

Social Sciences and Humanities for Advancing Policy in European Energy

Reporting

Project Information

SHAPE-ENERGY

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[Project website](#) 

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Periodic Reporting for period 2 - SHAPE-ENERGY (Social Sciences and Humanities for Advancing Policy in European Energy)

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Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project

SHAPE ENERGY - Social sciences and Humanities for Advancing Policy in European Energy - represents a €2m investment to strengthen and promote Europe's energy-related Social Science and Humanities (energy-SSH) capabilities.

Energy policy in recent decades has been driven, in large part, by innovations in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). This focus has under-utilised understandings developed by

the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) despite the critical role of societal and human issues in understanding and developing future (low-carbon) energy systems across Europe. European funding of energy research and innovation has similarly tended to prioritise STEM, whilst overlooking potentially fruitful avenues of energy-SSH. Overcoming this is not however a simple matter; significant challenges exist. Indeed different disciplines often approach energy-related issues in fundamentally different ways. In order to meet (or indeed re-evaluate) ambitious national and international low-carbon energy targets, it is essential that European energy policy is grounded in a better understanding of where and how energy-SSH disciplines differ, how they correspond with one another, and what implications this has for those who may wish to use insights from energy-SSH (e.g. policymakers, industry).

In this context, the SHAPE ENERGY Platform is working to develop Europe's expertise in using and applying energy-SSH through a wide range of activities. Our objectives include: (1) to use innovative approaches to encourage interdisciplinary working across and within academia, industry, government and citizens; (2) to fully involve stakeholders in framing the priorities of the SHAPE ENERGY Platform; (3) to grow the European energy-SSH community, and intentionally target parts of Europe where energy-SSH research is much less well developed; (4) to recognise and build on the success of current networks and initiatives; (5) to help inform and support the H2020 vision, Energy Union strategy and SET-Plan; (6) to include space for discussion of novel questions that challenge the status quo.

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far ^

The first year of the project saw a significant number of activities, which included:

- A deliberative academic workshop where high profile scholars discussed the foundations of a European strategic research agenda for energy-SSH. A key output was the SHAPE ENERGY lexicon which compared and contrasted definitions for 20 energy-related phrases, primarily drawn from the Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Four annotated bibliographies highlighting for non-experts the diversity of energy-SSH research of relevance to Europe across the four SHAPE ENERGY research topics: (1) Energy efficiency and using less; (2) Competitive, secure, low-carbon energy supply; (3) Energy system optimisation and smart technologies; and (4) Transport decarbonisation.
- An online energy-SSH researcher database, listing key details of over 550 European energy-SSH researchers, which is still growing.
- Four reports on energy-SSH themes: (1) Energy and gender; (2) Energy and multi-stakeholder interests; (3) Energy justice; and (4) Energy and the active consumer. The core of each report is centred around a review of research, which then provides the basis for each report's recommendations to the European Commission, other EU projects/platforms, and SHAPE ENERGY itself.
- A solutions workshop at the eceee summer study 2017, launching the Platform to a wider audience.
- An open Call for Evidence which aimed at identifying current understandings of and future priorities for energy research from policy, industry, NGOs and academia.

The second and final year of the SHAPE ENERGY Platform saw a large number of activities

In the second, and final year, of the SHAPE ENERGY PLATFORM saw again a large number of activities and outputs, feeding into the evaluation phase of the project. Activities in the second year included:

- The implementation of the H2020 'sandpits', with over 70 attendees from 35+ H2020 project.
- A further 13 city workshops on local energy needs taking place February-May 2018, in: Ankara, Belgrade, Brasov, Chisinau, Granada, Grand Lyon, Heidelberg, Lisbon, Skopje, Sofia, Trondheim, Utrecht and Zlin.
- The full production of 13 'Research Design Challenge' essays, together with an editorial. This challenge contained three sub-challenges framed as social science research problems on energy relating to control, change and capacity-building in energy systems. Authorship teams each comprised at least 2 researchers from at least 2 European countries.
- The full production of 10 'think pieces'. These interdisciplinary and cross-European contributions explored, critiqued and showcased the ways that different disciplinary approaches can (and should be) integrated for the betterment of future EU energy policy. Authorship teams each comprised at least 3 researchers from at least 2 European countries, covering at least 3 SSH disciplines.
- A final pan-European conference in Brussels in January 2019. This event was the occasion to unveil and debate on the final results of this project to several hundred senior stakeholders, including European and national policymakers, business representatives, civil society, STEM and SSH communities' representatives, press and media. SHAPE ENERGY presented its own 2020-2030 Research and Innovation Agenda, and was the focal point of the debate, allowing for SHAPE ENERGY to highlight a concise vision for the future which builds on the findings of the project.

Throughout this work, the Platform developed an active and engaging communications stream.

Progress beyond the state of the art and expected potential impact (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far) ^

We have provided evidence for how Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) must be supported and have triggered further investment. Our recommendations will help shape the future direction of energy-SSH in Horizon Europe, and wider EU energy governance agendas.

SHAPE ENERGY has gained interest from the EC's DG RTD, e.g. through us being invited to deliver training on how to account for energy-SSH in project management (attended by DG RTD, EASME, INEA, JRC, DG ENER, DG ENV, DG CLIMA). We have also advised DG RTD on the content of energy-SSH funding calls in Horizon 2020, and know that SHAPE ENERGY is already being used as further evidence for why SSH should be 'mainstreamed' across the whole €100bn Horizon Europe programme (not only for energy). SHAPE ENERGY also presented to the EU Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan) steering group, which guides the EU agenda for energy funding, and were since invited to be the sole SSH advisors to the SET-Plan working groups and their action plans. Our seven-principal Research & Innovation Agenda (570+ signatories and growing) is already being used by member states in their negotiating positions on energy-SSH in Horizon Europe (e.g. Norway, Bulgaria, Moldova).

We have supported Horizon 2020 energy project proposals, including via our free database of ~600 EU energy-SSH researchers for partner-searching, and training to members of the EU network of energy National Contact Points. The funded work was... which brought together technical and SSH

energy National Contact Points. The sandpits we ran – which brought together technical and SSH researchers to brainstorm interdisciplinary, policy-relevant proposals – directly led to one consortium winning a €3m Horizon 2020 energy project.

We have equipped the EU at strategic level, and project partners and proposal writers at a practical level, with key people-related tools. This is essential if the EU is to achieve its ambitious energy/climate targets.



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