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Aggregated Results Report Task 2.3 “Citizen Engagement and Transnational Collaboration Potential”

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Content

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1. Introduction

1.1 The CommitClimate Project

Municipality profit from active citizen participation when developing and implementing local energy action plnas, as the success of initiatives like public transport or renewable energy depends on the community's willingness to engage. Beyond this, elected politicians represent the will of the people, and any climate action plan should respect and reflect citizens' interests to truly succeed. While data on CO2 emissions can often seem abstract and disconnected from everyday life, the reality of climate change is keenly felt by citizens within the program areas. The impacts of political actions aimed at mitigation and adaptation are tangible and directly affect communities. It is crucial for citizens to be well-informed about energy use within their local authorities. Understanding the scenarios that underpin political decisions and recognizing how changes in individual behavior can influence these scenarios are essential steps toward meaningful engagement.

In the project CommitClimate, local authorities develop, test and deploy a computer-based simulation model to create sustainable energy and climate action plans. By providing citizens with clear, accessible information and involving them in the decision-making process, the CommitClimate project aims to bridge the gap between abstract data and real-world impacts. This approach not only enhances transparency but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. This collaborative effort ensures that the transition to sustainable energy is inclusive, effective, and reflective of the community's needs and aspirations.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This document is an aggregated result report after implementation of the Citizen Engagement task in the CommitClimate project. It focusses on the critical aspect of citizen engagement in local energy and climate planning as well as on analyzing the transnational potential of collaboration supported by the tool.

This report is designed to provide insights and actionable information for project partners, policymakers, municipalities, and tool developers. By addressing the needs and interests of these key stakeholders, the deliverable aims to foster collaboration, inform decision-making, and guide the development of tools and strategies that support sustainable energy transitions at the local level.

2. Methodology of the Citizen Engagement Task

2.1 Content and Design of the Citizen Engagement Task

The implementation of Task 2.3 – Citizen Engagement in Energy and Climate Planning – was designed to empower citizens as active contributors to local sustainable energy and climate strategies. The approach was developed to ensure both consistency and local adaptation across participating countries. It combined structured guidance, practical implementation tools, and transnational exchange to test and refine the CommitClimate Simulator and its behavior module with real users in municipal contexts.

Overall Design and Coordination

Lapplands Kommunalförbund (LKF) as task leader coordinated the task implementation in close collaboration with the project Lead Partner Riga Technical University (RTU). To facilitate a harmonized rollout of citizen engagement activities across partner countries, LKF provided a Task Planning Package, including:

- A Task 2.3 Infographic summarizing planned activities for quick partner reference
- A detailed Gantt Chart with implementation phases and milestones
- An Implementation Plan Presentation, delivered during the project partner progress meeting on 11 February 2025

This ensured a clear shared understanding of the task's purpose, timeline, and deliverables among all participating partner.

Citizen Workshop Design and Implementation

The core local activity of Task 2.3 consisted of citizen workshops, designed to introduce citizens to the CommitClimate Simulator and the Carbon Footsprint Calculator for individuals. This activity aims at facilitating understanding of local energy use and climate policies and empower citizens to become an active part of energy transition plans on local level. In the context of the project, the workshops served also to gather feedback for tool improvement. To support local partners, LKF developed Citizen Workshop Implementation Materials, which included:

- A printable Citizen Workshop Engagement Poster (2 versions) for outreach
- A Workshop Design Proposal to support local implementation and tailoring to local conditions
- A Feedback Form for evaluating citizen responses

A total of seven citizen workshops were implemented, engaging 126 participants across four countries. Workshops combined presentations, guided tool walkthroughs, and structured group discussions. They were delivered both in-person (Sweden, Latvia, Estonia) and online (Poland), allowing flexibility and accessibility for participants. Feedback from all citizen workshops was collected using standardized forms and summary templates. This input was analyzed to assess:

- User experience with the CommitClimate Simulator and behavior module
- Clarity of data and scenarios presented
- Empowerment impact on citizen understanding of local climate policies

Outreach Campaigns and Communication

Citizen engagement was supported by a Facebook outreach campaign, which consisted of 31 posts tailored to citizens during the project period, reaching over 5,100 views. Beyond, local outreach activities managed by local partner to ensure regional relevance and inclusivity.

Transnational Workshops and Online Dialogue

To enhance transnational learning and cross-municipal dialogue, LKF led the design and delivery of four international online workshops, each hosted by a different project country. These workshops created space for municipal staff, and experts to exchange experiences, best practices, and reflections on citizen engagement in climate action.

Themes and Dates of Transnational Workshops:

- 13 February 2025 – Local Renewable Energy Production and Energy Communities
- 19 February 2025 – Sustainable Transport Solutions for Citizens
- 6 March 2025 – Energy Efficiency for Households and Communities
- 25 March 2025 – Circular Economy Beyond Recycling

Each event featured speakers from municipalities and experts / research institutions across Europe. All presentations were recorded and made accessible to project partners.

3. Citizen Workshops Results

3.1 Overall Summary Workshop Design and Participation

7 Citizen Workshops have been implemented with a total of 126 people participating. In all countries, the CommitClimate Footprint Calculator has been tested in Citizen Workshops, while the CommitClimate SEAP Simulator has been presented and partially tested in Sweden, Poland and Latvia. Both presentations and different types of group discussions have been used in the workshops. Workshops have been held both online (Poland) and in physical meetings (Sweden, Latvia, Estonia). Both municipal staff (Poland, Latvia), citizens (Poland, Latvia, Sweden) and Academia (Estonia) have tested the tools.

	Latvia	**Estonia**	**Sweden**	**Poland**
Format	In-person	In-person	In-person	Online workshop with interactive elements
Target Group	Citizens, municipal employees, policymakers	Citizens / Academia	Citizens	Citizens, municipal representatives, PNEC staff
Participants	29 (Citizen: 13; Municpal Staff: 16)	13	30	44 (Citizen: 29; Municipal Staff 12; PNEC staff: 3)
Tools Used	CommitClimate Simulator & Footprint Calculator	CommitClimate Simulator	CommitClimate Simulator & Footprint Calculator	CommitClimate Simulator & Footprint Calculator
Key Topics	Energy management, independence and energy communities; climate action planning	Personal footprint, sector-specific discussion (esp. transport)	Building vs. transport CO_2 reduction strategies	Local climate initiatives, tool demonstrations

3.2 Citizen Workshops Key Findings

Citizen perspective:

The workshops across all participating countries demonstrated a strong positive impact on participants' understanding of local energy and climate policies, with Latvia and Poland reaching 100% agreement, Sweden at 80.5%, and Estonia at 70%. The tools also effectively increased participants' awareness of how personal choices influence CO_2 emissions, with particularly high results in Latvia (92%), Poland (83%), and Sweden (82.5%), while Estonia showed room for improvement at 70%. In terms of empowerment to engage with municipalities on climate issues, Estonia reported the highest impact at 90%, followed by Poland and Latvia at 66%, and Sweden at 65%. These results indicate that the combination of practical tools and participatory workshops can successfully enhance understanding, promote individual responsibility, and foster civic engagement in energy and climate action across different national contexts.

What percentage of citizens felt their understanding of the municipality's energy and climate policies improved:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Do not agree
Latvia	75%	25%		
Sweden	62%	18,5		19,5
Poland	100%			
Estonia	70		30	

What percentage of citizens felt empowered to engage with the municipality after using the tool?

	Yes, definitely	Somewhat	Neutral	Not really
Latvia	33%	33%	25%	8%
Sweden	65%		35%	
Poland	66%		33%	
Estonia	60	30	10	

What percentage of citizens felt that the tools helped to understand how personal choices impact CO2 emissions in their municipality?

	Yes	Agree/Somewhat	Neutral	Not really
Latvia	67%	25%	8	0
Sweden	82,5		17,5	
Poland	52%	31%	17%	
Estonia	20	50	20	

Valuable Aspects Identified by Citizens

Latvia

- Participants showed strong interest in establishing energy communities as a way to share green energy and support household energy needs.
- There was a clear demand for accessible, simple, and consolidated information on energy topics and recent policy changes, including the functioning of energy communities.
- Energy efficiency was a key concern, with participants asking for practical, actionable advice to reduce energy consumption and household costs, while improving comfort.
- Energy communities were seen as a promising solution, but citizens emphasized they should be open, fair, and sustainable.

- Local, relatable examples were considered essential for understanding complex topics.

Sweden

- The workshops improved participants' understanding of CO_2 emissions at both individual and community levels, especially the distinction between final energy use reductions and actual GHG reductions, depending on CO_2 emission factors.
- Participants gained insight into the cumulative effect of individual and collective climate measures.
- The simulators successfully sparked valuable discussions on priorities for local climate action.

Poland

- Citizens valued the workshop as a platform to express opinions, propose changes, and engage in dialogue.
- The sessions provided an opportunity to explore practical tools for both municipalities and individuals, enabling participants to simulate behavioral changes and assess their climate impact.

Estonia

- Participants gained new perspectives on their personal CO_2 footprint and the influence of daily choices on emissions.
- The simulator was perceived as an effective, user-friendly tool for individuals motivated to contribute to environmental protection.
- Discussions focused on practical ways to reduce environmental footprints, track progress, and encourage personal responsibility.

Suggested Improvements from Citizens

Latvia

- Future activities should combine energy topics with entertainment or social events to attract broader audiences and enhance engagement.
- Events should not be limited to Cēsis; rural areas and smaller towns should also be included, recognizing that energy challenges affect all communities.
- Participants requested more practical, hands-on information over theoretical presentations, particularly regarding energy efficiency, household self-sufficiency, and sustainable building practices.
- Clear, accessible communication is essential. Citizens want municipalities to provide regular updates, local examples, and plain-language explanations of new technologies and policies.
- Seminars should continue, ideally held within communities at convenient times and locations, with mechanisms for ongoing feedback.
- Municipalities were encouraged to make eco-friendly choices easier and more attractive, including incentives for sustainable behaviors.

Sweden

- Combine workshops with applied energy counselling, for example, providing practical advice on home insulation.
- Translate the simulator into Swedish to increase accessibility.
- Allocate more time for workshops to allow participants to fully explore the simulator, and enhance the tool's usability to simplify engagement.

Poland

- Increase participant engagement through interactive workshop formats.
- Improve public outreach and awareness about such events.
- Organize more direct, in-person meetings with residents to strengthen local dialogue and participation.

Estonia

- Overall feedback was very positive, some participants requested a faster-paced workshop structure.
- Future events should engage a more diverse range of participants, especially individuals not professionally connected to climate or energy topics.
- Expand the reach of workshops to additional groups to maximize impact and inclusivity.

Municipal perspective

Municipal staff participated in the workshops conducted in Latvia and Poland, providing valuable insight into the effectiveness of the tools for communication and citizen engagement.

In Poland, the tool was widely regarded as effective for explaining complex climate issues to citizens, with 92% of municipal staff agreeing and only 8% remaining neutral. Additionally, 84% of staff believed the tool is useful for engaging citizens in local energy planning, with the remaining 16% expressing a neutral stance. In Latvia, 43% of municipal staff considered the tool effective for communicating climate topics, 29% remained neutral, and another 29% did not find it effective. Regarding its usefulness for promoting citizen engagement in local energy plans, 29% agreed, 43% considered it somewhat useful, and 29% were neutral.

These results highlight that while the tool shows strong potential for supporting municipal communication and public engagement in some contexts, further adaptation or complementary activities may be needed to increase its effectiveness, particularly in Latvia.

Future use intentions and suggestions for enhancement and technical usability

The majority of municipal staff in both Poland and Latvia expressed a willingness to continue using the CO_2 Simulator in the future, though with varying levels of certainty. In Poland, 92% of respondents indicated they are likely to use the tool again, reflecting high overall satisfaction. In contrast, future use intention in Latvia was more cautious, with 57% stating they are likely to use the tool, while 29% remained neutral and 14% were unlikely to continue its use. This suggests that, although the tool is considered promising, further improvements—particularly regarding technical usability and local relevance—are needed to strengthen its acceptance and practical application in Latvia.

Technical Usability & Challenges

	Poland	Latvia
Overall Ease of Use	7% very easy, 66% easy, 22% neutral, 5% difficult	82% easy, 18% neutral
Common Technical Issues	Data input difficulties, understanding scenarios, navigating between sections	Data input (29%), confusing instructions (14%), navigation issues (7%), slow loading/crashes (7%), access issues (7%)
Interface & Guidance	7% very intuitive, 88% somewhat intuitive, 5% neutral	25% very intuitive, 50% somewhat intuitive, 19% neutral, 6% not intuitive

Clarity of Instructions	88% easy to understand, 7% neutral, 5% not easy	Not specifically indicated, but confusion reported by 14%
Technical Glitches	27% experienced glitches, 73% reported no issues	71% experienced problems, 24% occasionally, 6% no issues

Enhancement proposal Poland
Municipal employees suggested several ways to improve the CO_2 Simulator:

- Integration of more detailed, real-time local data.
- Addition of collaboration tools to share best practices and track progress between municipalities.
- Providing clearer instructions, especially for first-time users.

Enhancement proposal Latvia
Latvian staff emphasized the need for:

- Further testing to improve recommendations for citizen engagement.
- Stronger municipal regulations and supportive environments to enhance the tool's effectiveness.
- Inclusion of digital CO_2 footprint calculations to provide a more complete environmental impact assessment.

3.3 Take Aways from Citizen Workshops

Across all countries, the workshops successfully enhanced participants' understanding of climate challenges and personal CO_2 footprints. The workshops also provided space for open dialogue, empowering citizens to engage more actively in local climate action, with Estonia and Poland showing especially high levels of empowerment to engage with municipalities (up to 90% and 66% respectively). Citizens are not only willing to act, but eager to do so, if municipalities provide clear, inclusive, and practical support. These workshops confirm that citizen engagement is not only possible, but essential for the success of local sustainable energy and climate action plans.

Participants widely appreciated the interactive format, practical tools, and opportunities to discuss tangible solutions at both personal and community levels. Interest in energy efficiency, sustainable transport, and energy communities emerged as recurring themes across countries. Tailored approaches considering local conditions, clearer guidance, and enhanced user-friendliness will be essential for maximizing the tools' contribution to municipal climate action and citizen participation.

In some respects, results varied significantly in terms of perceptions and technical usability:

- Participants in Poland demonstrated high satisfaction among both citizens and municipal staff, with 92% of municipal employees finding the tool effective for communicating complex issues and 84% seeing its potential to engage citizens. Future use intention was equally high at 92%.
- In Latvia, citizen interest in energy communities and local energy efficiency was strong. The municipal feedback highlighted the need for further testing, improved communication, and additional features such as the integration of digital CO_2 footprints. A considerably lower percentage than in Poland of 43% of municipal staff found the tool effective for communication, and 57% indicated likely future use.
- Participants in Estonia, mainly coming from an Academia context, highlighted the tool's potential as an awareness-raising instrument, particularly for students and individuals unfamiliar with climate topics, but results showed room for improvement in connecting personal choices to community-level impact.

- In Sweden, the workshops showcased significant improvement in citizens' understanding of emissions and community-level climate action but pointed to technical improvements needed for the Simulator and stressed the idea of offering applied energy counselling alongside workshops like citizen's proposals for improvement in Latvia.

While the generals ease of use was rated positively, technical glitches still occurred. Common challenges across countries included difficulties with data input, navigation, and understanding scenarios—particularly among first-time users. Clearer instructions and more intuitive interfaces were consistently recommended for improvement.

4. Transnational Stakeholder Workshops

To enhance transnational learning and cross-municipal dialogue, LKF led the design and delivery of four international online workshops. These workshops created space for municipal staff, and experts to exchange experiences, best practices, and reflections on citizen engagement in climate action. Each event featured speakers from municipalities and experts / research institutions across Europe. All presentations were recorded and made accessible to project partners. Presentations have been recorded and made available to all partner and speakers:

4.1 Overall Summary Design

The cross-border exchange allowed municipalities to learn from each other's experiences, fostering the transfer of practical, scalable solutions. Workshop focused on the importance of involving citizens not just as passive recipients of policies but as active contributors in renewable energy, transport, energy efficiency, and circular economy initiatives. Case studies from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Belgium showed the critical role of local authorities in facilitating behavioural change, creating supportive frameworks, and implementing innovative projects.

13th of February: Local renewable energy production: opportunities, threats and the role of energy communities.

- LKF: Welcome, introduce the topic, objectives, and agenda.
- RTU: Welcome, introduction to CommitClimate and importance of Citizen Engagement
- Izabela Kuśnierz, Project Manager in Association of Municipalities Polish Network Energie Cités: Paving the Way for Local Renewable Energies through Citizen Engagement: Best Practice Examples
- Marcin Łojek: Energy transition & Citizen Engagement in Palecznica Municipality

19th of February: Local solutions for sustainable transport: electric cars, cycling and walking

- LKF: Welcome, introduce the topic, objectives, and agenda.
- RTU: CommitClimate, SEAPS and citizen engagement: Two different types of Simulator = individual choices vs public authority energy and land-use planning tool
- Raimond Tamm, Deputy Major of Tartu City Government: Sustainable Transport and Citizen Engagement in the City of Tartu
- Veerle De Meyer, Mechelen municipality, Belgium: SPOTLOG project (Green and Socially resPOnsible ciTy Logistics InnovaTions)

6th of March: Energy efficiency solutions for private citizens and communities

- LKF: Welcome, introduce the topic, objectives, and agenda.
- RTU: The CommitClimate Story: Simulator for Energy Efficiency
- Talis Linkaits, Riga Energy Agency: Empowering Youth for Energy Efficiency: Climate Days and Energy Detective Initiative in the Schools of Riga
- Targo Kalamees, nZEB Research Group, Tallinn University of Technology: Neighbourhood based & Prefabricated Renovation Projects in Estonia

25th of March: Municipality: More than recycling: true circular economy solutions

- LKF: Welcome, introduce the topic, objectives, and agenda.
- RTU: Introduction into the CommitClimate project and Circular Economy
- Daina Tērauda, Life Waste to Resources project Cēsis Municipality: Circular economy initiatives in Cēsis Municipality
- Mrs Ilvija Asmane, LAG Aizkraukle District Partnership: LEADER international cooperation project Circular Economy in Countryside. Global Eco – Inno Eco
- Professor Andra Blumberga, Riga Technical University: CircleUp: 100 Households, 100 Circular Stories: Inspiring Sustainable Living in Europe

4.2 Take Aways from the Transnational Workshops

Across the project area, a clear pattern emerged: local authorities face strikingly similar challenges when it comes to mobilizing citizen engagement for successful, democratic, and effective local energy and climate planning. While structural, cultural, and political differences exist between countries, the barriers to citizen engagement are remarkably aligned:

- Gaps in knowledge between decision-makers and citizens
- Lack of ownership or daily responsibility over energy decisions in public buildings
- Perceived complexity of energy and climate solutions
- Citizens feeling disconnected from abstract sustainability targets

However, the diversity of examples from different countries also illustrates a valuable potential for transnational collaboration, where shared experiences and tested approaches can accelerate collective progress. The workshops revealed that overcoming these challenges is possible when local authorities lead by example, empower citizens, and design engagement efforts around real-life issues.

5. Transnational Analysis and Collaboration Potential

Citizen workshops: Practical Lessons with Transnational Relevance

Several cross-cutting suggestions emerged to enhance future workshops and tool effectiveness:

- Combine technical tools with practical, applied advice, e.g. around household energy efficiency and transport.
- Expand outreach beyond urban centres to engage smaller rural communities as well.
- Translate tools and materials into local languages to ensure accessibility.
- Strengthen municipal communication efforts with clear, relatable examples.
- Foster more diverse participation, targeting groups beyond those already engaged in climate discussions.
- Enhance the Simulator with real-time local data and collaborative functions for municipalities.

Transnational Stakeholder Workshops: Practical Lessons with Transnational Relevance

1. Local Authorities as Leaders of Change

Municipalities like Palecznica (Poland) show how authorities can lead by implementing visible and tangible measures, such as upgrading inefficient fossil-fuel systems in public buildings to smart, renewable energy solutions, including heat pumps and PV systems. This demonstrates that climate action starts at home—municipal leadership can build credibility and inspire replication across borders.

2. Empowering Citizens with Knowledge and Tools

From citizen-targeted programs in Cesis, Latvia (e.g. composting workshops) and Estonia (neighborhood based renovation programmes), direct support structures help individuals take action. Similarly, Riga's "School Climate Days" and "Energy Detectives" provide existing eco-movements within schools with practical knowledge and simple tools. By that, citizen can play an important role in local energy transition within their communities. These initiatives can be adapted and shared across countries to accelerate behavioural change.

3. Making Engagement Local, Practical, and Personal

Abstract terms like "carbon neutrality" often fail to resonate. Local authorities can make climate action relatable by connecting to daily concerns—livability, economic savings, traffic safety, or comfort. Cēsis Municipality (Latvia) demonstrated this through practical, community-oriented activities like composting workshops, bicycle repair stations, and plant exchange markets—showing that small, accessible actions build community ownership.

4. Data-Driven, Dialogue-Focused Planning

Tools like GeoRiga (Latvia) or participatory public transport planning in Tartu (Estonia) show the power of (open) data—not just as a technical resource, but as a foundation for honest dialogue with citizens. Transnational collaboration can promote shared methodologies for data use, ensuring planning reflects real-life needs and fosters trust.

5. Layered, Multi-Tool Engagement Strategies

No single intervention will shift behaviours on its own. Aizkraukle District (Latvia) exemplified an integrated approach: combining research, stakeholder dialogue, capacity building, visible pilot projects, and communication. These experiences reinforce that sustained engagement requires diverse, complementary tools—a lesson applicable to municipalities in all countries.

6. Final Conclusions

Citizen engagement in climate and energy topics is already taking place across all partner municipalities, with many positive examples of local initiatives and growing awareness. Despite national differences, all partners face similar challenges — from communicating complex energy issues to motivating individual action and ensuring broad public support for climate strategies. However, this shared experience also highlights the significant potential for transferring good ideas, tools, and engagement formats between countries and municipalities.

The CommitClimate Simulator has proven to be a valuable instrument for participatory planning by making complex energy and climate scenarios accessible and actionable for both individuals and municipalities. The tool can support dialogue between citizens and decision-makers, fosters trust, and helps generate buy-in for the local energy transition. Ultimately, it strengthens the fact-based foundation of political decisions and empowers communities to take an active role in shaping their energy future.

Moving forward, the tool's potential lies in further localization, technical improvements, and integration into structured engagement processes. Strengthening partnerships between municipalities, citizens, and educational institutions will be essential to embed tools like CommitClimate in long-term climate action strategies.