Position paper

Proposals to improve youth engagement in the European energy transition

European Youth Energy Forum (EYEF) 2023

Second edition of EYEF

Berlin, 31 October - 3 November 2023

EUROPEAN YOUTH ENERGY FORUM

an event of the European Youth Energy Network (EYEN)

EYEN YOUTH ENERGY

In partnership with dena German Energy Agency, ER, Fraunhofer CINES

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Executive summary

The **European Youth Energy Network (EYEN)** aims to empower and prioritise the perspectives of youth within the European energy transition. Through its European Youth Energy Forum (EYEF), EYEN convenes young professionals and students from diverse backgrounds to craft **proposals for meaningful youth engagement in the energy sector.** The second edition of the forum, held in Berlin, focused on refining and enhancing previous proposals from the pioneering event in Lisbon.

Over two months, selected participants engaged in a **thorough online process,** analysing, selecting, and improving proposals to create **actionable plans.** The process culminated in a **four-day event** in Berlin, where discussions, workshops, and lectures were held to finalise a **position paper** that documents these essential discussions and intends to act upon their conclusions, emphasising their significance for European countries.

I. Introduction

The **European Youth Energy Network (EYEN)** is the network of youth-led European energy-focused organisations with the mission to place youth at the heart of the European energy transition by: **creating spaces** for youth to act; **connecting** youth with stakeholders and **coordinating** efforts, and reshaping youth engagement in sustainable energy. EYEN is a youth-led international non-profit association registered in Belgium, representing a network of 12 youth-led Members organisations active in more than 10 countries at European, national and local levels.

In pursuit of its objectives, EYEN has initiated the **European Youth Energy Forum (EYEF)**, a flagship event to **create the space for youth to voice its opinion and collaborate with energy stakeholders towards better youth engagement.** The first edition of EYEF was held in 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal and welcomed 45 young European professionals and students, who were carefully selected to participate in the event and develop a position paper following an application process which received significant interest across Europe. . The result of EYEF 2022 was a position paper on *"The role of youth in the future of the European energy transition"* that consisted of 12 pioneering proposals covering opportunities for youth engagement in the policy-making, education and private sectors.

Motivated by the success of the previous year's event and inspired by the participants' contribution, EYEN organised the second EYEF in Berlin (Germany) gathering 40 individuals from 26 countries, who were selected based on their skills, knowledge and experience, ensuring diversity and broad representation. The aim of the EYEF second edition was **to improve and refine some of the existing proposals** that would reflect concrete, actionable and realistic plans for youth engagement in the energy sector. The participants' online journey was divided into three stages covering: i) analysis of the existing proposals;ii) selection of proposals to improve, and; iii) improvement and adaptation of the selected proposals.

Over the course of 2 months, a series of online meetings were organised with the selected participants to **analyse the existing proposals** and decide on the ones to

be retained and further developed to reflect this year's aim. The analysis revolved around gauging **potential obstacles for implementation and the ways to overcome them.**

After in-depth discussions, participants were given the opportunity to decide which proposals are eligible for expansion and **further development.** The remainder of online sessions was dedicated to rewriting the proposals by grouping all the ideas and coming up with the **best achievable proposals for European countries.** This journey culminated in a four-day event in Berlin, where lectures and workshops were held to refine the proposals and finalise the paper. This position paper was developed to document these discussions, amplifying their importance and acting upon their conclusions.

II. Proposals - A call to action

Recognising the importance of tapping into the willingness of young people to make a positive difference for the future of Europe, we propose the following **set of concrete proposals to boost youth engagement in the energy sector:**

1. **European Youth Energy Hub: One-stop-shop** *(education)* **for Youth Energy Engagement**
2. **EmpowerED: A University Module for Student-Led** *(education)* **Energy Transition Workshops for High School Pupils**
3. **Youth NEETs Just Energy Transition Training** *(education)*
4. **European Youth Energy Council** *(policy-making)*
5. **Work Study Programmes in the Energy Sector** *(private sector)*
6. **National Talent Pool for Blue Collar Workers within the Energy Sector** *(private sector)*

While specific plans are outlined for each suggestion, the goal is to **implement them quickly** due to the numerous benefits youth inclusion offers to the energy transition.

1. European Youth Energy Hub: One-Stop-Shop for Youth Energy Engagement

Objective

As the energy transition gains momentum across Europe, **the demand for skilled workers is increasing.** Overall, around 1.3 million persons were employed in the EU renewable energy sector in 2020 (EU Commision, 2022). An estimated 3.5 million jobs need to be created by 2030 to reach the EU's goal of 45 percent renewables in the total energy mix. This accounts for an **increase of nearly 270%** when compared with the current jobs in the area. From 2019 to 2020 the increase of employment in the renewable energy sector was 5.2%, which reflects an increase of 65 000 jobs (EU Commision, 2022). However, reaching the 3.5 million we would **need a yearly increase of 17%** and even more qualified workers in the energy sector.

This highlights the huge gap between the existing talent pool developments and the growth rate needed to meet the demand for skilled workers of the future. Active **upskilling of the labour force is needed to close the employment gap** in the rapidly expanding clean energy sector.

Currently, **information on opportunities** within the European clean energy sector is **fragmented across platforms** and not easily accessible, which is a barrier to attracting young talent. The labour and skill gap within the clean energy sector can be addressed by creating a **comprehensive one-stop-shop website for youth to discover civic engagement, educational and vocational, employment opportunities** in the European clean energy sector, as well as comprehensive information about the clean energy sector.

The website will both engage youth and spark interest by providing **preliminary information on energy topics in Europe** as well as **curating upskilling educational and vocational opportunities** for entering the clean energy sector. This two-pronged approach will lead to an increase of interest in the topic, and gradually, more qualified workers entering the job market to fill the growing

demand. The website's job portal will then provide youth a curated list of opportunities to launch their careers in the energy sector.

State of the art

Every young European must be able to access the training and employment opportunities related to the energy transition. Despite European youth's high internet usage, with 96 percent of youth using the internet daily, the **rate for civic and political engagement online is very low** and currently only at 23 percent (European Union, 2023). A centralised platform on the topic of the clean energy sector does not currently exist for youth. Creating a **user-friendly and comprehensive** one-stop-shop web portal for European youth to find
i) employment, ii) educational and vocational training as well as iii) civic engagement opportunities across member states would remedy this gap.

The lessons learned from **studying platforms like EURES, EURACTIV, the European Youth Portal, and Eurodesk** highlight several crucial principles. These platforms operate in the diverse and multilingual landscape of Europe, necessitating a **localised approach** to reach a broader audience effectively. **Transparency, trustworthiness, and editorial independence** are paramount for platforms dealing with information, media, employment, or youth issues. Strict adherence to data privacy regulations, such as GDPR, is essential to gain and maintain users' trust. Collaboration with diverse stakeholders and a **user-friendly design** are key to ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

The European Youth Energy Hub will allow youth to make an **informed decision about future life choices** by providing the tools crucial for entering the energy sector of the future.

Methodology

The website will kick off with a **Minimal Viable Product (MVP) as a pilot project in France, as it has a diverse job market in the clean energy sector**. France offers vocational training, study opportunities, internships and also has a well known work-study system called "alternance". Successful synergies could be made with

various governmental bodies such as French Ministries for i) education, ii) employment and iii) energy policy to support the website.

During the first phase of implementation (see timeline 2024-2025), a core working team of six individuals in collaboration with two external contractors is set to develop the MVP that **lists opportunities in the French clean energy sector such as:** employment opportunities, graduate and post-graduate programs, PhD opportunities, events and conferences, summer schools, vocational trainings, internships, NGOs and civic organisations. The website would use algorithms as aggregators of opportunities that would **redirect the user towards source websites** to apply for positions and access further relevant information.

In the second phase of implementation (see timeline 2025-2027) user feedback from the pilot project (MVP) will be collected to make improvements and plan for future features. Once the pilot project is operational, it would **expand to the European clean energy opportunity website for youth.** The funding partners will be informed on a regular basis on the platform's progress and financial performance, in the optics of seeking additional funding rounds as the product expands and evolves.

Additional partnerships will allow to expand the website's offerings and improve its efficiency based on user feedback and youth demands. **Regulatory authorities would be consulted** to stay updated with relevant regulations and compliance requirements as the website scales. In particular, new features that might have legal implications must be cross checked. **Media and influencers** will be valuable to maintain visibility, especially **when launching new features or expansions**. Community and society with whom we will engage to incorporate social responsibility initiatives and community outreach programs as the platform gains traction and influence.

Observing and in some cases interacting with competitors will allow adjustments of business strategies based on the competitive landscape and **emerging youth trends.** A market analysis on the needs of future users should also be considered.

Stakeholder Analysis

To promote youth development through a dynamic platform, it is crucial to establish **partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.** Government agencies, often involved in funding and providing regulatory guidance, become important allies. National energy agencies and local youth groups of the pilot project are the stakeholders with whom a close collaboration is formed at the very first stages of the project development. It is a mutually beneficial relationship as the above mentioned stakeholders would provide **relevant data**, information, statistics, graphs etc. for the website's learning and resources core section. In return, the website will **increase the partners' outreach**. Legal partners will be a permanent stakeholder and will be contracted as an external partner to comply check and handle legal aspects of the product.

The website content managers will seek out a wider range of stakeholders after the launch of the website. For the civic engagement opportunities, the team will approach **nonprofit organisations, local community centres, cultural and civic organisations, and also youth influencers** for offers and partnerships. For expanding the educational and vocational database, the website team will collaborate with educational institutions to both provide an overview of all the energy upskilling programs offered, but also for university partners to promote their program offers on a broader scale.

For extra funding, leveraging marketing for EU campaigns, universities and green industry representatives will provide an extra revenue source to convert traffic into further website advancement. Through mutual linking of the resources and partner organisations, the website will enhance its reputation as a central hub for youth searching for information on the energy sector in Europe.

Financing strategy

Creating a **sustainable financing strategy** for a youth energy engagement website involves leveraging various funding methods to ensure its long-term viability and impact. To initiate the funding process, **crowdfunding** can be utilised as a key step, allowing the platform to tap into the enthusiasm and support of the community. Crowdfunding campaigns can raise awareness and generate funds

from individuals who believe in the initiative's mission. Following this, pursuing **grants and government programs** would be essential. By researching and applying for grants offered by governmental agencies and nonprofit organisations dedicated to youth empowerment and energy engagement, the platform can secure substantial funding. **Strategic partnerships with corporations, educational institutions, and NGOs** can significantly enhance financial stability. Additionally, engaging with business incubators and accelerators can provide not only funding but also mentorship and networking opportunities, enhancing the platform's growth and impact.

By **diversifying the funding sources** through crowdfunding, grants, strategic partnerships, and business accelerators, the one-stop-shop for youth energy engagement platform can establish a robust financial ''foundation'', ensuring its ability to empower and engage youth effectively.

Cost	**Salary** (per year)	Number of **Employees**	**Sum**
Website	-	-	75.000 €
Software Developer	70.000 €	1	70.000 €
Project Manager	50.000 €	1	50.000 €
Content Creator	50.000 €	2	100.000 €
Partnership & Communication Manager	50.000 €	1	50.000 €
Financial & Budget Manager	50.000 €	1	50.000 €
Legal Advisor (ext.)	25.000 €	1	25.000 €
Total			**420.000 €**

The initial cost of building the website is estimated at 75,000 euros. This budget will cover development, design, and initial operational expenses. To efficiently manage the platform, we need a dedicated core team.

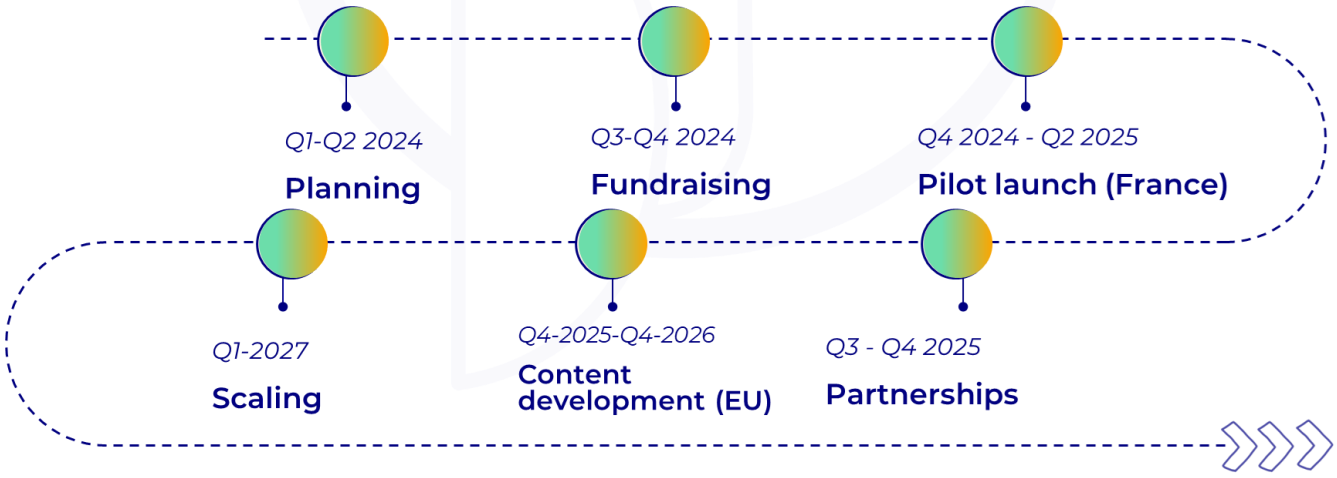
Team

The team will consist of six permanent positions, a project manager (50,000 euros/year), a software developer (75,000 euros/year), two content creators (50,000 euros/year each), one partnership & communication manager (50,000 euros/year) and a financial & budget manager (50,000 euros/year). The **project manager** is responsible for overseeing the project and coordinating the team, defining the strategy, key milestones and setting objectives, as well as keeping track of their fulfilment. This position is representing the platform towards key entities and stakeholders. In this representative function, the project manager is also tasked with international fundraising. A permanent **software developer** will be responsible for the technical aspects, functionality and maintenance process of the platform once it is set up by the external company. Two **content creators** will curate engaging content to keep the platform dynamic and informative, as well as having responsibility for marketing. The **partnership & communications manager** is a permanent position on the interactions with the stakeholders, such as national energy agencies and local youth groups. The sixth position is dedicated to the **management of the finances & budget.**

In addition, to the internal core team the platform will engage with external parties. Firstly, the external business which sets up the initial platform. Second, a legal advisor (25,000 euros/year) will ensure that the platform complies with all legal requirements. This team will implement this existing successful business model, ensuring its sustainability and effectiveness in engaging and empowering young changemakers.

Timeline

Project task	2024				2025				2026				2027	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Resource planning and project initiation by a core team	■	■												
Business plan preparation and approval		■												
Fundraising			■	■										
Building the pilot website				■	■									
Inauguration of a national pilot website						■								
Resource planning and project initiation for the website							■	■						
Partnership and stakeholders' development								■	■					
Content development								■	■	■	■	■		
Inauguration of the website across Europe													■	



2. EmpowerED: A University Module for Student-Led Energy Transition Workshops for High School Pupils

Objective

Given the urgent requirement for an educational paradigm which can adapt to rapid societal change in light of the ongoing energy transition, this proposal will **codify a syllabus for a module for third-level institutions**.[1] This syllabus will be **centralised and pan-European** in scope, and adopts a transdisciplinary,[2] modular approach. It will leverage the university students enrolled in this course to organise workshops which equip second-level pupils with an insight and skill-set into the energy transition.

Studies from several European countries show that existing formal education (secondary, vocational, or higher) fails to equip young people with sufficient knowledge about climate and energy related topics. Furthermore, students are generally not aware of the concept of the just energy transition, or what it stands for. This proposal rectifies these deficiencies in the education sector.

State of the art

Despite there being a number of educational initiatives, there are no pan-European transdisciplinary initiatives which service the needs that this proposal addresses. However, we were able to find a number of programmes which informed our methodological approach.

Fostering collaborative educational programmes between universities and high schools means seeking out **strategic, enduring and mutually beneficial partnerships** between educational organisations. Educational partnerships between schools and institutions of higher education provide a powerful means for enhancing student achievement, **promoting university enrollment and delivering educational benefits** for all parties involved.

[1] For the sake of brevity, the term "university" is used throughout to refer to any appropriate third-level educational institution.
[2] The desire for a transdisciplinary approach stems from the fact that energy transitions challenges are complex and go well beyond one discipline, alongside a desire to curate a syllabus that is widely applicable across many university departments.

Energy transition workshops targeting high schools given by university students leverage the latter's existing knowledge and provide an opportunity to **address the knowledge gap within the formal educational system** by using innovative educational methods that move away from the traditional teaching approach. For example, a recent study found that the collaboration between two distinct age groups (with a small age gap) proved to be extremely beneficial to the learning experience of pupils.

Despite the potential **advantage of this learning method**, energy and climate workshops for high school students in Europe are usually facilitated by experts and rarely delivered by university students.[3]

In addition, this proposal can **leverage the connections and expertise of existing European networks** (e.g. European Youth Energy Network) and local youth organisations with a focus on deepening the youth's knowledge on energy-related issues.[4]

Methodology

This proposal comprises two interconnected levels - an **administration level** whereby the **syllabus will be designed** and the necessary network established, and an **implementation level** whereby the **programme will be piloted.**

The following framework provides direction (rather than dictation) as to the methodology and mechanisms used in establishing and running the course - specific details are dependent upon the composition of the consortium and at the discretion of the academic involved.

[3] See examples: SEAI in Ireland, Panda Labs for a Just Transition in Eastern Europe or Energy Transition Academy by Reboot and E-redes in Portugal.
[4] For further information, see Reboot in Portugal or LEDS student organisation from Italy.

Administration level

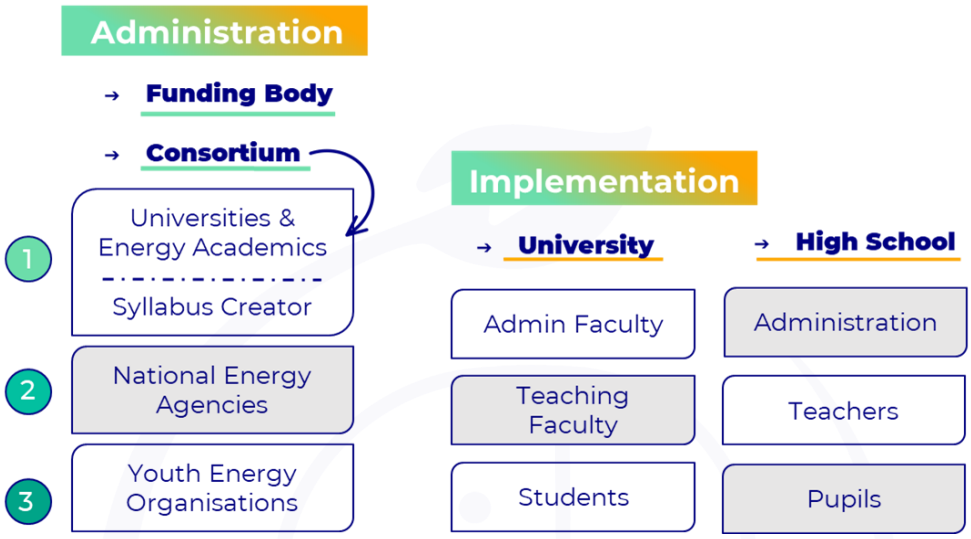


Figure 2. A graphic depicting the stakeholders involved in the proposal and their interactions

This proposal champions the creation of a **consortium of stakeholders** who are invested in the energy transition, who will be afforded administrative oversight over the project. This consortium would encompass the **administrative bodies of universities,[5] individual academics working in energy, national energy agencies, and European and local youth energy organisations.** Following its foundation, this consortium would be responsible for the creation of a transdisciplinary centralised syllabus (henceforth called the Energy Transition Syllabus) for a university-level module concerning the many facets of the energy transition.

The consortium is additionally responsible for securing appropriate funding to finance the research and the implementation of the programme. This **syllabus** is to be created **with the following specifications** by an academic researcher belonging to (or hired by) the consortium:

[5] Associations of universities such as the Russell Group or Universitas 21 may also be considered as consortium partners.

- **Transdisciplinary** - considering the energy transition from many perspectives, beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries, melding STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and social approaches.

- **Modular** - the syllabus is to have *70%* centralised material,[6] with the remaining material to be developed in a bespoke fashion by the university delivering the course to ensure regional relevance and applicability.

- **Robust** - developed over the course of 1.5 - 2 years, subjected to peer review via publications and conferences to ensure pedagogical best practice.[7]

- **Applicable** - the researcher is also required to create an evolving, editable, centralised repository of information and teaching materials for the workshops. (the consortium is responsible for maintenance and quality assurance of the repository and collection/processing of feedback)

The consortium is furthermore charged with developing (or leveraging existing) linkages with universities so as to identify pilot institutions.[8] The module's **flexible design** makes it possible to be **implemented in many settings**, as building on existing outreach programmes allows this initiative to save time on forging a network and to follow already-established best practices.

The **rationale motivating this administrative approach** is as follows:

- **Academic-driven:** Ensuring that the syllabus design is spearheaded by academia will mean that materials created are of a high quality, are **modular** and applicable for their audience, and are flexible and adaptive to changes. These factors, alongside the control and autonomy they possess in this framework, will greatly incentivise the universities to adopt the module.

[6] 70% is adopted as a compromise between a syllabus which is overly prescriptive, and one which is so unfinished as to be infeasible to implement.
[7] This peer review process is an additional opportunity to engage interested academics.
[8] It may be more straightforward to liaise with universities that have existing connections to local schools, and those with academics engaged in the consortium.

- **Cost minimising:** The funding secured by the consortium will be utilised to fund the research into the syllabus creation. Delegating the work in this fashion means that the universities shoulder costs associated with running the module, as usual.
- **Flexible and feasible:** This approach will develop a syllabus which has the necessary flexibility to be **widely applicable**, and circumvents many of the obstacles which would impede feasibility (cost, rigidity, over-prescription).

The benefit to the stakeholders is that the universities and academics are in a position to implement a new, desirable, high-quality module at significantly **reduced cost and effort**, costs are kept to a minimum while energy agencies and organisations are able to expand their outreach to the youth and community impact via the workshops in high school.

Implementation level

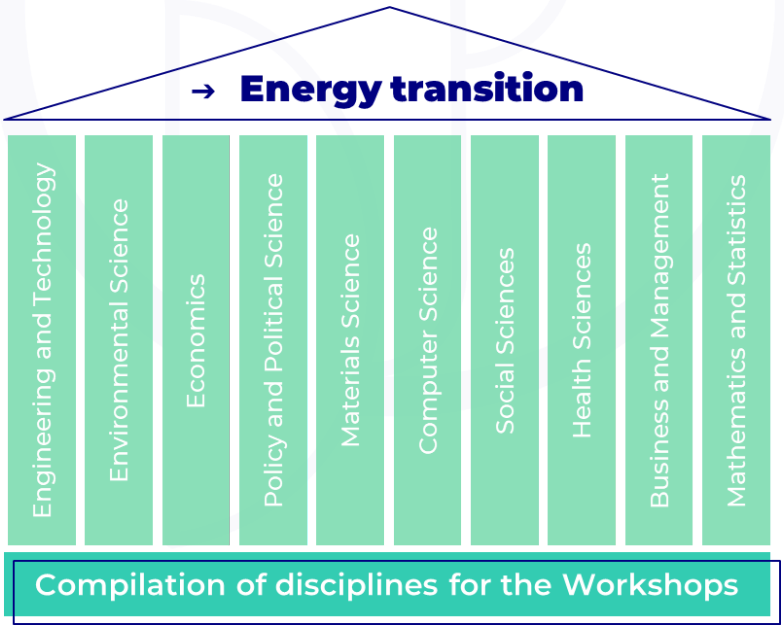


Figure 3. A thematic schematic showing the ten disciplines covered by the energy transition syllabus

Once this administrative structure is established, we pivot towards implementing the module at **pilot universities**. In order to facilitate this, it is **contingent upon the module organiser** of the university delivering the module to do the following:[9]

- **Administrative injection** - Review the existing modules offered by the university and, given the resources required, determine how to optimally integrate this energy transition course within their programme structure curriculum (either by altering an existing course or creating a new one). Participating high school(s) should be contacted and confirmed by the university prior to the commencement of the course. The course organiser must also identify a contact person at the partnering high school to ensure smooth coordination between the university and the school.

- **Design** - The module organiser will then need to decide on the learning objectives and syllabus of their course; they do so with autonomy, but have to select at least 3 disciplines from the Energy Transition Syllabus to ensure an overarching, transdisciplinary approach.

- **Specification/Development** - It is then incumbent upon the module organiser to create teaching materials to cover their own specific regional challenges, filling the modular component and ensuring relevance.[10] This will include the provision of teaching hours dedicated to skills surrounding pedagogy and presentation.

- **Translation** - *(If necessary)* the faculty additionally translate material from English to the language in which the course will be delivered;[11] they subsequently upload these materials to the centralised repository - relying on the repository to reduce redundancies is key for the efficient upscaling of the proposal.

[9] This suggested framework is written in the context of a pilot university, but is implementable to any university offering the module to its students.
[10] This involves creating the outstanding 30% of the syllabus and ensuring it is regionally relevant.
[11] The decision to delegate translation responsibility to the faculty is partially borne of a desire for minimal centralised administration, and partially a reflection of the highly technical nature of some of the documents which will be involved.

- **Evolving Responsibilities** - acting upon feedback received from students and high school pupils, adapting the syllabus to remain relevant, liaising with the consortium.

With these tasks completed, the module is ready to be delivered. The structure of the course is at the discretion of the module organiser, but the **suggested steps undertaken by the students** are:

- The cohort enrolled on the university module are subdivided into **groups of 3-5 people**, with each group choosing one among the pre-selected disciplines from the Energy Transition Syllabus.

- The group's research begins with each student conducting **guided independent learning** to familiarise themselves with their chosen topic. They present their findings within the university class (both for the dissemination of information and to develop presentation skills). The module organiser then assembles new **blended groups**, with a student representing each thematic group as an expert.

- With the university course completed, the students proceed to **delivering the workshop** their group has designed at the high school. They receive **feedback** from the pupils in the school, both via a survey and via gamified formative assessment. They then write and submit a **group report** detailing their research findings, workshop experience.

To facilitate and support the workshops themselves, **the teacher at the high school must:**

- **ensure participation of pupils and manage logistics** - provisioning an appropriate space, timetabling, delivery of certificate to participants (signed by consortium partners).

The benefits reaped by the universities are that they have a means of **implementing a new course idea** on a highly relevant and practical topic inexpensively and to a high standard. They additionally have the opportunity to

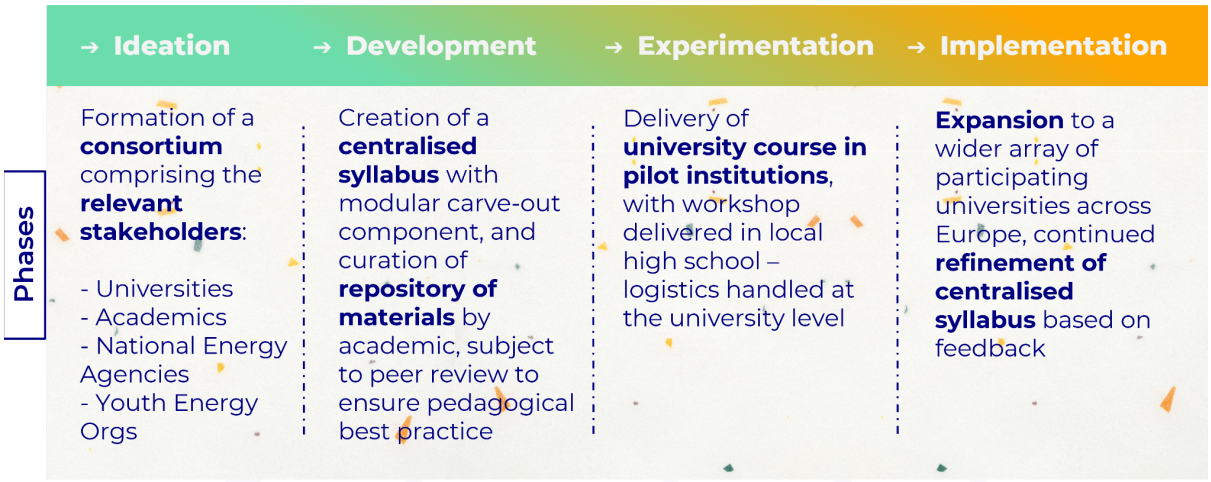
provide **holistic development** and **desirable graduate attributes** to their students. The *Energy Transition Workshops* provides an opportunity for university students to gain critical knowledge and skills beyond traditional curricula, while also gaining first **hands-on experience in science communication and teaching**. In addition, this will provide students with a real-world educational environment to apply their expertise in practice, in a way which is bespoke to the challenges faced by their local community. Moreover, by engaging with the proposed initiative, universities can **increase their visibility among future applicants**. Importantly, the workshops can provide invaluable insights on pupils' perspective, lived experience, knowledge and ideas regarding the energy transition.

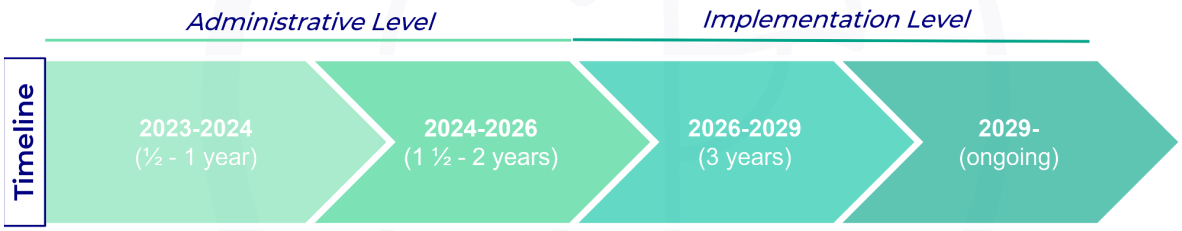
By participating, high schools open an unique opportunity for pupils to acquire **knowledge on a highly relevant** topic which is currently underserved, to partake in **intergenerational dialogue surrounding energy**, and to develop **soft skills** beyond those provided in traditional secondary education. The schools can achieve these benefits with minimal additional administrative strain or teaching resources, widening participation. Furthermore, due to the unique *"by youth, for youth"* nature of the workshops, the distance between educator and pupil is diminished greatly, and pupils are provided with an inclusive space for **orientation and reflection regarding their personal future path**.[12]

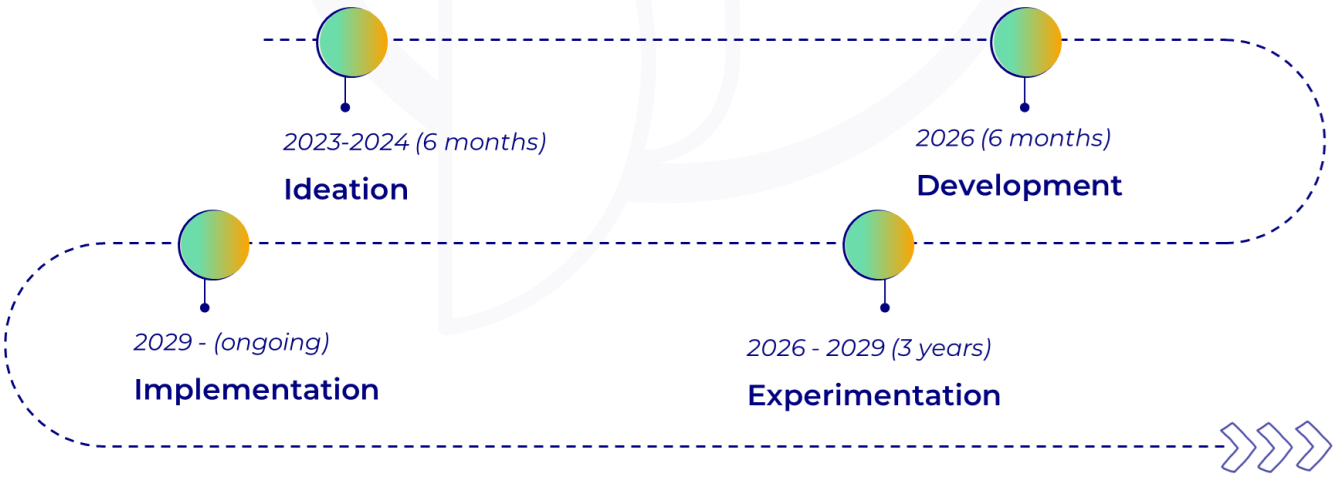
To incentivise participation, recognise pupils' efforts, and increase their own outreach, the consortium will issue **certificates of participation** which can further increase a pupil's potential as a future university and/or job applicant in energy-related fields. As such, participating high schools adopt a **pioneering leadership role**, strengthening their commitment to youth not just of today, but also of tomorrow.

[12] Having such a space is especially relevant for pupils towards the end of secondary education, which is why the proposed workshops specifically target pupils in the penultimate year of high school as this is a time to reflect and inform oneself about potential, future-relevant academic and professional paths.

Timeline


→ Ideation
→ Development
→ Experimentation
→ Implementation
Phases
Formation of a **consortium** comprising the **relevant stakeholders**:
- Universities
- Academics
- National Energy Agencies
- Youth Energy Orgs
Creation of a **centralised syllabus** with modular carve-out component, and curation of **repository of materials** by academic, subject to peer review to ensure pedagogical best practice
Delivery of **university course in pilot institutions**, with workshop delivered in local high school – logistics handled at the university level
Expansion to a wider array of participating universities across Europe, continued **refinement of centralised syllabus** based on feedback


Administrative Level
Implementation Level
Timeline
2023-2024
(½ - 1 year)
2024-2026
(1 ½ - 2 years)
2026-2029
(3 years)
2029-
(ongoing)


2023-2024 (6 months)
Ideation
2026 (6 months)
Development
2029 - (ongoing)
Implementation
2026 - 2029 (3 years)
Experimentation

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3. Youth NEETs Just Energy Transition Training

Objective

This proposal focuses on implementing a training programme designed specifically for European **young individuals who are currently not in employment, education, or training (NEETs)** in order to help them integrate the renewable energy labour market.

It addresses the **deficiency in vocational skills required for the energy transition in the European Union**. According to the European Commission, the achievement of the REPowerEU targets will require the creation of 3.5 million jobs in all renewable energy sectors by 2030, compared to the current level of 1.3 million. The lack of a skilled labour force could constitute a **threat to the growing deployment of renewable energies** in Europe. But it is also an opportunity to unleash the potential of young people, assisting them to enter the labour market so as to close the skill gap in the industry.

One viable option to address this challenge could be to explore the unexpressed talent of young European people currently not engaged in any training, education or jobs. As of 2022 in the European Union, on **average 11.7% of young people** aged 15-29 years old were classified as NEETs. Statistics vary widely across EU member states: on the two opposite sides there are Romania, displaying the largest

proportion of NEETs (19.8%), and the Netherlands recording a NEETs rate of 4.2%. Considering heterogeneity in both NEETs' necessities and European landscape for energy transition, the implementation of this proposal will initially have a **country specific focus targeting Romania.**

State of the art

Both European and national level actors have implemented initiatives to integrate NEETs into society and the job market by providing training and employment opportunities, and can provide valuable inputs for the implementation of this proposal. One example is the **Intercept Project** carried out in Italy, Malta and Lithuania which **connected young NEETs with green companies**. Experience from EU programmes such as **Youth Guarantee** underlined the need for effective strategies to involve NEETs and the relevance of factors characterising the NEETs population such as **gender gap and urban-rural divide.**

An example of **company-driven training programmes** targeting young NEETs is Generation Unlimited Spain, in which a partnership of private and public entities, led by UNICEF Spain and Iberdrola, funded and designed training programmes focused on the **installation and maintenance of photovoltaic panels**, targeting young people in vulnerable situations.

In Romania, different initiatives have been carried out in order to respond to the labour demand of an expanding renewable energy sector. One example is the **Valea Jiului Academy**, a ten-year programme providing re-skilling courses focusing on **wind energy and energy distribution to 8,000 ex-coal miners**. Even though this programme is not targeting NEETs specifically, similar actors could provide valued expertise.

Methodology

Formation of the group of volunteers

EYEN or EYEF participants establish a **group of volunteers** on their own or reach out to other youth organisations (mainly working in Romania) to present the proposal.

Formation of the steering group

The established group of volunteers contact and present the proposal to specific NGOs and private associations in Romania. As most of the NEET people in Romania live in rural areas, the group focuses on **organisations connected to rural places**. The aim is to present them our proposal and invite them to join the team.

Formation of the consortium

1. The steering group presents the idea to the **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Energy** in Romania, requesting their budgetary and organisational support.

2. The steering group reaches out to the **National Employment Agency** to collaborate on the proposal. The additional goal is to obtain in-depth data and evaluation of NEETs.

3. The National Employment Agency, jointly with the steering group, identifies and contacts **green energy companies** to become part of the project.

4. In collaboration with selected green energy companies and the National Employment Agency, a **consortium is established at the national level,** whereas initial actions could be held and focused on specific regions.

Training Programme Design

1. The consortium defines the training programme, focusing on:

    a. **educational objectives**: the learning outcomes related to theoretical knowledge

    b. **skillset specifications:** identification and categorisation of both technical and soft skills that participants need to acquire, ranging from hands-on techniques in green technologies to interpersonal and management skills

c. **training delivery methods**: decision on the approach of the course (online, in-person or hybrid)

d. **engagement strategy**: recognising the unique socio-economic backgrounds of NEETs, the programme will:
   - address the diverse challenges they face, ensuring inclusivity
   - offer financial incentives from the outset, making the programme attractive and feasible for them
   - collaboration with local community leaders to promote the benefits and opportunities of the training.

e. **legal compliance and ethical behaviour framework**:
   - performance evaluation: adopt a transparent and standardised method for assessing participant progress
   - youth safeguarding: introduce strict measures to prevent any exploitation of young participants
   - remuneration standards: mandate the disbursement of at least a minimum wage during training and internship periods. Additionally, ensure the compliance with all the other workers' rights
   - certification process: issue recognized certificates upon successful completion of the programme

f. operational

2. Consultation with various stakeholders, such as trade unions and youth organisations, to finalise the training programme.

Execution and evaluation

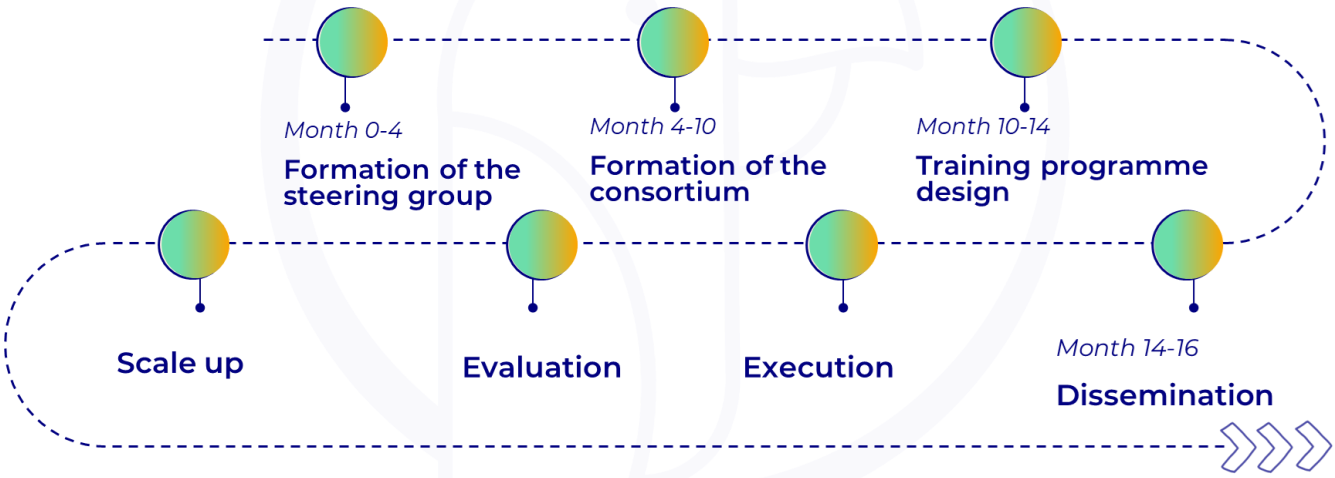
1. **Dissemination** of the programme with the help of various actors (employment agency, local community leaders, etc.) and channels to reach out to NEETs people in an accessible manner.
2. **Selection process** uses a first come, first served basis.

3. Participants attend the training programme and have a **chance of being hired** by the company upon successful completion and positive evaluation by the training provider.
4. The programme is **evaluated** through participants' and stakeholders' feedback and by measuring various metrics (attendance rate, employment success rate, share of attendees being successfully hired, etc.).

Execution on larger scale

The programme and the project roadmap is replicated in other European countries according to the specificity and requirements of other European nations.

Timeline



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4. European Youth Energy Council

Objective

The primary objective of the European Youth Energy Council (EYEC) is to **empower and engage young people from diverse backgrounds by facilitating their active contributions to energy-related policy-making processes all across Europe.** Young people are currently underrepresented in European political decision making processes: while one in five (18%) Europeans is between the ages of 18 and 35, just one in fifteen (6%) of Members of the European Parliament are in the same age group.

EYEC will take the initial steps to address the issues of youth underrepresentation in the European context by providing a **mechanism to advise policy-making processes** around energy transition. EYEC will be made up of **representatives from each of the 46 European countries**, with each representative being their country's National Focal Point (NFP), a role which entails working with existing national youth organisations and local authorities to implement and advocate for strategies agreed by the EYEC.

EYEC Members will work together to advocate for **more ambitious action and for specific policies** that will accelerate the European energy transition. Within the EYEC, they will work together to build **awareness**, contribute to **education** programmes and **advise** on policies related to the energy transition. The Council

will be self-governing and will be given the freedom to define its aims and goals within this framework, allowing for the priorities of EYEC Members to be addressed and facilitating an iterative approach to influencing policy.

State of the art

While there are various existing examples of programmes that aim to improve European youth engagement in policy-making processes, they differ significantly to the EYEC on their scope and focus. To maximise EYEC's impact and success, it will **adopt and implement best practices** from existing youth engagement initiatives at both national and European levels, such as the European Youth Parliament (EYP) and National Energy Councils (e.g. in Austria and Denmark). Germany has also supported youth engagement in energy policymaking, through establishing a youth ministry within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action that consists of youth organisations to improve their policymaking processes.

A key example of best practice that EYEC will adopt is the **principle of inclusive selection criteria**, which is the hallmark of several successful youth programmes across Europe. For example, the EYP serves as an excellent example of an EU-level organisation that has successfully engaged young people from diverse backgrounds in policy discussions. By drawing from a **diverse range of voices and perspectives**, EYEC will be a comprehensive and equitable representation of youth interests across Europe.

Methodology

The structure of EYEC has been designed to maximise the impact and effectiveness of its operations, through a clear organisational hierarchy and strategic partnerships (shown in Figure 1):

- **EYEC will act as the central body** to the structure and will be made up of representatives of countries from the European region as defined by the Council of Europe.
- A **dedicated Secretariat** will be drawn or developed in collaboration with an existing European youth organisation, which will provide logistical support and manage the selection process and act in line with principles of the European Code of Conduct.

- EYEC will also be supported by an **Advisory Board**, made up of experts.
- Each country will have a **National Focal Point** (NFP), made up of the country's EYEC representative and with the goal of implementing the policies and strategies agreed at EYEC on a national level in collaboration with national youth organisations and energy ministries.

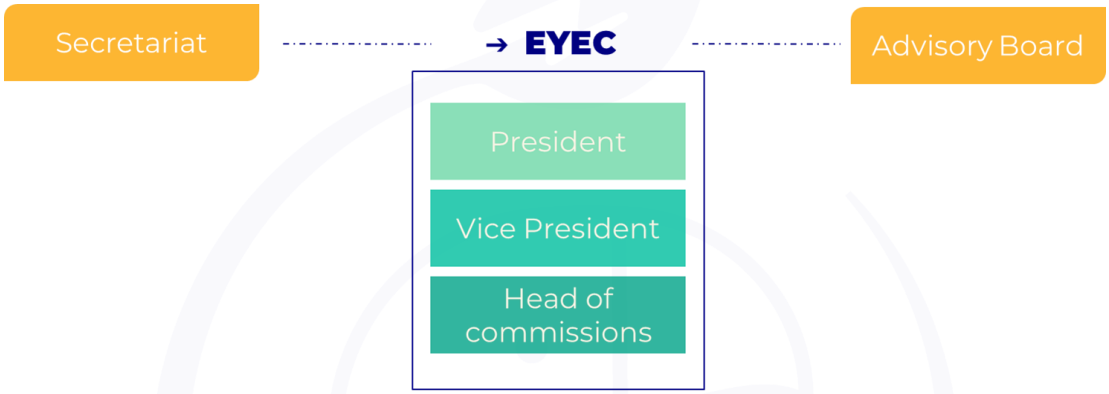


Figure 1. Organisational Structure of the EYEC

The Secretariat will manage the selection process for EYEC Members and will be responsible for the day-to-day management, coordination and public relations associated with EYEC's activities. EYEC Members will be selected according to specific criteria defined to ensure that EYEC achieves genuine representation of European youth whilst upholding a high standard of experience and education among its members.

The **selection criteria** will include an age limit (18 to 35), a focus on gender diversity and socioeconomic inclusivity. It will also prioritise selection of Members with **interdisciplinary perspectives**. The selection process will be transparent, with clear criteria, deadlines, and evaluation mechanisms. This transparency will help build trust in EYEC's selection process and ensure the diversity of voices that are represented.

In its first session, the EYEC will vote on the President, Vice-President and Heads of Commissions, which will include other internal roles and administrative procedures (where they agree on how to build consensus around their advice and advocacy).

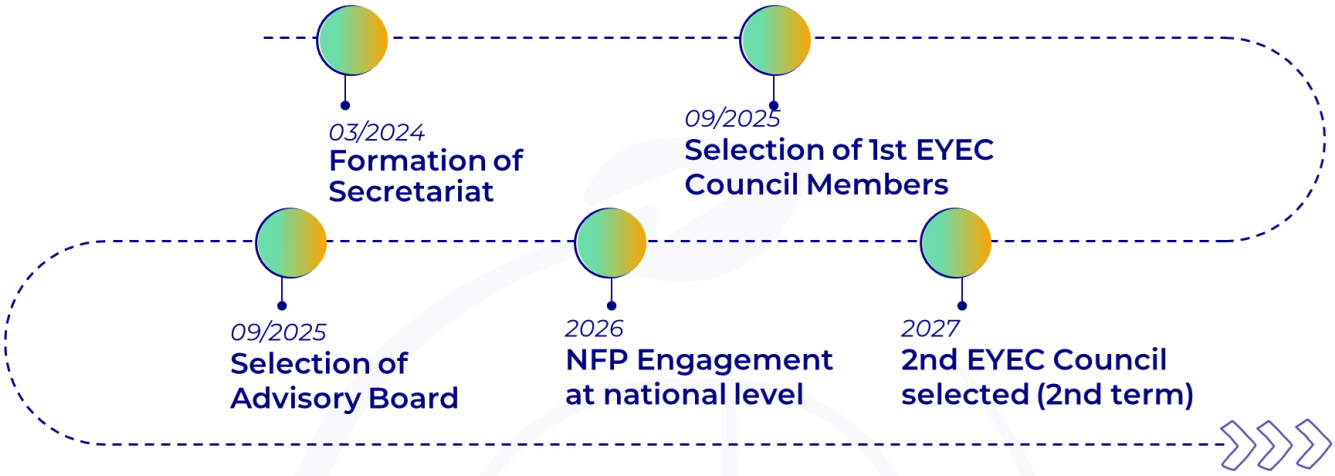
The **Advisory Board** will be composed of **experts, advocates, and supporters with diverse backgrounds**, and will be selected by the EYEC Members to support the goals of each term. They will provide strategic guidance, connections, and expertise to support EYEC's mission.

Each EYEC Member will act as an **NFP** for the respective country, gauging the opinions of youth within each country and aiming to implement the plans and recommendations agreed by the EYEC. They will bridge the national and European level actions of the EYEC, serving as a **contact point for national youth organisations and local authorities representing youth**. The NFP will build their team in collaboration with existing national youth organisations. If the existing bodies in the country do not exist or do not align with the EYEC criteria, the representative will build an organisation team.

The creation of the EYEC could be funded by the European Youth Foundation, which provides structural and activities funding for youth engagement. Once the EYEC is established, projects could also be funded by different **European funds**. The EYEC would also aim to tap into both public and private funds through the organisations they aim to partner with, prioritising philanthropic donations to maintain its freedom and independence. Each NFP will be in charge of providing and allocating funds to their local activities. **Regular training sessions and conferences** will be organised locally within each NFP to ensure all members are up-to-date about the latest developments in the energy sector and to allow the EYEC Member to collect opinions from youth within their countries.

In conclusion, EYEC has the potential to be a driving force in shaping European energy policy, focusing on engaging and empowering young individuals from diverse backgrounds. Its mission is to foster an inclusive and equitable energy transition in Europe. Join us on this journey to create a sustainable energy future, driven by the youth, for the future.

Timeline



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5. National Talent Pool for Blue Collar Workers within the Energy Sector

Objective

Our proposal is to establish an **online platform** that addresses the pressing need for blue-collar workers in the energy transition, which includes areas such as **heat pumps, renewable energies, HVAC, biomass, e-mobility, automation**, and more. This platform aims to pave the way for potential workers to **embark on a promising career path**. Simultaneously, it provides a space for companies seeking blue-collar workers to **advertise their job opportunities and upskilling programs**. Initially, our focus will be on implementing this platform at a national level, with a long-term vision of expanding its reach globally.

The energy transition cannot happen without **blue-collar workers**, yet they are a group that are **typically excluded from conversations about transition.** The need for this platform is threefold: ecological, economic, and social. From an ecological perspective, accelerating the energy transition is crucial for moving away from fossil fuels. In terms of the economy, there is a macro-level concern about the lack of a trained workforce to fulfil our economic production and service potential. This shortage of trained workers is a key concern for companies in Europe.

On a micro level, businesses are unable to fulfil their contracts and initiate their planned projects due to workforce shortages. From a social standpoint, the working class, especially the youth, are **unable to participate in the financial benefits of the energy transition**. These groups have traditionally been neglected but are a cornerstone of society and the energy transition. There is also fear among

communities associated with the old energy landscape (such as coal workers) about their future. This platform aims to address these concerns by providing opportunities and fostering talent in the energy transition sector.

State of the art

Blue-collar workers are in high demand in the energy transition, but there are a number of barriers to their participation, like the recruitment market not adapting to the current demand, accessibility to working class people, and geographic limitations. One newly emerged platform, **greentech.training**, aims to bridge these gaps between the supply and demand for a wide range of skilled labour in the energy sector, primarily operating in Germany. Other platforms, such as **Infojobs** in Italy and Spain, address some of the challenges in matching skilled blue-collar workers to jobs. Additionally, there are platforms that do the same for young people looking for trainee opportunities in collaboration with universities in work-study or **"earn as you learn" programs**.

Our review of the current landscape has revealed a **lack of matching services specifically tailored for blue-collar workers in the energy transition**. However, we are aware of the fast-paced dynamics in the labour market and will reevaluate the concept continuously to leverage synergy-effects with existing and new market participants to cater the individual needs of each country. With our platform, we aim to create a centralised talent pool for those interested in contributing to the successful delivery of the energy transition.

Methodology

The three main stakeholders of this proposal are the blue collar workers looking for jobs and upskilling opportunities, the businesses in need of new talent, and relevant government ministries. The aim of the platform will be to **match the demand for blue collar workers with the labour supply** and will thus have touchpoints with public institutions addressing labour demand for the green transition.

The main beneficiaries will be blue collar workers looking for a job and the companies looking to hire. Blue collar workers would be able to create profiles and upload CVs. We suggest that the platform provides opportunities in particular for

youth, nonetheless non-youth workers will be within the scope of the platform. Adding **labels on the web page (youth opportunities and opportunities for experienced workers)** will help users easily navigate the platform based on their experience and age bracket.

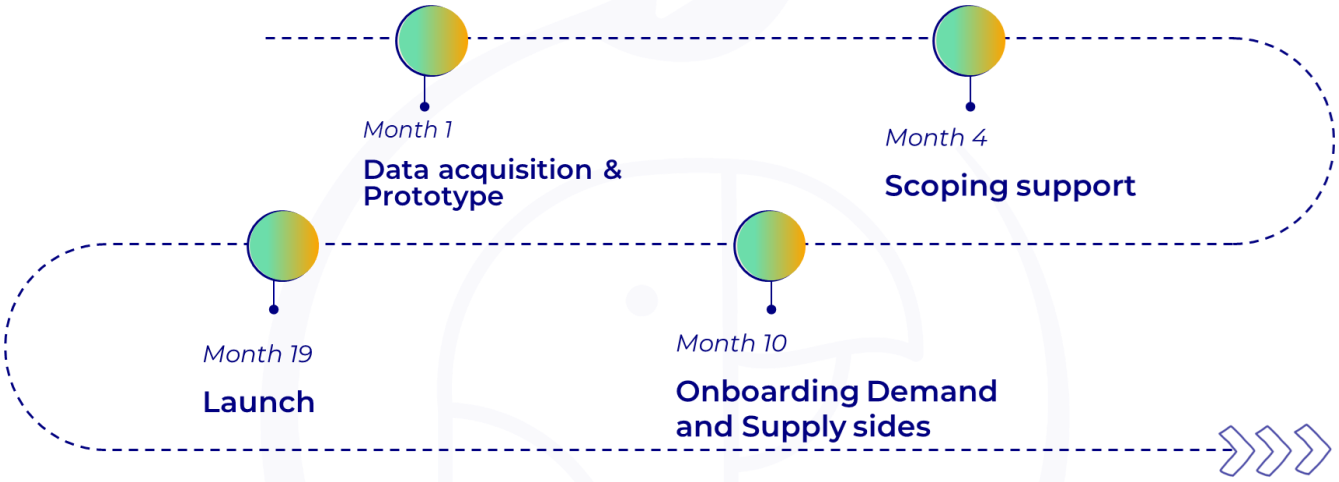
Due to the complex nature of the energy transition, this platform will aim to not only provide opportunities for blue-collar **career starts**, but also facilitate **career changes**. As many already have manual jobs, the platform will allow users to **identify their training and objectives** (whether that is a career change or a career start in the decarbonisation sector). Users will be able to **create detailed profiles using key words to ease the search of companies** that are looking to hire. While this platform would be particularly useful for graduates from trade schools with basic vocational training, any person interested in blue collar opportunities would be encouraged to apply. Users without prior manual work experience can be matched with companies that provide basic training.

Companies would be incentivised to use the platform and provide detailed opportunities for both youth and non-youth individuals. **Job details could feature training offerings, pay range and required experience levels.** In the pilot stage of the project, companies will not be asked to pay a fee to use the platform in order to encourage uptake. However, a fee may be introduced at a later stage, once the platform has demonstrated its proof of concept.

The **Ministry of Labor** will be the driver of this project by financing it and supporting the implementation phase. Ministries will play a crucial role in reaching out to students and young workers. To support blue collar workers who have limited access to the internet, **local employment agencies** would provide support. Additionally, to facilitate access to students, employment agencies can also extend their support to the project. We envisage the platform would be **in part paid for by the government and delivered by a non-profit agency**, which would be responsible for designing and maintaining the platform. Public authorities working on labour issues are in the unique position to enable the matching between blue-collar workers and companies as they have the network of contacts and institutions to facilitate this process. They not only serve as a **vital link to the target audience** but also stand as **potential implementers** of the initiative.

In order to offer additional services in the mid term, it'll be studied which is the most cost-effective way to offer incentives to companies to use the platform. Furthermore, users looking for a job could have access to 3rd party training and other benefits.

Timeline



6. Work Study Programs in the Energy Sector

Objective

In pursuit of their career goals, young people often face the issues of **work experiences not matching their future career goals**, being accessible only to privileged students, or being completed just to satisfy the university's curriculum. In addition, many of them are **paid little or even unpaid**, lasting only for a few months. Overall, this results in dissatisfaction among students which are organising to oppose these conditions. In order not to discourage prospective students from entering the energy field, we should try to **make the sector more approachable**. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the energy sector will **require many more workers than are available** on the job market today. These new openings will also require **new skills** in the rapidly-changing energy market.

To bridge this gap and solve the future shortage of skilled workers in the energy sector, we are proposing to **create work-study programs in the European continent, benefiting both students and companies by establishing a long-lasting student-company relationship.** Companies would benefit from tailoring the university's curriculum to the needs of their future workforce. Students will benefit from pursuing education in the energy sector while maintaining financial stability.

In essence, the proposal highlights cross-sectoral collaboration, fulfilling energy industry requirements through **optimised academic curriculum**, resulting in increased employment levels. **Universal access** – guaranteeing that all students, regardless of their educational institution (public or private), and background, have equal access to these opportunities – is central to our proposal.

State of the art

Some work-study programs are in place in some European countries, such as Germany and France. In France, the ***Alternance* program** has been active since 1993, currently **supporting 930,000 ongoing apprenticeship contracts** by the end of 2022. These numbers cover a diverse range of work-study programs, spanning from secondary education to higher-level diplomas and professional titles. Our specific reference proposal aims at the Bachelor and Master's level apprenticeships of the French energy sector.

This apprenticeship combines theoretical education at apprenticeship training centres, often affiliated or part of the universities, with practical on-the-job training under a contractual agreement with the energy industries. They are accessible to young individuals up to 29 years old and entail compensation determined by the apprentices' age, in addition to the payment of the university fees. Work-study programs provide French students with valuable benefits, including **tuition-free high-level education, a salary, housing assistance, and higher employment prospects and remuneration.** The program has proven effective, however, it would have had a higher impact if scaled up to the European level.

Methodology

The implementation of this proposal and the timeline of its execution will differ from country to country, depending on the country's prior experience in creating work-study programs. To ensure the successful implementation of the proposal, it is necessary to **conduct interviews with stakeholders** from the *Alternance* work-study program in France, while also interviewing stakeholders in the other European countries to better understand how these programs work, including their main challenges and how to overcome them. Accomplishment of the goal depends on the coordination between the European Organizations, national government institutions, educational institutions, and energy companies.

1. From EYEN to Europe

In the first implementation phase, EYEN conducts a comprehensive study of successful models, such as *Alternance*. A dedicated **task force, consisting of local Youth Energy Associations in various countries, NGOs, and external consulting companies** will gather valuable insights for the implementation of the proposal. The result of this phase is a comprehensive **report of testimonials and available data**. EYEN shall leverage this report to formulate a list of clear guidelines that will seek to ensure the program's success and establish proof of concept. These guidelines will include recommendations on how to implement work-study programs.

The results from the data collection will be shared to an international audience by EYEN. International organisations at the European level, such as the **Energy Community, EUNEC, Directorate-General for Energy, European Labour Authority** can support the facilitation of the work-study programs and establish the necessary connections to accelerate the process.

2. From Europe to Nations

In the second phase, the **report will be reviewed and detailed guidelines will be prepared to assist nations in the implementation process.** Additionally, the results will be presented to National Youth Organizations, who will act as a driving force at the national level. The abovementioned European organisations and many more will take an **advocacy role** for the proposal, given that each member country has a dedicated representative within these organisations. The top-down

approach, following the review and acceptance by the organisations at the European level, is vital to the **standardisation and widespread implementation** of the proposal.

3. From Concept to Reality

In the third phase, the proposal will have to be implemented on a **national level**. The Implementation will depend on each country's regulatory landscape and/or their previous experience in formulating work-study programs. In countries where similar programs already exist, the aim would be to **improve these programs based on the formulated guidelines.**

In countries without existing work-study programs, the national governmental bodies, such as the **Ministry of Education, Economy, Energy, Employment** and national equivalents will **take lead in creating work-study programs** based on the guidelines from the EYEN to Europe phase. Responsibility will fall on these key actors for overseeing the initiative with the guidance of the European organisations. Cooperation between the universities and energy companies is necessary to design energy courses in accordance with industry needs.

Stakeholders & Resources

The **European Union** and the cited **European Institutions** are major actors given their support and coordination along the process. These different actors will offer **consulting and workforce to help the implementation on national level**, promoting innovation and national cooperation in the energy sector, while reducing youth unemployment.

National-level governmental bodies are expected to work together to put the proposal into action. They will formulate **regulations and economic incentives** to promote this cooperation between universities and energy companies, with the European organisation guidelines and help. The implementation of work-study programs will be beneficial for the economic and social development of each country.

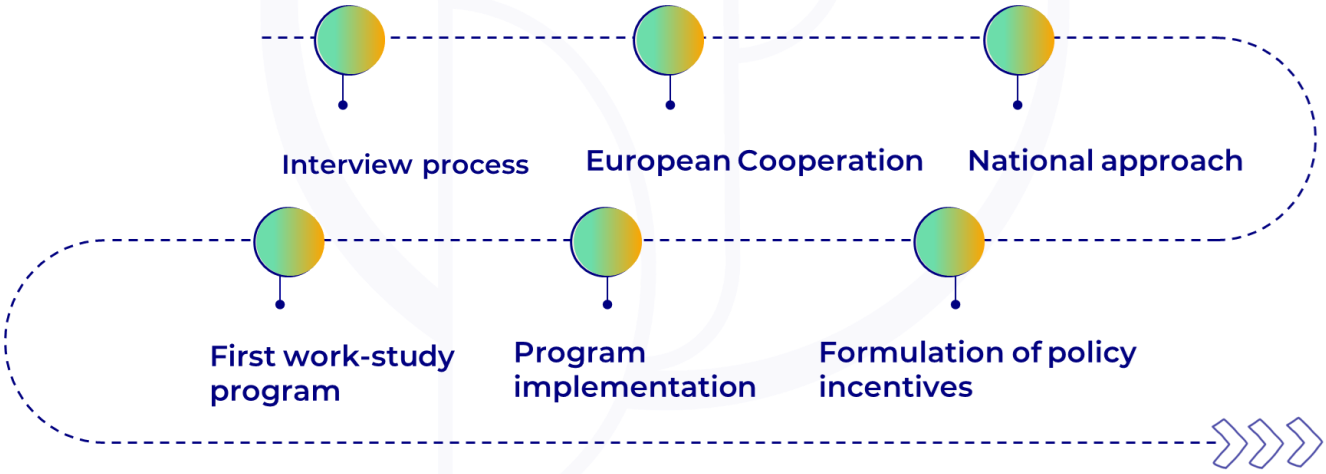
Universities play a crucial role in **diversifying their curricula** to better **accommodate students' work and study schedules.** By establishing strong connections with the energy sector, universities will offer high level theoretical and

professional knowledge, improving students' employment prospects. This will enhance universities' employment rates, performances and reputation, also increasing fundings and advancement.

Energy companies will offer **job positions to students**, paying their salary and/or tuition fees. In return, they will gain access to a **highly skilled and industry-ready workforce**, as well as exemption from specific contributions and exceptional grants, boosting their image and youth engagement.

Students, as the beneficiaries of this proposal, benefit greatly by leveraging the chance to gain **practical work experience while studying** and potentially **lowering their educational costs** through reduced tuition fees and salaries. Moreover, students can expand their professional networks, making them more attractive to future employers.

Timeline



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III. Conclusions

In order for the European energy transition to be just and inclusive, it needs to **accommodate the needs and participatory rights of all.**

The youth, who are key actors in shifting the current paradigm and conventional procedures within the energy sector, acknowledge the urgency of the European energy transition, which has to capitalise from young people's engagement, knowledge, legitimacy and diversity. With the goal of improving youth engagement in the European energy transition, **the proposals presented here are a call to action** for all identified stakeholders and the ones interested in carrying out envisioned activities.

We strongly believe that this process of inclusion and transgenerational consensus puts us on the right path to an **affordable, safe and sustainable European energy sector.**

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