

# NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS

YEE  
YOUTH AND  
ENVIRONMENT  
EUROPE

HANDBOOK FOR  
YOUTH PARTICIPATION





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If you have any questions on the content of our handbook or on how to participate effectively in the NECP process, please do not hesitate to email Alex at

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This handbook has been prepared by the Legal Seeds team of YEE with the intention of educating and empowering young people to participate in the updating of NECPs and advocate for a more transparent, fair procedures in lines with the Aarhus Convention and the principle of intergenerational equity




# 1 | WHAT ARE THE NECPS ?

*“Without a plan and measures the climate targets would be empty promises.”* [CAN Europe](#)

In 2021, the EU launched its [Fit for 55 Package](#), a set of proposals to revise and update EU legislation. The package sets out **energy and climate targets for 2030** to meet the obligations under the [European Climate Law](#), with the key target being to reduce net GHG emissions *by at least 55%* compared to 1990 levels.

A number of laws have been passed by the EU to contribute to the achievement of the 55% target, with the main ones being:

1. The **Effort Sharing Regulation**: imposes binding minimum emission targets for EU Member States' buildings, road transport, agriculture, waste and small industry. It applies to sectors that are not covered by the EU [ETS](#).
2. The **Renewable Energy Directive**: sets a target of having an EU renewable energy share of at least 42.5% by 2030.
3. The **Energy Efficiency Directive**: makes it binding for EU countries to collectively ensure an additional 11.7% reduction in energy consumption by 2030.



According to the EU 2018 [Governance Regulation](#), EU Member States (MS) need to issue a plan which reflects **how** these vital targets will be achieved: **the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)**.



While there is room for interpretation in terms of how MS should approach their updated NECP drafts, there are several considerations that should be taken by MS to show cohesion with EU policy:

**2030 national climate targets consistent with 1.5°C**

MS are required to provide measures to adapt their economies so they are consistent with the 1.5°C target, with a focus on targets of specific sectors (buildings, transport, agriculture, waste and small industry)

**Ambitious 2030 national energy contributions:**

MS should state their contributions to EU-wide renewables and energy efficiency targets for 2030

**Ensure a fair and just transformation**

an ambitious NECP should address the social impacts of the targets, measures to alleviate poverty (energy and transport poverty specifically) and state measures how fair and just transition will be ensured

**Credible and consistent policies and measures**

MS are also asked to set measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related objectives.

**Adequate funding for the transition**

MS should clearly identify public and private funding sources used to achieve the planned measures, including all relevant EU funding.



**+ A collective and transparent process!**

This is where your contribution as a citizen would be extremely valuable. MS are required to organise early and effective public consultations prior to the submission of draft and final NECPs.



# 2 | WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation of citizens in environmental decision making is required by European law. It is particularly valuable in climate governance for a number of reasons:

Public participation can lead to **more robust and ambitious climate policy** that reflects the interests, needs and attitudes of citizens

Public participation can **challenge embedded social and climate inequalities**.

Public participation can help break political deadlocks and increase confidence and **willingness of political leaders to take climate action**.

Public participation can increase the **legitimacy and public acceptance of action** on climate as transitions continue to impact people more directly.

Public participation can promote a more **climate aware, politically active and confident citizenry**.

NECPS also present an opportunity for the younger generations to exercise their right to public participation in national climate policies.





## Youth participation in the drafting and implementation of NECPs is essential for several reasons:

1

The content of the NECPs will have long-lasting effects on the lives of the youngest generations, who will be most affected by the consequences of climate change and the energy choices made now.

2

Young people can contribute to a long-term commitment to climate and energy goals, the involvement of youth can encourage young people to take an active role in sustainability and climate action throughout their lives.

3

Youth participation can help hold governments and decision-makers accountable for meeting their climate and energy targets.

4

Youth participation ensures a more diverse set of perspectives at the decision-making table, including those from underrepresented or marginalised groups. This diversity can lead to more comprehensive and equitable climate and energy policies.

5

Involving young people in the drafting and implementation of NECPs provides them with valuable educational and capacity-building opportunities. They can learn about the complexities of energy and climate issues and gain skills that are crucial for the future of the EU.

6

Youth can provide insights into how to make NECPs more adaptable and resilient to future challenges, as they will be dealing with the long-term consequences of today's decisions.





# 3 | PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE NECPS

## What is required by Member States in terms of public participation?

Article 10 of the Governance Regulation requires MS to give the public early and effective opportunities to participate in the elaboration of the NECPs. This is also in line with the [Aarhus Convention](#) Article 7, which obliges MS to ensure that the public is given **early and effective opportunities to participate** in preparing plans, such as the draft NECPs, in a transparent and fair framework.

Per the [Commission Guidance on NECPs](#) section 3.2, this obligation entails that the public must be given **reasonable time to participate in the different phases** and must be consulted when all options are still open. The public should have access to all relevant documents, reports and assumptions at the start of the consultation period.

The Commission further states that social dialogue and a whole-of-society approach are key for developing and implementing effective energy and climate policies in line with the principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Lastly, MS are invited to reflect on best practices, such as setting up the consultation through a dedicated NECP website, which contains all necessary information.





## Multilevel Climate and Energy Dialogues (MCEDs)

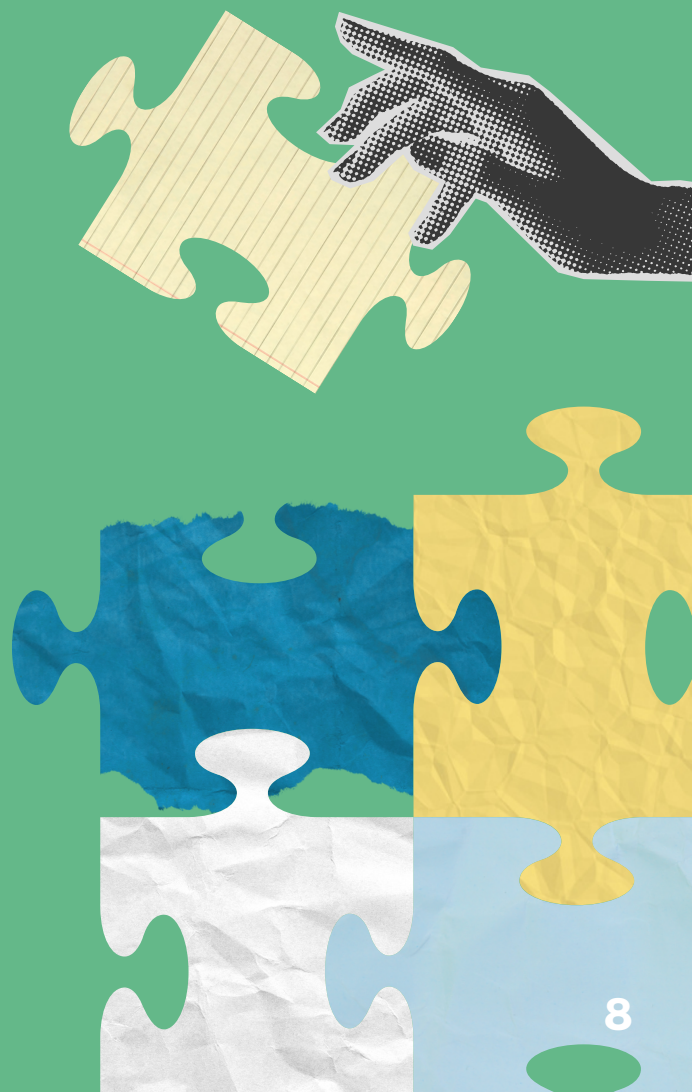
Under Article 11 of the Governance Regulation, MS must establish a MCED. This entails the establishment of a platform to discuss with stakeholders, such as but not limited to investors and civil society, the different scenarios envisaged for energy and climate policies and achieving the EU's climate-neutrality objective set out in the Climate Law. MS will report on the progress in establishing this dialogue in the national energy and climate progress reports (NECPRs).

## Youth Participation Provisions

No explicit reference for youth participation has been made in either the Governance Regulation or [Commission Guidance on NECPs](#). The Commission has stated in a Guidance document that MS must update the NECPs in a dialogue with local authorities, civil society organisations, social partners, the sectoral business community, investors and other stakeholders. Although unspecified, we believe that youth should have been included within civil society organisations and the category of other stakeholders in particular.

## Transparency

In the updated NECPs, Member States are required to include a summary of the consultations and of the public's view or provisional views. According to [Commission Guidance](#), MS should explain how the views of the public were considered ahead of submitting the draft and final national plans. MS are also expected to describe how the process allowed the public to participate transparently and fairly..





# 4 | WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

MS had until 30 June to send to the European Commission their new draft NECPs. By November 3rd, only 16 out of 27 Member States had done so and, disappointingly, several of these submissions closely resembled their 2019 NECPs without meaningful updates. It is clearly not sufficient for a participation option to be available, it has to be an effective opportunity according to both the Governance Regulation and the Aarhus Convention. However, the Governance Regulation has shortcomings in itself. Graham Smith, professor of Politics at the University of Westminster has described that the current context for public participation in NECPs is **not the most encouraging**.

## Problems at EU level

The Governance Regulation in itself has also not offered strong public participation provisions. According to a coalition of NGOs including ourselves, the text of the Governance Regulation does not require Member States to ensure a fair, transparent and early public consultation when all the options are still open. It also lacks clear guidelines on how to report on public consultations, apart from providing a summary of the public's views (Article 10 (1) Governance Regulation). Furthermore, it does not require MS to take account of the public's views nor to demonstrate how these views have been integrated into the plan or not. While the European Commission suggests a willingness to explore a legislative revision of the Governance Regulation, under the auspices of the report it has to deliver to the European Parliament and Council of Ministers, there is no proof of an ongoing legislative procedure or a clear commitment at political level.



## Problems at MS implementation level

In most EU MS, some form of public consultation has occurred, but often, several minimum legal requirements set by EU law are not met. Out of all MS, only Lithuania and Belgium has received satisfactory feedback from civil society organisations.

MS are also required to involve the public early in the preparation of draft NECP updates, and provide all the information necessary for effective participation. However, some MS have conducted consultations late or even after the submission deadline, while necessary information has been omitted. More problems encountered with the draft NECPs due in June 2023, included:

- The draft NECP was not shared during the consultation (Cyprus, Portugal, Czechia and France).
- It was shared too late to provide meaningful input (Cyprus, Slovakia, Spain).
- It was incomplete (Hungary).
- No scenarios with additional policies were presented (Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia).
- There was a short timeframe (Czechia, Slovakia, Croatia, Luxembourg).
- There was limited space for providing feedback (Czechia, Poland, Portugal).



# 5 | WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

## At the EU level

- Target the European Commission while it is considering the drafts to require MS to undertake robust participation exercises before finalising their NECPs. The Commission is expected to provide progress reports to MS by the end of 2023. The Guidance should then be updated on a similar line to reflect best practices.
- The inclusion of youth should be guaranteed in the Governance Regulation for the purposes of both public consultations as well as in multilevel climate and energy dialogues commitment at political level.



## At the Member State level

- Putting pressure on MS to undertake **meaningful** participation before the final version of the NECP is submitted on 30 July 2024, including highlighting the risk of strategic litigation if this is not forthcoming.
- Putting pressure on MS that have delayed their drafts to establish participation processes if reasonable time is available and political will is present to take engagement seriously.





# 6 | WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A YOUNG PERSON?

TYPE OF ACTION	AIM	WHAT THIS COULD MEAN IN PRACTICE
Stay informed about NECPs	Keep yourself informed about your country's energy and climate policies to be ready to act on further developments.	Check the <a href="#">European Commission's website</a> for the most updated information on national submissions regarding NECPs.
Join local organisations and/or environmental NGOs that share the same goals	Joining these groups will give you a platform to engage with like-minded individuals, learn more about the issues, and collectively advocate for change.	Check out a registry for NGOs in your country or simply do a Google search on different organisations based in your country. They usually have an email and/or contact form for volunteers or specially promote roles to engage with their activities.
Participate in petition and/or advocacy campaigns	Participate in or initiate petition campaigns to draw attention to specific energy and climate issues	Check out the websites of prominent NGOs in your country - usually they are a good start.
Participate in stakeholder events	Attend events organised by civil society organisations or other bodies. These might provide a good platform to check information you are unsure about or speak to other young people about the issues.	Stakeholder events can be found virtually everywhere - develop your social media channels by following organisations based in your country to get updated on their upcoming events. There might be offices of worldwide or regional environmental organisations such as WWF or Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, but could also be local organisations.



TYPE OF ACTION	AIM	WHAT THIS COULD MEAN IN PRACTICE
Participate in public consultations	Keep an eye out for announcements about public hearings or consultations related to NECPs. Attend these events to voice your opinions and ask questions directly to decision-makers, to have your say on the different scenarios envisaged for national energy and climate policies.	Checking your government's or relevant ministry website on a regular basis to see relevant information about the consultations. For example, <a href="#">here is the Cypriot one</a> .
Voice out concerns	You can share your concerns by creating content, particularly through blogs and social media.	Sharing content on social media/blogs or through existing initiatives. You can check further opportunities through YEE or our partner organisations.
Engage with YEE activities	YEE is strongly committed to accelerate youth participation in the NECP process. Feel free to engage with our future activities and campaigns to learn more.	Keeping up to date with YEE social media and website. For example, check <a href="#">this post</a> on the YEE instagram page!





# 7 | FURTHER READING

Would you like to learn more about participation in NECPs?

Here are some sources for you!

- CAN Europe - March 2023 - [Why is this a crucial year for national climate action and what are “NECPs”? - CAN Europe](#)
- CAN Europe - October 2023 - [Time to step up national climate action](#)
- EEB - October 2023 - [EEB demands for the European Commission’s recommendations for European Commission’s recommendations for Member States’ draft NECPs](#)
- EEB - October 2023 - [Public participation and the updating of NECPs: towards more meaningful dialogue and deliberation](#)
- CAN Europe - October 2023 - [LETTER to the European Commission expressing NGOs concerns regarding the draft National Energy and Climate Plans \(NECPs\) - CAN Europe](#)

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