Tax and Customs body] announced the reduction of the Valued Added Tax [VAT] from standard [23%] to zero percent for private dwellings for solar photovoltaic panels, solar windows and solar walls that are “supplied and installed as part of a supply and install contract”. ⁵³
Green Loans	Several institutions offer green loans for sustainable projects.

48 SEAI, tax incentives, [\[Link\]](#)

49 SEAI, Micro generation support programme, [\[Link\]](#)

50 Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Micro-generation, [\[Link\]](#)

51 ESB networks, connect a micro-generator, [\[Link\]](#)

52 Department of Finance, New tax incentive to encourage small-scale landlords to undertake retrofitting works, [\[Link\]](#)

53 Solar panel VAT reduction, [\[Link\]](#)

Barriers and drivers



In recent years, Ireland has been experiencing a transformative wave in the domain of energy efficiency renovations.

However, like any transformative process, there exists a mix of barriers and motivators that determine its pace and direction. Community energy projects face the following barriers:



Political and Strategic Prioritization: The absence of a robust political culture championing citizen-led energy efficiency, combined with the government's pronounced focus on deep renovation and achieving economies of scale, could unintentionally reduce the participation and efficacy of community-driven projects⁵⁴.



Economic and funding hurdles: A combination of factors highlights financial barriers. First, a significant 34% of homeowners have emphasized their inability to support energy-efficient improvements due to costs⁵⁵. Moreover, the intricacies surrounding available funding options, along with their potential mismatch for community initiatives, make it challenging to secure resources⁵¹.



Operational and knowledge barriers: Delays in application processing, exemplified by the lag in the Fully Funded Energy Upgrade, coupled with a stark skilled labour shortage, result in extended waiting times^{56,57}. Furthermore, an awareness gap persists, with 60% of homeowners unfamiliar with their Building Energy Rating (BER)⁵².

54 RESCOOP, Citizen-led renovation, Country Study Ireland, [\[Link\]](#)

55 Savills News, 16 May 2023 – One in three homeowners cannot afford energy-efficiency, [\[Link\]](#)

56 Tippmidwestradio, Delays to government warmer homes scheme, [\[Link\]](#)

57 NorthernSound, Apprenticeship opportunities needed locally, [\[Link\]](#)

Yet, the country also has many strengths like its infrastructure, government support, and people's motivation to push for better energy use.



Governmental support and vision: Ireland's determined ambitions concerning climate change, sustainable heating, renovations, along with tangible mechanisms supporting energy communities, lay down a fertile ground for citizen-driven energy initiatives⁵¹.



Financial and environmental incentives: The prospect of diminished energy bills is a dominant motivator, with 76% of homeowners eager for such monetary savings. In parallel, environmental consciousness is on the rise, with 19% indicating their willingness to undertake improvements for the planet's sake⁵².

Navigating these challenges and capitalizing on the available opportunities will be pivotal as Ireland moves towards a sustainable energy future.

Conclusions



Ireland is distinguishing itself through a progressive focus on sustainability and energy efficiency, exhibiting an unparalleled commitment to building renovations. Given the substantial efforts required due to the country's GDP-based effort sharing, achieving the stringent GHG targets is indeed a significant undertaking. The resolve is evident: to renovate 30% of homes by 2030 through citizen-driven initiatives, anchored by well-established legal frameworks and substantial budgetary provisions.

In Ireland over 750 communities are working together to become more sustainable in how they use energy for the benefit of their community. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is leading this transformative effort with innovative and inclusive grants, emphasizing community-based energy projects and forging pathways in environmental collaboration. The level of support for communities is notable, with aspirations to elevate the number of sustainable energy communities to 1500, reflecting the holistic and community-centric strategy embraced across Ireland.

An array of essential grants and incentives are catalysing the shift towards a green economy, exemplifying the unwavering commitment to renewable energy and sustainability. The harmonious integration of these innovative approaches with solutions to prevailing challenges is integral in sculpting Ireland's path towards a sustainable and energy-efficient future.



↑ Ireland © Photo by Andrea Leopardi on Unsplash.

Citizen-led renovation is managed by the European Commission Directorate-General for Energy

