INITIATE

INITIATE Hackathon – Portugal

Energy Communities and Green Energy Transition

| HACKATHON RULEBOOK

18-19 March 2027

Iscte, Lisbon Campus

These rules set out the conditions for participation, the stages of the competition, the assessment process and the support available to teams at the *Energy Communities and the Green Energy Transition* Hackathon – PORTUGAL organised by Iscte as part of the INITIATE project (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101136775).

01

Scope and Challenge

Even when technical barriers are overcome, energy communities may not be successful in sustainable implementation and long-term operation. Challenges include limited public awareness, a lack of promotion of renewable energy communities, and a lack of public acceptance. In some cases, traditional barriers to renewable energy are evident, e.g., competition for land used for food production, but new challenges are also noticeable, for instance, the acceptance and adoption of household hybrid Renewable Energy Systems (RES) and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).

Energy communities are concentrated in countries with more established welfare societies and attitudes. Widening countries may be limited in this, with grassroots movements and socially driven innovation either completely missing or having little power to shift the policy scene. Economic challenges relate to energy community profitability and optimised operation in the electricity market, optimisation of daily operational generation mix schedule and optimised business model for dispatching of hybrid RES-BESS systems. Other socio-economic challenges include establishing transparent governance models, building trust amongst stakeholders and managing their differing motivations. Consequently, energy communities must demonstrate tangible and equitably distributed benefits, such as lower energy costs, reduced energy poverty, local job creation, and the retention of economic value. Ongoing communication, training and member engagement are also essential for attracting and retaining participants and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The INITIATE Hackathon – Portugal invites teams to develop innovative solutions from a **socio-economic perspective** that promote energy communities and contribute to a just energy transition. Proposals must demonstrate the potential to engage citizens and organisations, improve energy efficiency, reduce costs or energy poverty, and support the local uptake of renewable energy.

The Hackathon takes place in 6 countries. One team will rise to the top and win an immersive experience at Climate KIC in the Netherlands, with the opportunity to take their idea from concept to real-world impact.

02

Stages

The Hackathon has four key stages:

1. **Preparatory training session:** online session on 17 February 2027.

2. **Local competition:** on 18–19 March 2027, teams will come together in person at Iscte – Lisbon Campus for an intensive two-day experience of brainstorming, collaboration, and solution development. Working with their peers and transforming their ideas into innovative, impactful solutions, teams will pitch their concepts to a local jury, which will select the winning team to represent Portugal at the Final Pitching in Europe.

3. **Final pitching:** on June 2027, in the INITIATE final event, the Portuguese winning team pitch in English to an international jury from the European energy innovation ecosystem, joined by INITIATE partners and the European Commission.

4. **Bootcamp experience:** the grand-prize winner team gets an immersive experience at Climate KIC in the Netherlands in the Climate Launchpad bootcamp.

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Participation and registration

Eligibility criteria

University students at any level of study are eligible to participate. For undergraduate students, final-year status is preferred, as the Hackathon requires a certain level of academic knowledge and experience.

Full attendance at Stages 1 and 2 is mandatory, and teams must commit to participating in the Final Pitching (Stage 3) should they win the local competition. The absence of any team member from a mandatory stage or event may result in the immediate disqualification of the entire team.

At least one team member must be fluent in English, as the winning team will be required to present its proposal in English at the Final Pitching event. The local activities however may be conducted in Portuguese.

Local organisers may conduct pre-selection, if necessary. Priority will be given to multidisciplinary teams.

How to apply?

Participants must apply as a team, rather than individually. Each team must consist of three members.

Applications must be submitted by 28 December 2026.

Applications may be submitted in either Portuguese or English.

The selected teams will be announced in February 2027.

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Organisation and Assessment

The pitches

Each team will have 5 minutes to pitch their proposal, followed by a 5-minute Q&A session with the jury.

Winners selection

At the Local Competition a jury of local experts evaluates teams using templates provided by INITIATE and published on the website. Jury members ensure fair evaluations, avoid conflicts of interest and keep evaluations confidential.

At the Final Pitching, an international jury will select the overall grand-prize winner, based on criteria including the solution's potential for scalability, wider implementation, and meaningful impact across Europe.

Prizes and expenses

All participants will receive a Certificate of Participation and a FNAC/El Corte Ingles voucher.

The winning team of INITIATE Hackathon Portugal will travel abroad for the Final Pitching, with Iscte covering travel and accommodation expenses.

The grand-prize-winning team is offered a bootcamp experience at Climate KIC in the Netherlands.

Lunch will be provided for all participants on both days of the Local Competition.

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Mentoring

During the Local Competition (Stage 2), teams will have access to a network of mentors who will support them throughout the development process. Mentors will help teams refine the problem they are addressing, test assumptions, develop and strengthen their solutions, and prepare their final pitch. The mentoring network may include researchers, industry professionals, local authorities, civil society organisations, and experts in energy, climate, and innovation.

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Contact Details

For additional information, send an email to business-analytics-lab@iscte-iul.pt, with the subject **INITIATE Hackathon – Portugal**.

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