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for a sustainable future

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Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
CEC	Citizen Energy Community
CEP	Clean Energy for all Europeans Package
EC	European Commission
ED 2019	Electricity Directive
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan
REC	Renewable energy community
RED II	Renewable Energy Directive
RES	Renewable energy systems

Index of Contents

Index of Figures

1 Executive Summary

A key aspect of the sustainable energy transition is a shift in the current paradigm about citizen participation – away from a predominantly consumerist and towards a multidimensional conceptualisation of citizen engagement in which citizens are considered in their capacity as political subjects, producers as well as consumers. Energy citizenship is a complex and dynamic social, political and economic phenomenon which reflects the understanding that citizens ought to be at the centre of the energy transition. The operationalisation and uptake of the notion of energy citizenship has the potential to enable citizens to be actively involved in energy transition processes.

This report looks into several main groups of factors impacting the emergence, exercise and deepening of energy citizenship, namely: a) legal and regulatory framework(s); b) gender-related factors; c) institutional and socio-political factors; d) socio-economic factors; and e) socio-cultural factors. It examines the effects of those factors and their relative importance in the eight DIALOGUES countries - Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and Türkiye. Structural and individual-level factors are discussed in parallel in order to understand how structural elements create the context for individual-level factors. A major finding of the analysis is that the common factors that affect energy citizenship across the different countries include: existence of an enabling legal and regulatory framework, regulatory stability, political will to support citizen participation and RES deployment, citizen trust in public institutions, institutional frameworks for citizen participation, public awareness about energy-transition-related issues, and availability of economic capital. Among the principal barriers to citizen engagement in energy transition processes in the examined countries are legal, regulatory and administrative obstacles, absence of institutional frameworks to enable citizen participation, limited mandates and capacity of local government institutions to support citizen engagement, and a low level of public interest and information about the energy transition and opportunities for citizen involvement.

In addition, the report investigates the impact of the different factors on specific socio-economic groups and protected groups, such as women, economically vulnerable individuals and households, older persons, ethnic minorities, migrants, young people, and persons with disabilities. It is observed that due to the effects of socio-political, legal, socio-economic, socio-cultural and other types of impediments and the absence of supportive institutional and policy frameworks, these groups are in many cases underrepresented and hard-to-reach when it comes to the energy transition. What is more, underrepresented groups are mainly confined to exercising their energy citizenship through energy consumption and their agency as political subjects and potential producers is often disregarded.

2 Introduction

The achievement of climate and energy goals requires a transformation of the energy system away from the use of fossil fuels towards increased reliance on renewable energy sources (IRENA, 2022; Biresselioglu et al., 2021a, p. 12). A critical aspect of this transformation is an alteration of the paradigm that citizens are merely passive consumers who are being distributed primarily centrally generated energy (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 24). Energy citizenship is a construct that places citizens at the heart of the sustainable energy transition and enables them to be actively involved in related processes not only as consumers[1] (e.g. through uptake of energy efficient technologies, etc.) but also as energy producers (e.g. through prosumerism, participation in energy communities, etc.) and political subjects (e.g. by taking part in decision-making, social movements, etc.) (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 5; Biresselioglu et al., 2021, p. 14). Thus, energy citizenship entails a reconfiguration of social norms when it comes to energy systems and places an emphasis on the active engagement and democratic participation of citizens (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, pp. 10, 12). Currently, the notion of energy citizenship, while being operationalised by research initiatives such as DIALOGUES, is an academic concept and does not have the status of a legally defined term. In DIALOGUES, energy citizenship has been defined as:

[T]he degree to which, and the ways in which, the goals of a sustainable energy transition enter into the everyday practices of an individual. Energy citizenship can either be shown through individual and collective actions or felt internally through reflection and concern. Energy citizenship is not a static quality, but evolves over time, waxing or waning due to internal and external factors, making it important to find ways of sustaining engagement. (Biresselioglu et al., 2021b, p. 46)

Energy citizenship is an inherently normative concept as the main tenets of the energy order it prescribes are grounded in consequentialist as well as deontological reasoning: the active involvement of citizens in the sustainable energy transition is seen as necessary both for the practical achievement of the energy transition and for the realisation of just processes and outcomes which are, among other things, inclusive of various social groups. For example, Devine-Wright puts forward a definition in which energy citizenship is understood as a social necessity of engagement on the part of a public whose members are viewed as active participants in the energy system and bearers of both rights and responsibilities (Devine-Wright, 2006, in Shejale et al., 2022, p. 8).

When it comes to the practical acceptance and uptake of the notion of energy citizenship, several cross-country studies conducted in DIALOGUES provide data relevant to this question. The results of a comprehensive analysis of energy citizenship initiatives and in-depth qualitative research among energy experts point to a strong trend among professionals from different countries of acknowledging the importance and relevance of citizen participation in the energy transition (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 14). What is more, there is a shared perspective regarding the need to work toward achieving inclusivity of citizen engagement (ibid). Interestingly, there is also an

[1] It would be important to recognise that engagement as an energy consumer may take many different forms ranging from passive price-taking to critical consumership and investment in the energy system (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 11).

emerging understanding that citizen participation is in and of itself a major indicator of the success and fairness of the energy transition (ibid, p. 15). At the same time, the findings of several Citizen Action Labs show that the concept of energy citizenship is not yet commonly understood or used by the research participants.

As a complex and dynamic social, political and economic phenomenon that has both internal (psychological) and external (behavioural) as well as individual and collective dimensions (Biresselioglu et al., 2021a, p. 20; Carrus et al., 2022), energy citizenship is affected by multiple forces and dynamics. In order for energy citizenship to be successfully encouraged and supported, it is paramount to shed light on the factors that foster and impede its emergence, exercise and deepening. The present report covers eight countries that are represented and, respectively, examined in DIALOGUES - Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and Türkiye - and investigates how the factors affecting energy citizenship play out in each of these countries. It analyses several main groups of factors which have emerged as relevant to energy citizenship in the results of the research conducted in DIALOGUES, namely: legal and regulatory framework(s); gender-related factors; institutional and socio-political factors; socio-economic factors; and socio-cultural factors. The report examines the ways in which these various types of factors relate to one another as well as to other important contextual aspects, for example technology and investment. Structural and individual-level factors are discussed in parallel in order to understand how structural elements create the context for individual-level factors, including psychological factors such as values, attitudes, emotions, and motivations.[2] It is also discussed how individual-level factors may relate to categories of inclusion and exclusion such as gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, migrant status, disability, etc. Therefore, a critical component of the analysis is how the effects of the various types of factors may differ when it comes to specific population groups, including marginalised and hard-to-reach groups. Briefly put, the report addresses the following research question(s): How do the main factors fostering and impeding the emergence, exercise and deepening of energy citizenship play out across the eight countries? What is their relative importance in these countries? Do different socio-economic groups, in particular groups that are marginalised or hard-to-reach when it comes to the energy transition, experience the effects of these factors differently?

The analysis synthesises the findings of several DIALOGUES studies across the eight countries, including: a comprehensive analytical review of 375 energy citizenship initiatives; 82 semi-structured in-depth interviews with energy professionals; Citizen Action Labs implemented in Türkiye, Italy, Germany, and Bulgaria; an analysis of the legal, regulatory and institutional dimensions shaping the context for energy citizenship; and an examination of the pathways to energy citizenship.[3] Taken together, these various studies cover a wide array of methodological approaches and research methods, including qualitative and quantitative primary research and desk research. In the present report, as a way of bridging research and policy and harnessing the results of DIALOGUES for the purpose of creating a more enabling context for energy

[2] While some of the reasons behind individual and collective citizen involvement in energy transition processes are discussed in this report, a comprehensive examination of this question falls outside the scope of the present analysis. For a literature review and analysis of the drivers of citizen engagement in the energy transition, including in the context of collective action initiatives in the energy sector, please refer to: Rodríguez-Chávez et al. (2022).

[3] This is a non-exhaustive list.

citizenship, on the basis of the analysis of the factors some key directions for policy action are outlined.[4]

3 Factors affecting energy citizenship

3.1. Legal and regulatory framework(s)

At a fundamental level, a country's system of government profoundly impacts energy citizenship as it determines the rights and obligations of citizens and the scope and mechanisms for citizen participation in political and governance processes. The eight countries covered in this report are representative democracies and thus key institutional pathways to energy citizenship are available to their citizens, such as the right to vote as well as the right to assemble and protest for or against particular decisions (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, pp. 21-22). In general, the legal and regulatory framework of a state is a contextual dimension of paramount importance for citizen participation in the energy system. Importantly, it delineates the roles that citizens can undertake, including whether and how citizens can produce energy either individually or collectively, and if they can be involved in political processes through mechanisms for citizen participation, surveillance and consultation (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, pp. 12, 21).

In the examined countries, there are important similarities as well as differences in the national energy and climate laws, regulations and policies in terms of facilitation of the energy transition, provision of support for citizen agency in the transition process, integration of aspects of inclusiveness, and placement of overall priorities. The national legal and regulatory context in the eight countries is influenced by two key supra-national legal instruments: 1) the Paris Agreement which has been ratified by all these countries, and 2) the Clean Energy for all Europeans Package (CEP) which puts citizens at the centre of the energy transition and directly impacts the legal and policy context in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and Italy as European Union (EU) Member States but may also indirectly affect the non-EU countries, Norway, Switzerland and Türkiye (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 5). While providing a general framework, the CEP also gives EU Member States generous leeway in how to translate the CEP directives into national law. This section looks into those aspects of the countries' domestic legal and regulatory frameworks that are of direct relevance to energy citizenship and investigates how they affect citizen involvement in the energy transition.

One of the legal dimensions which are of paramount importance for the emergence and exercise of energy citizenship are the rules and provisions creating the context for the establishment and operation of collective citizen-driven initiatives, including energy communities and energy cooperatives. DIALOGUES research suggest that, in practice, energy communities may be both more widespread and discursively more prominent in some of the countries, such as Germany, Norway and Switzerland, than in others, such as Türkiye and Bulgaria where energy communities are still at an embryonic stage

[4] The findings and directions for policy action presented in this report will be used in forthcoming DIALOGUES activities to formulate actionable evidence-based policy recommendations.

(Shejale et al., 2022, pp. 17-18; Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 48). The models of renewable energy communities (RECs) and citizen energy communities (CECs)[5] have been legally implemented in Austria, Germany, Greece and Italy (Veseli et al., 2022, pp. 22, 31). In Bulgaria, the legal and regulatory changes required in order to fully transpose the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) have not yet been implemented. In Austria, the scope of action given by the RED II has been used in favour of consumers through the provision of considerable incentives to members of RECs, in particular financial benefits, and the implementation of low-threshold criteria (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 24). Similarly, in Italy, recent legislation has eased the requirements for REC establishment, including in relation to size and connection to the grid (ibid, p. 38).

In Germany and Greece, overall, an enabling regulatory framework for RECs does exist and RECs have been established in numerous local communities. Nonetheless, there remain certain legal and regulatory deficiencies in both countries. For example, in Germany, as a result of several amendments to the regulatory framework concerning RECs, the conditions for participation in RECs have become less favourable than under the previous system (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 31). What is more, Germany has not yet transposed into national law the requirements of the Electricity Directive (ED 2019) and RED II directives that decentralised energy generation and consumption by private actors should be enabled and fostered (ibid). This omission is hampering innovations, including new business models. For example, it blocks the implementation of energy sharing - an emerging new market framework which has been shown to have considerable potential to support the proliferation of renewable energy by allowing the members of RECs to sell electricity jointly through the regional distribution grid (ibid). In general, legislative shortcomings continue to impede the success of citizen-led initiatives in Germany, as pointed out by an experienced political activist and member of the board of a renewable energy cooperative (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 49; Biresseliouglu, 2022, p. 21).

In the case of Greece, regulation has successfully tackled some challenges in the provision of support for RECs, such as the issue of large private investors taking advantage of REC legislation at the cost of local community initiatives (ibid, p. 36). Shortcomings that remain to be addressed by law- and policy-makers include the need to secure the provision of financial support to energy communities with non-profit character and energy communities of collective energy offset through the introduction of a package of measures, as well as the issue of remaining pronounced regional disparities in the geographical concentration of energy communities (ibid).

In Bulgaria, in contrast to the other EU Member States examined in this report, there is a worrying lack of an enabling legal and regulatory framework for energy citizenship. The role of citizens and citizen collectives in the energy market and the energy transition is not addressed in the existing legislative and strategic documents (ibid, p. 27). Local authorities and citizen initiatives that aim to launch projects for shared energy production, consumption, and storage, encounter many challenges and uncertainties, including heavy administrative permitting procedures, implementation delays, grid connection issues and lack of institutional support for planning, deployment and monitoring. In principle, the law does not limit the possibilities for citizens to act as prosumers or to set up RECs or CECs, however, there are no legal definitions of these

[5] The definitions of Citizen Energy Communities (CECs) and Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) are set out, respectively, in Art. 2(11) of the EMD 2019/944 and Art. 2(16) of the RED II.

terms and no legal framework for the establishment of such associations (ibid). Furthermore, the Bulgarian National Energy and Climate Plan (2021-2030) (NECP) does not envision any measures to be undertaken by the state to support prosumers and energy communities and remove the existing legal and administrative barriers which hamper their establishment and functioning (CSD, 2018). This legal situation owes to the significant delay in the national transposition of the RED II which has led the European Commission (EC) to refer Bulgaria to the Court of Justice of the European Union requesting the imposition of financial sanctions (EC, 2023). The failure to transpose the relevant EU legislation has undermined the viability of the RES deployment process Bulgaria, hindering the country's progress towards achieving its 2030 RES targets.

On the whole, energy governance in Bulgaria remains centralised, impeding the emergence of energy citizenship. Some measures in the direction of decentralisation and democratisation of energy governance and the energy system have been undertaken by the previous interim governments, notably certain short-term green solutions (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 28). However, these policy efforts have been insufficient so as to close the gap between Bulgaria and other EU countries when it comes to the creation of a legal and regulatory environment supportive of energy citizenship. Several of the Bulgarian energy professionals who were interviewed in DIALOGUES contend that a critical step toward encouraging citizen participation in the energy transition would be to decentralise energy governance and delegate more powers to local authorities. In these experts' opinion, local municipalities are the state actors that are best fitted to support local energy citizenship and such reforms are urgently needed to enable them to fulful this potential role (ibid).

Insufficient capacity of local authorities to support energy citizenship, in particular through being involved as partners in energy citizenship initiatives, has come up as a challenge in Bulgaria as well as in some of the other countries investigated in this report (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 21). In general, DIALOGUES research shows that in order to maximise the achieved positive results for energy citizenship across the eight countries, the decentralisation of energy governance ought to be complemented by enhanced cooperation between local and regional authorities in the area of energy citizenship, for example through the creation of energy networks - as has been successfully done in Norway (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 19).

Legal and regulatory provisions regarding inclusivity and diversity in RECs and CECs have a significant impact on the opportunities available to different socio-economic groups to take part in such initiatives. In this regard, the research conducted in the framework of DIALOGUES has yielded conclusive results only about the Austrian case – showing that Austrian law has met the requirement of the RED II that RECs must also be open to consumers living in low-income or vulnerable households. In Austria, the legal and regulatory framework supports the participation of low-income and vulnerable households in RECs through the provision of financial relief (e.g. tax exemptions) and subsidies (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 24). However, the extent to which RECs are accessible to and inclusive of low-income and vulnerable households largely depends on the specific design of each REC, as established in the contractual agreement among the participating members (ibid). Thus, while the country's legal and regulatory framework is principally supportive, it is not sufficient to ensure adequate participation and representation of these groups in RECs and other factors, such as availability of information, time and financial resources, play out as necessary

conditions in this respect. What is more, the specific - largely technical - definition of 'proximity' used in Austrian law in the application of the RED II requirement that the members or shareholders in a REC have to be in proximity to each other, may in fact render participation by some groups more difficult (ibid, pp. 24-25).

When it comes to the legal and regulatory framework(s) relevant to energy citizenship in the non-EU states studied in the present report, a commonality observed across Norway, Türkiye and Switzerland is that EU legislation and the conditions in the European energy market affect all three countries, albeit to varying degrees. It appears that bilateral cooperation - also in the field of energy - and the impact of the EU energy acquis is the most significant in Norway, while in Switzerland and Türkiye, both cooperation and spill-over effects from the EU have been relatively more limited.

Norway maintains close cooperation with the EU on energy matters and has incorporated EU legislation in the governance of the internal energy market through the EEA agreement (Energifakta Norge 2022, in Veseli et al., 2022, p. 39). The EU energy acquis also influences the Norwegian context indirectly by impacting the European energy market which is Norway's principal external market for oil, gas and electricity (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 39). Norway has not yet implemented the RED II and the foundation and operation of local energy communities is regulated by several pieces of legislation in the field of area license, trading license, marketplace license and consumer protection (THEMA, 2018, in Veseli et al., 2022, p. 41). The most popular form of local energy communities are small hydropower plants (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 41). The applicable procedures are more straightforward than those for large-scale projects and thus can be completed more expediently (ibid). Small-scale hydropower, wind and solar power installations are among the power production facilities which may be owned by private actors without an industrial license (ibid). What is more, there are positive developments in the country in relation to ensuring inclusivity in local government initiatives. A good example is a local government which effectively ensured recognition and inclusion of multiple axes of intersectionality in the involvement of various groups in a sustainable urban development project focusing on energy, among other things (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 21).

In the Swiss context, there is no overarching framework agreement with the EU in the field of energy. A potential agreement is regarded by the Swiss as a delegation of national authority and is therefore a highly contentious issue (ibid, p. 44). At the same time, such a framework agreement appears to be a prerequisite for successful Swiss-EU cooperation in specific niche areas where there has been impasse for many years, such as in relation to electricity generation, distribution and consumption (ibid). Citizen participation in the energy transition seems to be regarded in public policy strategies and initiatives as a cornerstone of the transition process (ibid, p. 46). The involvement of private actors is fostered, inter alia, through the decentralisation of electricity generation. The legal regulation of auto-consumption (in 2014), including at the collective level in a so-called RCP (*'regroupement dans le cadre de la consommation propre'*), allows small-scale producers to use and/or sell all or part of the energy generated (ibid). It should be noted that presently individual small-scale consumers cannot access the energy market, though full market liberalisation is planned to take place in the coming years (ibid). Another important aspect of the exercise of energy citizenship in the Swiss context is the direct proposition of and opposition to policies and projects at the cantonal and federal level - which is enabled by the decentralised character of political decision-making in the country (ibid). Notably, since 2015, energy

questions have entered the voting agenda through three federal referenda (among those, two popular initiatives) (ibid). A vivid example of citizen agency is the case of the dispute over the largest ecological thermal network in Geneva (the Genilac) which saw the local commune of Cologny and its citizens delay a controversial project (ibid).

In the case of Türkiye, notwithstanding that the EU energy acquis, including the CEP, is not applicable, the country strives to bring its energy laws and policies in line with the EU body of law (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 49). In addition, as one of the EU's most significant trading partners and an EU candidate country, Türkiye is being affected by the European Green Deal in important ways (ibid). In response to those dynamics, Türkiye has been seeking to harmonise its national legal and regulatory framework with the Green Deal, including through the implementation of a Green Deal Action Plan (ibid). While Türkiye has ratified the RED II and the ED 2019, it has not yet made respective amendments to its energy laws, including so as to legally define and regulate RECs and CECs (ibid, p. 50). This delay has detrimentally impacted the inclusiveness of the domestic energy transition, particularly in the electricity market, since, currently, collective energy production in a community or a cooperative is only possible for natural or legal persons that share a tariff group and a connection point (ibid). Regarding individual electricity generation from renewable energy sources, the law permits small-scale installations for own consumption (ibid).

3.1.1 Gender mainstreaming in energy law

As clearly demonstrated by the findings of a DIALOGUES study on energy citizenship initiatives across the eight countries[6], the energy sector is at present overwhelmingly male-dominated (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 6). In addition, the problem of a lack of diversity in the energy sector when it comes to gender has been repeatedly emphasised by multiple energy professionals who were interviewed in the framework of DIALOGUES, including experts in Germany, Türkiye, Italy and Norway (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 22). Research on gender, energy and climate change strongly supports the understanding that the gender dimension is of critical relevance to the energy transition (Veseli et al., 2022, pp. 19-20). Thus, gender should be systematically included and addressed in policy efforts aimed at encouraging energy citizenship, inter alia through gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches (ibid). Disconcertingly, there are deficiencies in the incorporation of gender-inclusive language and gender mainstreaming[7] into the CEP. Only one reference to 'gender' and 'gender equality' is to be found it the entire CEP, namely in recital 45 of the Governance Regulation which stipulates that human rights and gender aspects are to

[6] The study in question looked into the objectives and activities of 375 energy citizenship initiatives in the eight DIALOGUES countries in order to understand the extent to which these are inclusive and contribute to advancing energy justice. The research was also underpinned by an analysis of 82 semi-structured in-depth interviews among energy professionals conducted in the same countries in the framework of the project.

[7] The Council of Europe (1998, p. 15) employs the following definition of gender mainstreaming: '*the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy- making*'.

be integrated by Member States in their national energy and climate plans and long-term strategies (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 19).

The research carried out in DIALOGUES points to the conclusion that explicit gender mainstreaming in energy law is present only in the case of Austria - in the NECP and the National Climate and Energy Strategy. As next steps to undertake in the country, experts have highlighted the need to introduce gender criteria in procurement and award guidelines, increase the employment of a gender-sensitive approach in communication, and apply gender mainstreaming in law enactment and amendment (Friedl, 2020, in Veseli et al., 2022, p. 22).

In the rest of the studied countries, namely Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye and, to a large degree, Greece, explicit gender mainstreaming in energy law is yet to be implemented. For example, in Bulgaria and Italy, there is virtually no gender-sensitive language in the main national energy-related laws and strategic documents, including the NECPs (ibid, pp. 26, 38). In a similar vein, the German and Greek NECPs make no mention of gender equality and propose no gender-sensitive approaches or measures (ibid, pp. 31, 34). Overall, in Germany, there seems to be a lack of a gender-responsive energy policy at any level as well as absence of sex-disaggregated data on energy poverty (Habersbrunner and Martschew, 2020, in Veseli et al., 2022, p. 31). In Germany, the lack of gender mainstreaming in energy law and policy appears to be linked to a gap in the implementation of national-level provisions for gender mainstreaming by policy-makers in the field of energy (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 29). On a positive note, the Ministry of Environment, which is in charge of climate change adaptation, has developed a gender strategy. Nonetheless, the Ministry of Economy and Climate Protection, which is in charge of mitigation, has not yet adopted such a strategic document (ibid, p. 31). In general, energy experts in Germany report that the energy sector is unquestionably one of the most gendered industries in the country (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 28). In Greece, while some general policy commitments to promoting gender equality in energy matters have been made, for instance through the requirement for mandatory participation of women in energy communities, energy legislation and policies largely remain gender-neutral (ibid, p. 35). As a result, there is a striking underrepresentation of women in energy communities in the country (ELECTRA ENERGY, 2020, in Veseli et al., 2022, p. 36).

Concerning the non-EU states, Türkiye, Norway, and Switzerland, while all three countries have made progress towards general gender equality and gender justice, there remain significant loopholes in regard to the application of gender mainstreaming in energy law and policy. A forerunner in this field, Norway is reported to have closed more than 90% of its gender gap (Veseli et al., 2022, p. 40). However, gender mainstreaming in energy law is not explicit (ibid). The implementation of gender mainstreaming as well as the collection of gender-disaggregated data on energy-related matters are also absent in Switzerland (ibid, p. 43). In the case of Türkiye, steps have been undertaken to improve awareness at the ministerial level about the role of women in the energy sector and gender-equality issues in relation to energy topics (ibid, p. 48). Nonetheless, currently, there is no usage of gender mainstreaming approaches in energy law- and policy-making (ibid). In an in-depth interview conducted in DIALOGUES, a representative of the National Committee of Women in the Energy Sector shared that there is negative discrimination against women in the energy sector, and that the sustainability and transformation niches are ‘especially male-dominated’ (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 15). In addition, a number of participants in the Turkish Citizen

Action Lab thought that there is gender inequality in the field of energy and that the general economic disparity between men and women in Türkiye is also reflected in the energy sector.

In conclusion to the discussion about the impact of legal and regulatory frameworks on energy citizenship, it is possible to highlight several common directions for policy action. In several of the examined countries, in particular Bulgaria and Türkiye, policy-making efforts should focus on constructing an enabling legal and regulatory framework based on clear and measurable goals and objectives for individual and collective citizen participation in the energy transition (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 21). In addition, incentives, particularly financial such, and subsidies for energy communities should be provided (ibid). In nearly all of the countries, including those where a conducive legal framework largely exists, there is a need to devise improved regulatory mechanisms supporting the involvement of low-income and vulnerable households, as well as to integrate gender mainstreaming in energy law and policy. Ensuring regulatory stability is also critical as frequent legislative changes have been shown to obstruct energy citizenship initiatives (Biresseliouglu et al., 2022, p. 79). What is more, administrative hurdles clearly emerge as a factor which hinders citizen participation in the energy market and the energy transition in nearly all the countries, namely Bulgaria, Greece, Austria, Germany, Norway, and Türkiye (Biresseliouglu et al., 2022, p. 21; Shejale et al., 2022, p. 21). In fact, in both Bulgaria and Greece, cumbersome administrative procedures are a major obstacle to the establishment of energy communities, as indicated in the data gathered in the in-depth interviews with energy professionals in the two countries as well as in the Bulgarian Citizen Action Lab (ibid, p. 35). Therefore, across all these states, the administrative procedures for RES deployment ought to be simplified and transparency in policy processes ought to be enhanced.

3.2 Institutional and socio-political factors

The findings of the primary and secondary research conducted in the framework of DIALOGUES indicate that the main institutional and socio-political factors affecting the emergence, exercise and deepening of energy citizenship across the eight countries include: institutional and political support for RES deployment; political will to encourage citizen participation in the energy transition; correct political understanding of the key aspects and requirements of the energy transition; public awareness about the energy transition and RES; citizens' political stances; citizen trust in state institutions; and citizen trust in the EU institutions/Euroscepticism (applicable to the EU Member States).

Public institutions can influence the context for energy citizenship in various ways, while simultaneously being shaped by citizens through democratic and consensual mechanisms of political participation (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 12). For example, institutions can assume more participatory roles in the energy system as well as empower citizens to engage in different capacities (ibid). In most of the countries, however, there is presently a lack of institutional frameworks that enable public participation and the establishment of large-scale RECs. As already mentioned in relation to the question of decentralisation of energy governance, municipalities clearly

emerge as political actors having the potential to play a key role in encouraging local energy citizenship. Nearly all energy professionals who were interviewed in the eight countries maintain that municipalities are important facilitators of both the energy transition and citizen participation in transition-related processes (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 20). For example, the participation of local municipalities in energy cooperatives contributes to the successful implementation of larger-scale renewable energy initiatives (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 12). Analogously, the participants in the Italian and Turkish Citizen Action Labs believe that the main way to move forward with the energy transition is to increase the involvement of local government institutions.

What is more, municipalities can also help to address the issue of a low level of trust in public institutions which is another socio-political factor hampering energy citizenship endeavours in some of the countries (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 21). For example, the findings of the Turkish Citizen Action Lab indicate that the lack of trust in public institutions is a major barrier to energy citizenship in the country. In the case of Bulgaria, the low level of trust in public institutions as facilitators of certain forms of energy citizenship engagement, such as prosumerism and participation in energy communities, is in part linked to the cumbersome administrative procedures for RES deployment which were discussed in the previous subsection (3.1). Importantly, DIALOGUES research results indicate that municipalities are in a position to significantly contribute to building citizen's trust in state institutions as enablers of the energy transition (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 20).

In addition, by providing accessible and comprehensible information local municipalities can help tackle another problem which emerges as one of the primary deterrents of energy citizenship in nearly all the countries, namely citizens lacking interest, knowledge and information about the energy transition, the potential environmental and social impacts of RES, and opportunities for citizen involvement, as well as being unable to access such information (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 24). For example, in Austria, municipalities have successfully assumed the role of information disseminators and motivators of citizen participation in the national energy transition (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 20). Some Bulgarian municipalities also appear to be promising examples in this regard. Nonetheless, municipal and civil society experts who were interviewed in DIALOGUES emphasise that, as a whole, Bulgarian citizens continue to lack relevant information, for example in relation to individual and collective energy efficiency measures and pathways to prosumerism, and that one of the most effective instruments to tackle this problem would be the implementation of one-stop-shops in Bulgarian municipalities (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 22). On a more general note, in order to address the overall lack of public awareness about the energy transition which appears to be a barrier to energy citizenship across the examined countries (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, pp. 48-50), concerted efforts at all political levels are necessary. For example, country experts in Italy and Bulgaria who took part in the in-depth interviews, highlight that there is a need to educate citizens about the energy transition and that the provision of information by local authorities has to be complemented by nation-wide public information campaigns (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 48). Similarly, the participants in the Turkish Citizen Action Lab are of the view that awareness, a sense of responsibility and motivation to change behaviour should start from the bottom, while being supported by top-level initiatives and strategies.

Public institutions can also impact energy citizenship through their respective representatives and the influence the latter may have over public opinion. It has been found that politicians and the representatives of state institutions may lead local opinion in the direction of either support for or opposition to energy-related developments (Cohen et al., 2021, in Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 21). For example, the level of social acceptance of RES was positively influenced by local politicians in Switzerland, and by national and EU politicians in Italy (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 21). By contrast, in Bulgaria, negative political discursive representation of RES by several governments over the course of the past two decades has detrimentally affected public interest in and support for RES.

Another significant socio-political and institutional factor affecting the context for energy citizenship is the misconception on the part of political decision-makers in the studied countries and in Europe more generally when it comes to one of the key aspects of the energy transition - namely, the engagement of citizens in various roles and capacities and not merely as consumers. Research has found that, not only in regulation (as discussed in 3.1) but also in official political discourses about the energy transition, consumer-type participation is preferred and citizens tend to be framed primarily as 'citizens-as-consumers' (Lennon et al., 2020, in Shejale et al., 2022, p. 25; Mullally et al., 2018, in Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 35). While energy consumer is a fundamental role of energy citizenship (Lennon et al., 2020, in Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 11), this reduction of citizens to consumers obstructs other key forms of citizen engagement in the energy transition, in particular such in which citizens act in the capacity of producers and political subjects. Moreover, the findings of DIALOGUES research show that in some of the countries in focus in this report, such as Italy, there are corresponding perceptions on the part of citizens that energy issues are about economics and the market - energy being seen as a commercial commodity - and less about citizenship and participation (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, pp. 22-23). Further research is needed in order to establish whether there are correlations between citizen perceptions, on the one hand, and interpretations by decision-makers, on the other hand, of the nature of citizen participation in the energy system.

In order to address the complex socio-political factors impeding energy citizenship, both decision-makers and law-makers need to move away from a principally consumerist framing of energy citizenship and towards a more multifaceted conceptualisation of energy citizens as not only consumers but also political subjects and producers. A citizen-driven energy system would require the creation of more participatory, transparent and inclusive decision-making structures and processes (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 35). In turn, such structural transformations can only be achieved through profound political, systemic and regulatory disruptions which overturn the dominant paradigm of citizen participation as consumer-type participation (ibid). It is pivotal to foster political forms of citizen engagement which may require the building of certain skills and competences locally (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 25). Finally, as in some of the countries (e.g. Norway) policy stakeholders at the national, regional, local and EU level have been found to have different agendas and rationales, multi-level alignment of regulations, political strategies and political discourse is needed in order to foster citizen participation, particularly at the community level (Oteman et al., 2014, in Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 22).

3.3 Socio-economic factors

Socio-economic factors which strongly impact energy citizenship include economic capital, capital endowments, individual socio-economic status - often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (Oxford Reference, 2023) - geographic location (which tends to correlate with socio-economic opportunities and, respectively, with socio-economic status), and social class. It may be argued that, across the eight countries, current policy frameworks do not enable the participation in the energy transition of citizens with adverse or complicated socio-economic characteristics.

In general, economic capital which may come from income or wealth is considered in the academic literature to be of critical relevance to energy citizenship as it influences citizens' overall capabilities (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 11). This argument is supported by the research findings of several of the Citizen Action Labs implemented in DIALOGUES. For example, the participants in both the Bulgarian and the German Citizen Action Labs point out that the availability of economic capital has far-reaching implications for citizens' ability to take part in the energy transition.

More specifically, socio-economic status, in particular income and education, appears to considerably affect the forms of citizen engagement through which energy citizenship manifests externally (i.e. behaviourally as opposed to internally/psychologically). The findings of the Turkish Citizen Action Lab show that energy-saving behaviours may vary in accordance with income level, and that individuals of a lower income more frequently seek to decrease their electricity bills by conserving energy in their households. Simultaneously, energy production (e.g. in energy communities, energy cooperatives) and direct political actions (e.g. through social movements, political activism, lobbying in citizen collectives) are two forms of citizen engagement which tend to involve individuals who have a higher income (also, who are typically male and native of the country they live in) (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 5). For instance, the findings of DIALOGUES research show that the members of energy communities in Germany, Norway and Italy are typically well-off individuals (ibid, p. 18). Similarly, a representative of a professional network in the energy sector in Austria who was interviewed shared that in the country's energy sector there remain implicit prejudices and indirect discrimination against individuals of a low socio-economic status (Shejale, 2022, p. 20). That in most cases energy citizenship initiatives which engage citizens in energy generation through energy communities and energy cooperatives require the payment of a membership fee, obstructs the participation of low-income individuals and groups, including migrants, young people, and households headed by women - which are more likely to live in less favourable social and economic circumstances (Shejale, 2022, pp. 5, 18, 26; Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 20). In some of the countries, for instance in Bulgaria, older persons have also been found to constitute a social group which is generally underrepresented when it comes to the energy transition - to a large degree owing to their economically vulnerable situation. Conversely, in other countries such as Switzerland, older persons are among the principal population groups participating in citizen energy initiatives (e.g. energy cooperatives) (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 19). The findings of the German Citizen Action Lab also suggest that, in the German context, older people may have

considerable resources that enable them to take part in the energy transition, such as experience, money and social standing.

In addition to income, education is another dimension of individual socio-economic status which affects energy citizenship opportunities. On a more general level, educational and/or professional background constitute cultural capital which is linked to citizens' ability to comprehend and take part in complex social situations and to tackle collective action problems (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 11). What is more, in some of the countries, educational level comes to have an immediate effect on citizens' opportunities for collective engagement in the energy transition as it is among the criteria for participation in energy communities. For example, in Germany, the requirement of an advanced degree has been found to be a factor impeding female involvement in energy communities (Shejale, 2022, p. 19). According to energy professionals who took part in the in-depth interviews conducted in DIALOGUES, energy cooperatives in Switzerland are still reserved for well-educated individuals (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 19).

As a result of such dynamics, individuals and groups who are economically vulnerable and have a lower level of education remain underrepresented and are mainly confined to exercising their energy citizenship through energy consumption, for instance by being involved in energy conservation initiatives and information and awareness-raising campaigns (ibid). For example, out of the 124 initiatives reviewed in the framework of DIALOGUES which involved any underrepresented groups in their activities, 86% focused on consumption (ibid, p. 22). Thus, socio-economic status and other individual-level factors that relate to categories of inclusion and exclusion, taken together with the structural forces which create the context in which these individual-level factors operate, come to shape the very roles in which individuals engage as energy citizens. Underrepresented groups tend to be considered and involved primarily in their capacity as consumers and their agency as political subjects and potential producers is generally disregarded (ibid). An example in this respect would be the construction of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure in the vicinity of the dwelling places of economically deprived communities and the systematic non-representation of those communities in the respective decision-making processes (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 10).

It is important to note that even in the context of initiatives which view citizens primarily as consumers, underrepresented groups may often be left out owing to the effects of certain economic and socio-economic factors. For instance, there is an array of initiatives aimed at influencing energy consumption through activities such as information/awareness-raising campaigns and behavioural incentives to increase energy efficiency and promote the uptake of new energy-efficient technologies and retrofits (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 22). However, such initiatives - as well as the forms of energy citizenship engagement they seek to foster - are underpinned by assumptions about ownership (of land, dwellings, buildings, transport vehicles, etc.) and as a result may overlook and leave out low-income individuals and households (ibid). An illustration of this problem would be the cross-national initiative TOPTEN ACT aiming to promote energy-efficient household appliances and products among consumers, retailers and manufacturers by devising a market strategy (ibid). This undertaking appears to be unable to reach citizens who do not have sufficient financial resources to invest in such goods (ibid).

Therefore, it is critical for policy stakeholders to consider ways to encourage the participation of economically vulnerable individuals in energy transition processes, including by constructing policy frameworks that enable the participation of citizens with adverse or complicated socio-economic characteristics. Policy-makers ought to foster the involvement of citizens, first, as consumers, through distributive justice tools and strategies, such as having well-off households partially subsidise the engagement of underprivileged households, and second, as political agents, through mechanisms of recognitional and procedural justice and the building of relevant knowledge and skills, particularly at the local level (ibid). In some of the countries, such as Italy and Bulgaria, there is also a pronounced need to increase the availability of financing mechanisms for RES in order to relieve citizens of direct investment (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 18). Experts stress that it is paramount to accord priority to the economically vulnerable in the introduction of such mechanisms (ibid).

As a way of concluding the analysis of the relevance of economic and socio-economic factors for energy citizenship, it would be worthwhile to highlight that the reverse phenomenon of low income hampering citizen participation in the energy transition may also exist. The findings of DIALOGUES research suggest that affluence could also be correlated with a low level of engagement in energy transition processes (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 23). Thus, it may be the case that more affluent individuals could also be rightfully considered ‘hard-to-reach’ which is disconcerting given that overconsumption in their respective households is a common phenomenon (ibid).

3.4 Socio-cultural factors

When it comes to the socio-cultural factors affecting energy citizenship, the findings of the multiple studies carried out in DIALOGUES primarily provide data and insights about the effects of certain socio-cultural factors on the exercise of energy citizenship by specific protected groups such as women, migrants, and ethnic minorities. Research results about socio-cultural factors that operate at the wider societal level are more limited. Social trust and community consciousness have been found to be such general factors impacting participation in collective forms of citizen engagement in the energy transition. Individual environmental sensitivity and a pro-environmental attitude also appear to be of relevance to energy citizenship.

Among the main socio-cultural elements influencing the emergence and exercise of energy citizenship by protected groups are social norms, social marginalisation, and cultural and linguistic differences. Those factors to some extent also explain the underrepresentation of such groups in energy transition processes in several of the investigated countries. Social norms, for example such that are linked to stereotypisation and the attribution of social roles in relation to particular social characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc.), have a fundamental impact on the participation of certain groups in the energy transition. What is more, social marginalisation is a major barrier to energy citizenship engagement on the part of the affected groups, especially when marginalisation has deep historical roots and is thus related to continued non-recognition. DIALOGUES research on energy justice has shown that social groups which have been historically marginalised and/or excluded are underrepresented and sidelined in present-day energy transitions (Shejale et al.,

2022, p. 10). Among the most serious aspects of this problem is low involvement and representation in decision-making and knowledge creation, as well as in the corresponding places of power and influence where these processes take place (Walker & Day, 2012, in Shejale et al., 2022, p. 11).

A disconcerting example in this regard is the systemic restriction by gender-related social norms of the opportunities of women to take part in decision-making when it comes to the energy market, energy governance and energy-related processes at all levels (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2017, in Shejale et al. 2022, p. 9). The underrepresentation of women in the making of decisions is particularly pronounced at the national and global level (Gender CC, 2022, in Shejale et al. 2022, p. 10). On a more positive note, the findings of DIALOGUES research, while clearly supporting the observation that the energy sector is still male-dominated across the eight countries, also indicate certain promising developments (Biresselioglu et. al, 27; Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 52). Energy experts in Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Greece who took part in the in-depth interviews conducted in DIALOGUES note that they have been witnessing transformations in their respective organisations towards greater gender equality and gender inclusivity (Biresselioglu et. al, 27). Nevertheless, such processes seem to be unfolding slowly, particularly when it comes to closing gender gaps in senior leadership (ibid).

Another relevant illustration of social norms, including such related to stereotypisation, negatively affecting the energy citizenship opportunities available to certain social groups would be the case of ethnic minorities. In many of the countries in focus in this report, ethnic minorities face major structural barriers to exercising their energy citizenship. For instance, the social marginalisation of the Roma minority in Bulgaria is linked to issues of economic deprivation, low level of education, and administrative impediments which in turn hinder the engagement and participation of individuals of a Roma background as energy citizens (Shejale et al. 2022, p. 15). Young people are another group which is not adequately represented in the energy transition in several of the countries, including Türkiye and Germany, due to various influences, in particular socio-cultural and socio-economic factors. For example, in Germany, the CEO of a digital platform for energy citizenship projects who was interviewed stated that young people are one of the two groups (the other being women) who are most discriminated against when it comes to the sustainable energy transition (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 22). This observation is also supported by the data collected in one of the three focus groups implemented in the context of the German Citizen Action Lab.

A migrant status may also be associated with limited opportunities to exercise energy citizenship[8] through certain forms of engagement such as energy production and direct political actions at the individual and collective level (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 5). Barriers related to language and cultural differences in many cases obstruct such forms of participation by non-citizens (ibid). For example, data from the in-depth interviews with energy professionals reveal that, in both Germany and Austria, immigrants do not feel considered in the energy transition and do not understand relevant concepts, such as prosumerism and energy communities (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 18). In the German

[8] It is important to note that the conceptual and normative understanding of energy citizenship in DIALOGUES is that energy citizenship should not be limited to the legal status of citizenship of a particular state (Shejale et al., 2022, pp. 11-12). Therefore, migrants should be seen as having certain rights to exercising energy citizenship in the state where they currently live.

context, the need to more effectively reach out to and engage migrant populations in energy initiatives and campaigns has been strongly emphasised by a number of participants in the German Citizen Action Lab as well as several energy professionals who were interviewed (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 26). In regard to energy communities, a narrow legal or political interpretation of the 'local' character of energy communities in terms of country or place of origin has in effect justified the exclusion of migrants and ethnic minorities from such initiatives (Biresseliouglu et al. 2022, p. 18; Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, pp. 20, 36).

Concerning the inclusivity and diversity of energy communities more generally, DIALOGUES research on energy citizenship initiatives shows that many energy communities struggle when it comes to inclusivity and that some may even be focused singularly on collective action for investment in RES, rather than on involving underrepresented or hard-to-reach groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, migrants and young people (Shejale et al., 2022, pp. 4-5; Nielsen et al., 2021, in Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 36). For instance, only 33%, or 124, of the total of 375 energy citizenship initiatives which were reviewed involved any underrepresented or hard-to-reach groups in their activities (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 22). It should be noted that energy citizenship initiatives increasingly acknowledge young people and, to a certain extent, women as underrepresented groups (ibid, pp. 4, 16). Some good examples are the initiatives Klimaschutz in unserer Hand in Germany, the C3E International Initiative in Austria, WenCoop in Greece, Turkish Women in Renewable Energy and Energy Sector (TWRE) in Türkiye, and EnergyMeasures in Bulgaria. Nonetheless, overall, energy citizenship initiatives continue to heavily underrecognise ethnic minorities, migrants and other population groups (ibid, p. 4). For instance, staggeringly few (only four) out of the total of 375 energy citizenship initiatives analysed in DIALOGUES have involved migrants in meaningful ways (ibid, p. 19).

Insufficient inclusivity also tends to be observable in initiatives aimed at engaging citizens in decision-making processes related to energy policies (ibid, p. 20). In the case of both initiatives for direct citizen political action and energy communities, lack of inclusivity is oftentimes linked to the assumption of a 'blind' approach to protected social characteristics which ignores and may in effect reinforce disparities and discrimination. As a result, such initiatives have helped to augment the voices of citizens who are already well-represented in energy law- and policy-making but have made little contribution to addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and engaging them in such processes (ibid). An example of this issue would be the case of an overarching network for energy citizenship which has been established in Germany with the goal of fostering the creation of a framework of enabling conditions for RES through collectivisation of the voices of the network's members (ibid).

According to the research participants in several of the Citizen Action Labs, such as the Turkish Citizen Action Lab, and the in-depth interviews with energy professionals, the involvement of all segments of society, gender equality and fair representation of vulnerable groups are prerequisites for a just energy transition. Policy-making efforts should therefore be directed at remedying the implications for energy citizenship of social stereotypisation and social marginalisation and should focus on, inter alia, putting in place mechanisms of inclusion which allow various groups and communities to participate in energy transition processes. Such mechanisms ought to include the mobilisation of local knowledge, full information disclosure, and representation in state institutions, industry and other relevant entities (Jenkins et al., 2016, in Shejale et al.,

2022, p. 10). In addition, it would be important to consider the use of restorative justice approaches that involve the remediation of past claims of energy injustice and help overcome systemic non-recognition of certain historically marginalised groups (Lacey-Barnacle, 2020, in Shejale et al., 2022, p. 11).

Cultural mediation and the empowerment of specific communities through community leaders appear to be other promising approaches to use as a way of accessing and engaging underrepresented and hard-to-reach groups. There are good examples of endeavours which rely on cultural mediation, such as the translation of content and the involvement of community members as gatekeepers (ibid, p. 22). In Bulgaria, the Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty (STEP) initiative seeks to reach out to marginalised Roma communities by actively involving representatives of the Roma minority in related activities (ibid). In the case of Germany, there are a number of initiatives which aim to facilitate the participation in the national energy transition of ethnic minorities through the translation of relevant information into Turkish and Arabic (ibid, p. 23).

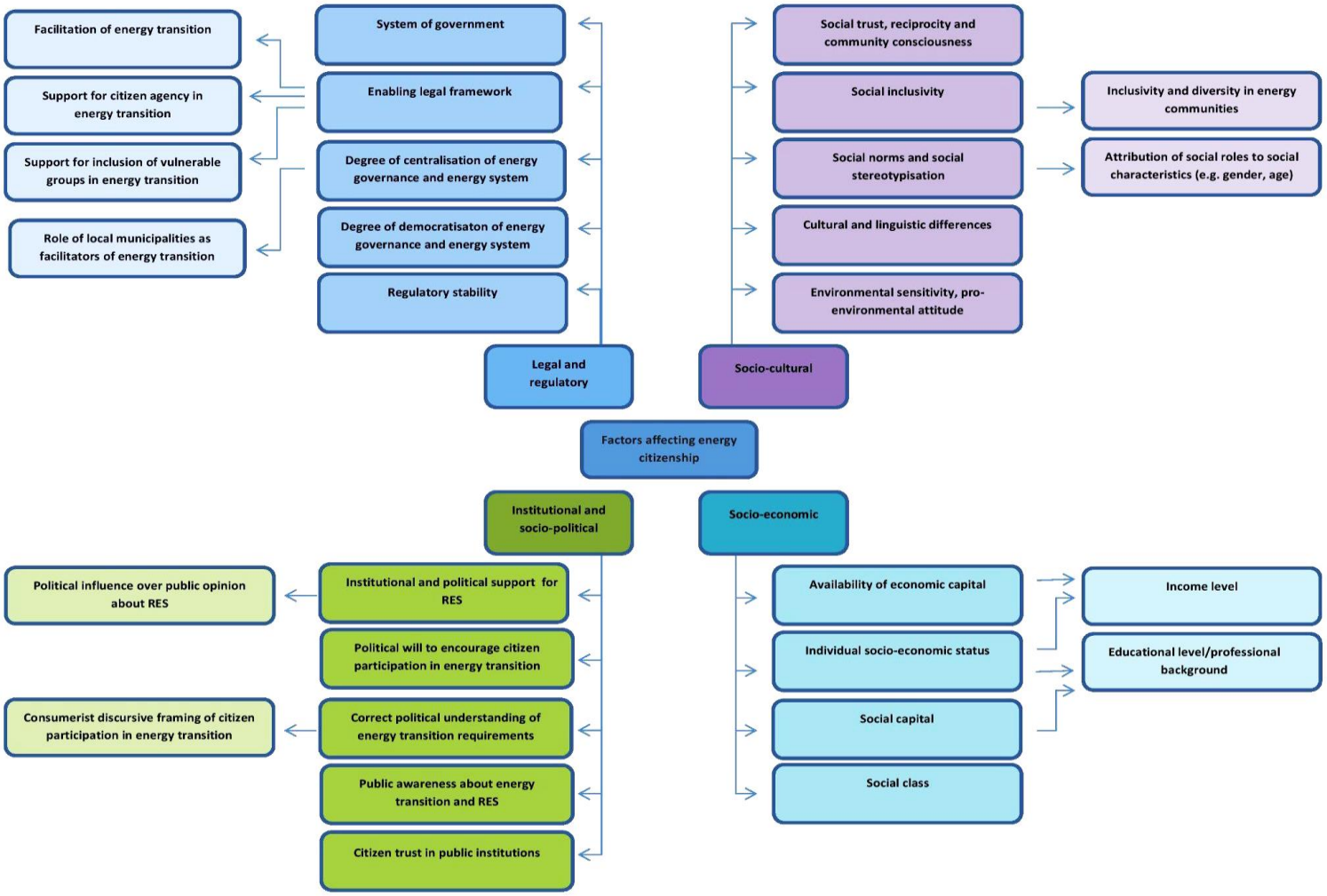
Enhanced inclusion of underrepresented groups in energy communities, in particular, is paramount to achieving a just energy transition (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 20). Successful practices aimed at making energy communities more inclusive are the extension of the membership of energy communities to the cohabiting members of the family (women, children, youth) in Italy, and the provision of trainings to female technicians at energy manufacturing companies on topics such as RES, energy finance and circular economy in Germany (Shejale et al., 2022, p. 19). The power of such positive examples should be harnessed through improved communication and awareness-raising. When it comes to working towards gender equality in the energy sector, there needs to be increased reliance on and visibility of female role models (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 29).

Concerning the more general socio-cultural factors affecting energy citizenship at the wider societal level, social trust, reciprocity and community consciousness appear to be of critical relevance. For example, in Switzerland, energy experts who were interviewed in the framework of DIALOGUES contend that the wish to support the members of one's community is among the main motivations behind citizen participation in energy cooperatives (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p. 48). However, in other of the examined countries, there is an unpopularity of community-oriented motives, as well as of environmental motives, which in effect hinders collective forms of citizen engagement in the energy transition (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 22). In Bulgaria, for instance, a number of civil society experts who participated in the in-depth interviews underscore that community consciousness - an enabling condition for energy communities and collective political action - remains rather underdeveloped among Bulgarians.

Environmental sensitivity and a pro-environmental attitude also emerge as relevant to energy citizenship in all of the eight countries. However, the findings of the DIALOGUES studies are somewhat inconclusive as to the extent and ways in which such aspects are correlated with deeper energy citizenship. It may be generally observed that weak environmental motives seem to be a barrier to energy citizenship (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 22). At the same time, the implications of environmental sensitivity for citizen participation in the energy transition tend to vary in the different countries. For example, in Switzerland, environmental reasons are a major motivation behind citizen participation in energy cooperatives (Rodríguez-Chávez et al., 2022, p.

48). Nonetheless, in Türkiye, energy experts contend that environmental sensitivity is not a primary driver of positive energy behaviours, such as energy-saving (Biresselioglu et al., 2022, p. 22). In a similar vein, in the case of Bulgaria, the results of the Bulgarian Citizen Action Lab reveal that for the majority of the participants in the lab an environmental attitude did not strongly correlate with engagement with energy-related topics and in the energy transition.

Figure 1: Main groups of factors affecting the emergence, exercise and deepening of energy citizenship



4 Conclusion

The present report has analysed several main groups of factors impacting the emergence, exercise and deepening of energy citizenship, namely: legal and regulatory framework(s); gender-related factors; institutional and socio-political factors; socio-economic factors; and socio-cultural factors. It has looked into the effects of those factors and their relative importance in the eight DIALOGUES countries - Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and Türkiye. Among the major hindrances to citizen engagement in energy transition processes across these countries are legal, regulatory and administrative barriers, absence of institutional frameworks to enable citizen participation, low level of public interest and awareness about energy transition-related issues, and limited mandates and capacity of local government institutions to support citizen engagement. Addressing such barriers should be a priority for policy stakeholders at all levels of government.

The analysis has closely considered the influence of the different factors on specific socio-economic groups and protected groups, such as women, economically vulnerable individuals and households, older persons, ethnic minorities, migrants, young people, and persons with disabilities. It has found that these various groups experience different contexts for energy citizenship. The exercise of energy citizenship on the part of some of these groups is obstructed by socio-political, legal, socio-economic, socio-cultural and other factors. Owing to the effects of those factors and the absence of supportive institutional and policy frameworks, these groups are in many cases underrepresented and hard-to-reach when it comes to the energy transition. For instance, factors which relate to categories of inclusion and exclusion may significantly affect the particular forms of citizen engagement through which the members of those groups exercise their energy citizenship. Underrepresented groups are mainly confined to exercising their energy citizenship through energy consumption, for example by being involved in energy conservation initiatives and informational and awareness-raising campaigns.

To conclude, it is critical for policy stakeholders to put in place mechanisms of inclusion which allow various groups and communities to participate in energy transition processes. With enabling institutional and policy frameworks in place, energy citizenship has the potential to become a pathway to overcoming vulnerabilities (e.g. increasing income), strengthening social justice, equality and non-discrimination, fostering citizen participation and enhancing democracies.

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