

MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

METHOD GUIDE

How to engage with hard-to-reach citizens for policy development?

Methodology, learnings, and best practices
from the project “Fair Energy Transition for All”



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1. INTRODUCTION: WHY TO INVOLVE HARD-TO-REACH CITIZENS IN DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING?

Climate change, energy crisis, digital divide, rising inequality, global pandemics – these are only some challenges and transition processes our societies are currently facing. A communality of all these challenges: **economically and socially disadvantaged citizens (e.g., unemployed people, low-income workers, migrants, single parents, young people, or elderly citizens, as well as people threatened with the loss of their jobs due to these transitions) are most affected**, not only by their impacts but also by policies adopted to meet them. Also, they are often **not sufficiently represented or heard in political debates and in policymaking**. Their voices are not present in the transition debates: they are “invisible”.

At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to get in contact with structurally disadvantaged groups yet involve them in policy dialogues. If not part of any representative organization, these **hard-to-reach citizens do not have a say in the debates**. This increases the representation gap. In recent years, a **lack of knowledge and understanding among these groups is accompanied by rising scepticism and a general distrust** in the institutions and so called “elites”. Combined with a perceived and actual lack of agency this puts democracy and efforts to tackle challenges for and transitions in our societies at risk.

The **perspectives and ideas of hard-to-reach citizens need to be considered** in the development and implementation of any transition policy and project to ensure comprehensive solutions and approaches considering different needs and perspectives. To successfully target the challenges named above, and to adopt policy measures that are fair for everyone, mutual understanding and widespread public acceptance is needed. European and national policymakers need to develop policies that everyone can relate to and benefit from. **Decision and policy makers should listen to the voices often being left out of the current debates and include them in the policy and communication process.**

Recently, **citizens’ assemblies and other deliberative processes on various topics** have been launched at European, national, and regional level to involve a diverse group of citizens into specific policy- and decision-making processes, and to hear their recommendations on the topic. This gives the unique opportunity to gain insights in the needs, ideas, and priorities of citizens, and to enrich the agenda setting and policy-making process with citizens’ recommendations. At the same time, involving broad sections of societies can help to strengthen acceptance of adopted measures and to build trust in political decision-making. However, **reaching out to and involving hard-to-reach citizens poses a particular challenge** even in deliberative processes. Therefore, they tend to be underrepresented also in these processes. At the same time, they often face high barriers when participating since they might not be used to and might not feel comfortable with the deliberative environment. In some cases, this might lead to their exclusion from the debates.

For this reason, it is important to **find new strategies, instruments, and methodologies for reaching out to these specific target groups**, to listen to their needs and ideas, and to involve them in decision- and policy-making processes. New ways of recruiting, engaging, and communicating must be discussed to bridge the representation gap and to establish a truly inclusive deliberation.

How to use this Method Guide?

This Method Guide aims to be a practical guide for everyone planning **to better involve hard-to-reach citizens in the public debate, decision-making, and policy-making processes**. The methodology and best-practices in this Method Guide are meant to serve you as an offer. They are based on the project “Fair Energy Transition for All” (FETA; see below). Depending on the goal, object of participation and context of your project, you can **select, adapt the proposed ideas, methods, and measures, and combine them in different ways**. Not all steps described in this Method Guide might be applicable or necessary for your project.

In the following (and based on a thorough account of the FETA methodology), each chapter deals with different process steps on the way. This will include ideas for a methodological framework, learnings, and best practices as well as a hands-on check boxes with things you should keep in mind when planning and implementing a process with hard-to-reach citizens. It is meant to be a **hands-on guide** rather than on theoretical excursions.

We hope to **share the methodology, learnings, and best practices with practitioners, experts, philanthropists, and further actors** interested in the process.

We want to **support concrete projects and deliberative processes involving hard-to-reach citizens** by providing hints and clues.

We want to foster the debate on **how to involve hard-to-reach groups better and systematically in deliberative processes to reach the goal of a truly inclusive deliberation**.

WHAT IS THIS METHOD GUIDE BASED ON?

The method guide is based on the FETA project. The overall aim of the project was to explore the concerns, fears, hopes and expectations of economically and socially disadvantaged people (with regards to the energy transition), to give them a voice and to provide input for national and European policymakers to develop socially fair and just policy measures on different levels. Based on the results of Focus Groups with hard-to reach-citizens, **experts formulated policy recommendations with a focus on the specific target group**. These policy recommendations were then taken back to the citizens to see whether they represent the needs and ideas of hard-to-reach people. The results of these so called “Fair Energy Forums” were used to revise and comment on the policy recommendations. This process was accompanied by an expert group on the European level discussing possible Europe-wide measures.

FETA Key Facts

1. FETA was spearheaded by the [King Baudouin Foundation](#)
2. The process and methodology were designed and implemented by [ifok](#).
3. Over 900 hard-to-reach citizens all over Europe have been involved in the process.
4. 120 experts on national and European level were consulted.
5. Policy Recommendations were formulated based on the input of citizens.

If you are interested in the results and recommendations, further publications and information on the project please have a look at the FETA website: <https://fair-energy-transition.eu>

2. PROJECT ENVIRONMENT: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PUT HARD-TO-REACH CITIZENS AT THE HEART OF YOUR PROCESS?

CHECKBOX: What you need

Expertise	Methods	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and design of the process and every step on the way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear structure and regular meetings with all people involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management and collaboration tools (e.g., MS teams for shared documents and communication)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators with special focus on the specific target group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent communication and constant knowledge flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital collaboration tools: Kanban Board, Murals etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy expertise to take care of the content and to translate citizens' results into policy recommendations/solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual learning, and reflection exercises 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings and training sessions 	

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure common understanding and regular exchanges: Set-up regular meetings with all partners involved to ensure knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide comparability: Design a detailed layout of the methodology and rollouts for each phase.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure constant knowledge flow: Set-up a clear knowledge organisation and a common project management and communication tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be agile: give enough room to manoeuvre and adapt throughout the entire process always putting the needs of the target group in the centre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on the knowledge of the many: Convene regular briefings and trainings in combination with an iterative feedback process. 	

WHAT TO DO?

To ensure an inclusive deliberation process with hard-to-reach citizens through preparation, sensitive implementation, and a range of expertise is needed. Depending on the goal and scale of your project, the number of partners might vary. However, putting hard-to-reach citizens at the heart of each step of your process requires enough time and resources as well as close cooperation, constant exchange, and sensibility of all team members involved. Even more than in other processes, all actors involved must be well prepared to **create an environment that meets the needs of the target group** considering all barriers they might be facing.

Relying on partners with specific knowledge in facilitation (and in the policy area), is therefore key **to ensure a high process quality, at the same time allowing to adapt according to specific contexts and needs of the target group**. For this, a range of expertise is needed:

Methodology, Design and Coordination Expertise: operationalising and finetuning the process from the definition of mandates and goals to ensuring potentials for policy impacts; Designing a methodology for facilitation phases and other meetings; Training and briefing and coordination of all partners involved during all phases

Facilitation Expertise: implementing methodological framework (citizens' engagement); transferring and translating results for further use; understanding the local and national context, providing local networks

Policy Expertise: focusing on the content and translating citizens' needs, concerns, and ideas into policy recommendations/solutions; explaining the recommendations to citizens; providing policy context at the respective levels

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

To ensure a **successful and flexible workflow**, a combination of clear structured and agile project management elements should be applied. On the one hand, a clear structure, regular meetings with partners involved and a transparent communication and knowledge flow is needed (online communication and collaboration tools can help to facilitate the information flow between all partners). On the other hand, enough room for flexibility and potential adaptations depending on specific requirements must be foreseen. This will enable you to react to specific needs of the target group and to new contexts.

3. DEFINING AND RECRUITING THE TARGET GROUP OF HARD-TO-REACH CITIZENS: WHO DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO, WHY AND HOW?

CHECKBOX: What you need

Actors	Methods	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and design team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the scope and finding your target group (selection criteria etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing and information materials for intermediaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-trained facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk research and contacting intermediaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy-to-understand information and invitation materials for citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediaries to reach out to hard-to-reach citizens (local organizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefings for facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If needed, translated communication and information materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for intermediaries 	

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly define scope and questions for the citizens' engagement: What do you want to find out from the hard-to-reach citizens? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up closely with the organisations involved, keep them in the loop and provide as much information as possible. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find clear criteria to define the target group in line with the goal, scope, and methodology of the participation process: Who do you want to talk to, why and how? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure participants feel appreciated through eye-level communication, incentives, transparent information, and compensation. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find the right intermediaries and get them engaged throughout the process. Make sure to plan enough time and resources for this process. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in a comprehensible and accessible way. Whether by e-mail, onsite or for documentation purposes, the use of language that is easy to understand, authentically and non-formal is essential. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information material in plain language on eye-level for recruiting citizens | |

Setting the scope: What do you want to find out from the hard-to-reach citizens?

To understand what to ask hard-to-reach citizens and why, the first phase of the project should always entail a **policy review/problem definition in your specific area of interest**. It will help you to understand the context and status quo and will help you to find a guiding question and to further develop the methodology.

The following questions can serve you as a guideline for this crucial step:

1. What are the important dimensions and key issues to the policy topic/problem?
2. Which policies/solutions are already in place?
3. Which policy measures/solutions are currently being discussed on political level and may come in the near or mid-future?
4. Who, if anyone, speaks to disadvantaged people about the specific question at hand in the concrete context?

Finding target specific criteria for hard-to-reach citizens: Who do you need to talk to?

WHAT TO DO?

After answering the question “What do you want to find out from hard-to-reach citizens?”, a next step of the process should always be to clearly define the target group and a clear set of criteria before taking the next steps. The set of criteria may vary in accordance with the question and methodology chosen. In general, the term **“hard-to-reach citizens”** refers to those groups who are socially or economically disadvantaged and whose interests are often not sufficiently represented in political debates and in policymaking.

These groups are less likely to participate in or even to be recruited for deliberative processes. To reach a diverse range of people, a careful selection of regions, cities, and localities, coupled with a thoughtful recruitment strategy is therefore crucial for the project’s success.

POSSIBLE CRITERIA TO DEFINE THE TARGET GROUP

- > unemployed people (receiving social aid, social housing etc.)
- > low-income earners,
- > single parents living in difficult situations (or other difficult family constellations),
- > young people (under 25 years) living in difficult situations,

- > elderly citizens (over 60 years) living in difficult situations,
- > workers threatened with the loss of their jobs due to increasing regulations on energy-intensive industries,
- > people with health issues and/or disabilities,
- > people disadvantaged because of ethnicity, migration history, gender or citizenship status.

In addition, a **set of diversity criteria** should be applied:

- > gender,
- > age,
- > rural, peripheral, and urban,
- > migration background,
- > educational background.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

To recruit hard-to-reach citizens, you should **not** rely on representative organizations. The best way to **reach the target groups is to contact local organizations working with the target groups on a regular basis**. The general aim should be to find organisations serving the needs of hard-to-reach citizens “on the ground”. In close cooperation with them, the goal is to find participants meeting the criteria of the target group as well as the diversity criteria named above.

Finding intermediaries: Who can help you to get in touch with hard-to-reach citizens?

WHAT TO DO?

The aim is to engage with hard-to-reach target groups that are not used to taking part in dialogue formats. Reaching out to and integrating these groups into the process can be challenging, as such individuals may be confronted with extra barriers or might be unfamiliar with the usual forms of civic participation. Therefore, **you should be aiming at reducing the barriers to participation as much as possible.**

To recruit the participants, you might **find and contact local organisations and businesses which serve these communities**, such as community welfare associations, educational institutions, or support groups, volunteer fire brigades, language schools, and family centres as well as charities serving the needs of senior citizens, friendship centres, local housing associations and day centres.

To spread the message effectively among those organisations and to help them **communicate the goal of their participation, information material must be provided explaining concisely and in easy language the purpose and scope of the project**, its direct relevance for the real-life circumstances of specific target groups and underlining the opportunity for the participants to express themselves and enjoy the company of others.

Your chosen format of participation (e.g., Focus Groups, Round Tables) can be **embedded in existing course structures** (e.g., language courses or resettlement programmes for unemployed). Like this the participants usually know each other and might feel more comfortable speaking openly in front of each other. In addition, the time and day is already implemented in their personal agenda and will fit in their weekly routine.

Contact persons in the organisations are central to peoples' participation – they are more likely to motivate them to take part and reassure them to trust in the format. Using intermediaries may therefore help to:

1. establish a first contact with hard-to-reach citizens,
2. overcome trust issues citizens might have.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

The use of **local intermediaries is essential to get into contact with the target group**. Given the variety of criteria described above, you cannot rely on existing databases to find participants. At the same time, the specific target groups are often less respondent to open calls for registration.

Therefore, finding matching intermediaries, getting in contact, briefing them, and coordinating with them is **highly demanding in terms of resources, time, and thus, budget**. (For the FETA project, in some cases, more than 100 organisations were addressed to reach the target of 10 Focus Groups.) The endeavour is even more difficult in rural and structurally weak areas, which might make it challenging to meet all diversity criteria.

Communication with hard-to-reach citizens: How can you build trust?

WHAT TO DO?

A key element of reaching out to and engaging with hard-to-reach citizens is **trust building and creating safe spaces**. Enough time and resources should be foreseen for a close participant management and communication ensuring that citizens not only feel listened to but also appreciated as persons. Throughout the process, collaboration with the same intermediate organisations helps to stay in touch with the participants. As described above, this will also help you to overcome reluctance to participate as well as to establish a first sense of trust.

To meet the needs of the specific target groups as well as to further strengthen trust in the team and in the process, **a comprehensible and accessible way of communicating is key**. Whether by e-mail, onsite or documentation purposes: the language must be easy to understand, authentically and non-formal. Even though this is an important criterion for all participation processes, it should particularly be considered when working with hard-to-reach citizens. Depending on the target group you might need to provide translated materials as well or solutions for disabled citizens.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

To **make citizens feel valued and respected and to keep them interested in the topic** enough time and resources should be available. Apart from this, you should consider other means to make sure participants feel appreciated. Given the financial circumstances of most participants, different **forms of compensation** will help to make them feel valued and give them the necessary leeway to compensate for work they might miss during the participation or provide for childcare. Covering citizens' expenses, including the costs for food and travel to and from the different event locations will have a significantly positive effect on participation rates especially among low-income groups or single parent households – the latter of which might also be incentivised through providing on-site childcare.

Further incentives to motivate participants to take part in all stages of the process could entail:

- > **Financial compensation or vouchers** for stores and activities in their immediate environment,
- > On-site **social activities** such as a joined lunch or dinner and/or collective activities such as city tours, museum visits etc.,
- > Extending the **invitations for social events to family and friends** (for example for a museum's visit).

4. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH HARD-TO-REACH CITIZENS?

The goal of your project is to **listen to the concerns and ideas of citizens that are often unheard and to translate them into concrete, workable policy recommendations or solutions to concrete problems.** These policy recommendations/solutions will be directly rooted in the experiences, concerns, and ideas of these target groups by

making sure that their needs and specific requirements are met in every step of the process. It means to go beyond simply listening to active dialogue using methods and designing the process so that deliberation and joint development of ideas is possible.

Designing the methodology: How to put hard-to-reach citizens at the heart of your process?

The overall methodology should make sure to put the target group at the centre of each step. This can be done by a **three-step approach** that might be applied in different contexts as well as on different levels. Of course, you might decide to plan only one or two steps according to your needs and context:

1. listening to hard-to-reach citizens (e.g., in Focus Groups or Round Tables),
2. developing policy recommendations/solutions based on their needs, hopes and fears,
3. getting feedback from the target group on these policy recommendations/solutions (feedback event).

This “sandwich process” ensures that **policy recommendations/solutions formulated based in the first deliberation are, firstly, based on the actual needs of the target group and, secondly, are peer-reviewed and commented on by the same group in the end before finalizing the work.** For all steps along the way, detailed scripts should be developed serving as a framework guiding the discussions in particular directions leaving enough leeway to all partners to employ their expertise and experience.

Laying the ground: How can you actively listen to hard-to-reach citizens?

CHECKBOX: What you need

Actors	Methods	Materials and Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and design team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active listening methods (e.g. Focus Groups or Round Tables of 12-15 citizens) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters with pictures and easy-to-understand, short descriptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-trained facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inovative and interactive methods to make topic accessible: Personas, "Future Diaries" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to understand information material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediaries to reach out to hard-to-reach citizens (local organizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative Approach focusing on trust, fairness and emotions Personal concerns illustrated by concrete examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy-to-reach event location in a familiar surrounding

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

Before the (first) deliberation phase:	During the deliberation phase:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an informal setting in a familiar space to the participants and enable undisturbed discussion opportunities and make sure that the space is easily accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put citizens' needs in the centre of each step. Create a sense of appreciation, agency, and trust.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find facilitators well-trained in communicating in an approachable, authentic manner, creating a trusting atmosphere and "safe space" for the participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information material in plain language for the participants..
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborate a detailed approach as to how to prepare, implement and evaluate the deliberation phase. Provide briefing documents and conduct trainings/briefings plus room to exchange on experiences and best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose diverse learning methods: Instead of long lectures, use interviews. Instead of long texts, work with pictures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add-On: Plan dry-runs to test the methodological approach in different environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take short breaks regularly – even if they have not been scheduled, as the needs of the participants are what matters most.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and explain innovative formats (e. g. "energy diaries") to illustrate the topic, core dilemmas, to connect to the citizens' everyday life and foster discussions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use open questions closely related to the target group's background.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay attention to the group and its dynamics: set clear rules for communication and solving conflicts from the beginning and avoid exclusion.

As a first step in the process, facilitators are conducting deliberative meetings with hard-to-reach people. These 3-h-meetings (e.g., Focus Groups or Round Tables) of around 12-15 participants centre around the opinions of the group, rather than the individual opinions of each participant. It will be a first step to create the required **open and safe space** for participants to share their individual and collective feelings and are thus the right format for **qualitative listening**. To facilitate the workshops, the facilitators can visit the target groups in their local environment, in surroundings familiar to them.

The **aim of this process step** is to understand the challenges faced by hard-to-reach citizens in their everyday lives and to understand what their needs, concerns, and ideas in the policy area. It is important to start the discussion based on their daily lives and concerns rather than starting with technical questions.

Questions you might use are:

- > What do you like about the place where you live?
- > What are the most important issues your country/your city/your community is facing at the moment?
- > How does the problem at hand affect you in your everyday life?

A scenario building method could be used to make the topic more accessible and to foster the discussions. In the FETA context, an **'energy diary' format** was used, taken from the academic literature. These diaries are **used to describe possible (energy) scenarios in the future**. The energy diaries were adapted by the facilitators to reflect realistic energy policy futures for the respective context (see annex [Erreur! Source du renvoi introuvable.](#)). In discussing the future scenarios, you can learn more about the participants' attitudes, hopes and fears. The aim of using energy diaries is not necessarily to represent all aspects of the everyday life of participant but to trigger a discussion based on a "real life format".

Any comparable exercise should try to help citizens discuss their experiences, emotions as well as questions of fairness and **identify areas that are most important to them with regards to their everyday life experiences**. This can help opening the debate and focus the discussion on practical questions. **Approaches like this could systematically include the question which narratives are used by citizens (fairness, trust, emotions)** feeding into the recommendation/solutions developed after this citizen engagement phase. This can also help you to communicate proposed recommendations/solutions ensuring buy-in and inclusion and preventing backlash and marginalisation.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

It is of utmost importance to **create an atmosphere of trust and appreciation during the deliberation with hard-to-reach citizens**. Communicating on eye-level, starting from the participants' everyday life experiences, helps to build trust. This is especially important since there might be a tendency to mistrust institutions, politics, and the "elites". Taking the fears, scepticism, and the mistrust seriously and giving room to discuss them is key to building trust and to keeping citizens engaged.

Training sessions and detailed scripts for facilitators help to accomplish these tasks and to generate a common understanding of the goals and means of the methodology applied. The role of experienced facilitators is crucial in this phase. Even more than in other deliberative processes they must be very sensitive with regards to the language used, methods applied, and the dynamics in the room. In addition to this, clear rules for the deliberation should be made transparent from the beginning to all participants since they might not be used to discussing in this format. The goal will be to encourage equal participation of all citizens (this can also entail methods such as "go-arounds") and to reduce existing barriers.

Building on hard-to-reach citizens' input: How to translate their thoughts into policy recommendations/solutions?

CHECKBOX: What you need

Actors	Methods	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and design team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderated online or in-person meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In an online setting: Mural, Zoom etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Personas to make the discussion more vivid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing materials and presentations based on the citizens results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling exchange between experts, facilitators, and citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports from the citizens' engagement phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants of the citizens' engagement phase 		

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster mutual understanding: regular exchange among all partners involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give the target group an active voice if possible: invite participants when working on policy recommendations/solutions and ask them to share their experiences. You might also show interviews with them on video.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link discussions on possible policy recommendations/solutions to the outcome of the dialogue phase: Facilitators from the engagement phase can share their experiences of the dialogues and/or use innovative formats to illustrate fears, needs and ideas of the target groups. Provide concrete examples through quotes or videos to make them more vivid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If needed, you can invite distinguished experts to discuss the results reducing participation barriers through online meetings. These meetings can be held under the Chatham House rule to ensure an open discussion

WHAT TO DO?

As a second step in the process of the project and based on the results of the citizens' engagement phase, policy recommendations/solutions for the problem at hand are formulated. For this, **expert meetings could be organised** to discuss measures to face the challenges and obstacles as discussed by citizens. You could of course also rely on policy expertise in your team. At this stage you should focus on how the target group is affected by the challenges and what they deem important for tackling them. You should foresee enough time and room to discuss citizens' needs at all times. If you plan to invite experts, meetings could include administrations, members of the civil society, think tanks and academia, but no sector representatives nor policymakers at this stage. Experts focusing on working with the target group can also help the discussion.

The goal of this phase is to translate the discussion results from the citizens' engagement phase into concrete policy recommendations/solutions. For this, partners who were involved in all stages of the process organise and facilitate these meetings, and make sure to always steer the discussion back to the citizens' needs. To guarantee a **constant link to the citizens' concerns, and ideas** several measures can be applied:

- > Facilitators should be present and brief all partners involved with regards to the outcomes of the first engagement phase,
- > A report of the citizens' results should be provided,
- > In addition to the report, further output documents might be provided highlighting the most important ideas and results including concrete examples of topics and questions raised by citizens,
- > "Personas" could be developed to represent the participants feelings, life circumstances and voices (see annex).

After the expert meetings, the **preliminary results should be compiled in a short paper** containing a summary of the policy recommendations/solutions, possible blind spots, and trade-offs but also open questions.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?

In general, **close contact and constant interlinkage between all partners involved helps to successfully "translate" the citizens' results into policy recommendations/solutions.** Complementary expert meetings should be prepared and planned in line with the results of the citizens' results, with regards to the content discussed and the expertise needed. This will help expert to think about solutions in **new framework** and to overcome a "top-down bias".

Taking it back to the hard-to-reach citizens: How can you make sure that possible solutions meet the needs of the citizens?

CHECKBOX: What you need

Actors	Methods	Materials and Location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology and design team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback event working in small groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy-to-understand information material and presentations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-trained facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews to explain the recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters, flip charts with pictures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enough time and room for interactive discussions and methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy-to-reach, central and barrier-free event location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens from the first discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activating and group-building activities: common meals, breaks etc. Process, objectives of the meeting as well as the general process are clearly explained at the beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentives for citizens: vouchers, financial compensation, child care etc.

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan enough time to prepare the presentation of policy recommendations/solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be transparent: Invite people involved in drafting the recommendations/solutions. Clearly outline what will happen with the results next.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break the recommendations down by using plain language, concrete examples, pictures and summaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan enough time to incorporate the citizens' feedback into the policy recommendations/solutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of presentations use formats like interviews and informal open forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it as easy and pleasant for citizens: plan breaks, social activities, give support. Show appreciation!

WHAT TO DO?

A **feedback event** can be the last step of the process. **The goal of the feedback event is to ensure that the recommendations/solutions represent the voice of the people involved in the first phase of the process.** The citizens are asked to discuss, comment on, and prioritize the policy recommendations/solutions developed after their first meetings. The feedback event consists of around 15-20 participants who took part in the first round of engagement as well as further hard-to-reach citizens. Having participants from the first phase present will help to understand if the recommendations/solutions are in line with their ideas. Opening the event to new participants can be fruitful for the discussion providing new input and adding new perspectives.

To bring the recommendations/solutions back to citizens several measures can be taken to make them more understandable and digestible. Instead of presenting the plain text, recommendations/solutions should be “broken down” to bullet points and illustrated with pictures and examples how the recommendations could influence the daily life of the participants. Policy partners should be invited to the event to answer citizens’ questions and reflect on the work of the expert meetings in an interview situation.

In moderated small groups the citizens discuss the draft policy recommendations/solutions at hand particularly **focusing on the questions:**

1. Do the recommendations/solutions reflect citizens’ ideas and needs? Are they fair?
2. Which of the recommendations/solutions do citizens find most important and why?
3. Which aspects should be considered when implementing the recommendations/solutions?

Outcomes of the discussion are **systematically recorded in provided templates** and can then be integrated in the final recommendations/solutions.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND?




In general, the “sandwich approach” aims at giving the last word to the citizens. **However, translating and presenting the policy recommendations/solutions to the citizens will be a challenge. Enough time must be given to adapt language and explanations according to the target groups’ needs.** Having all partners involved present, helps to establish trust in the process and to explain the recommendations in interactive formats.



5. ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH: HOW CAN YOU ENSURE BEST USE OF THE RESULTS?

To find their way into policies, the results of the dialogue phase should **regularly be presented to policymakers and the interested public**. A final event might involve presenting the results as well as the approach, opening the floor to discussions. This is the opportunity for the results to be handed over to decision and policymakers

and to launch joint discussions on how to best implement them. The goal should be to make the invisible visible and to highlight the need to systematically include hard-to-reach citizens in political and deliberative processes.

CHECKBOX: Guiding principles

-  Make sure to actively plan advocacy and outreach throughout the process highlighting the need to systematically include hard-to-reach citizens.
-  Make sure to involve and engage with decision and policymakers throughout the whole process.
-  Let the citizens be heard through interviews, videos, inviting them, citations or bring in the facilitation partner to share their experience.

-  Provide material and information to advocate for the inclusion of hard-to-reach citizens in different policy areas.
-  Make use of a broad network of stakeholders.

6. AT A GLANCE:

HOW TO MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE?

	Trustbuilding	Motivation	Support	Self-Efficiency
Reaching-out and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Find the right intermediaries and get them engaged throughout the process > Communicate in plain language on eye-level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Take the concerns and fears seriously > Create a sense of agency and trust > Communicate regularly > Show appreciation and be transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Easy-to understand information and invitation materials for citizens. Translations if needed > Close participant management and support for all steps > Use the power of the quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Transparency and open communication about their role and their impact > Show how their ideas are influencing policy choices
Methods and Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Rely on facilitation experts > Put citizens' needs at the heart of all steps creating a sense of appreciation and trust > Create an open atmosphere in a familiar surrounding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Innovative and interactive formats to illustrate the topic > Use open questions > Use interviews > Work in small groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Explain goal, agenda and process > Set the timing accordingly to the needs of the target group > Start from where they are and provide easy-to-understand knowledge input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Use interactive formats > Be transparent about the use of the results > Allow sufficient time for discussions > Plan a follow-up
What is in it for me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Be transparent about the goal, the topic and remit of their input > Act as a bridge between all stages making it transparent to the citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Illustrate the connection to the citizens' everyday life > Use concrete examples > Give room for discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide further information material > Goal should be to provide everything needed during the meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Illustrate affectiveness by means of concrete examples
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Be transparent about the process > keep citizens in the loop > Closely cooperate with intermediaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Provide financial compensation > Plan common meals > Offer incentives: vouchers, activities > Offer Child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Plan a professional participant management > Make the impossible possible > Find convenient event dates and locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Assure interest in the opinions of the participants

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The King Baudouin Foundation's mission is to contribute to a better society in Belgium, in Europe and in the world. It is an actor for change and innovation, serving the public interest and increasing social cohesion. It seeks to maximise its impact by improving skills in organisations and for individuals. It also stimulates effective philanthropy by individuals and corporations. The King Baudouin Foundation was set up in 1976, on the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign.

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Methodology Framework, citizens' engagement, project management: ifok

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Annex I: Method idea: Personas to help stepping into the shoes of hard-to-reach citizens

To constantly link the discussions in the expert meetings to the outcomes of the Focus Groups and to illustrate the needs of different types of people within the target group “**personas**” might be developed on basis of the Focus Group participants. This can be done in a collaborative work of facilitation and policy partners using the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the Focus Groups.

The aim will be to **represent specific characteristics** in terms of age, residence, employment status as well as condensing their ideas, attitudes, needs, challenges, fears, and hopes. This effort will help experts to fully understand and sympathise with the needs of the target group. Personas add a human touch to what could otherwise be a dry discussion on policy and regulation. This is fundamental for the design of the policy recommendations.

The following questions were used to develop the personas (a template can be found in the annex):

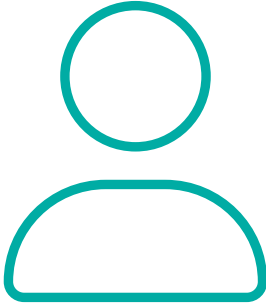
- > What kind of background does this persona have (age, location, education, occupational status, gender, etc)?
- > What sort of challenges does this persona struggle with daily?
- > What additional personal details could be included to make this persona more realistic / give them a human touch?
- > For the sake of clarity, please choose fictitious names for your personas. Make sure that the actual participants remain anonymous.
- > Please chose a quote that would be typical for this persona.



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Exemplary Persona used in the EU Expert Meetings of the FETA project.

The following template adapted to the specific context might be used to present the personas:

NAME		Background
		Age:
		Employment status:
		Education:
		Location (rural / urban / peripheral):
Quote: "....."		
What kind of challenge does NAME face in everyday life?	How does NAME feel about the energy transition / climate change?	What does NAME need for the energy transition to be fair?
> ... > ... > ...	> ... > ... > ...	> ... > ... > ...

Annex II: Energy Diary Example

Energy Diary: Home (rural)	
8am	Woke up. Ate breakfast with my partner before she left for work. It's cold outside so I'm grateful that the house has good insulation and that it was installed for free by the government- makes the house cheap and easy to heat.
9am	Started work at home. My team at work meet up in person occasionally but it's normal to do lots of work online now to reduce pollution from cars.
10:15am	Made a hot drink and realised I've run out of some food I need for dinner tonight. Ordered the food online to arrive later today.
1:20pm	Ate lunch.
4pm	Starting to feel a little bit cold. Heating and lighting came on automatically – landlord installed 'smart heating' for us so it just comes on when it senses that it's dark or cold. Helpful to have the smart meter too which shows how much money we spend on energy.
4:40pm	Food shopping arrived by electric drone. Live miles away from the nearest shop so it's great that it can deliver my shopping from far away on the same day of ordering.
6:15pm	Finished work
7.00pm	Attended energy community meeting. Our local community generates its own energy with our own mini solar farm which we use to run our homes and charge our electric cars and sell the excess to the grid. Glad that it's community-owned so if something goes wrong, we can fix it ourselves

Exemplary Energy Diary used in the Focus Groups of the FETA project.

Colophon

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