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**Evaluarea uniunii energetice europene –   
Dimensiunea socială și societală a tranziției energetice**

**RAPORT DE INFORMARE**   
  
Comitetul Economic și Social European  
  
**Evaluarea uniunii energetice europene – Dimensiunea socială și societală a tranziției energetice**   
(raport de informare)

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# **Introducere**

## Uniunea energetică europeană, lansată de Comisia Europeană în 2015, urmărește să creeze o uniune energetică care să permită consumatorilor din UE – atât gospodăriilor, cât și întreprinderilor – să aibă acces la energie sigură, curată și la prețuri accesibile. În prezent, Comisia Europeană imprimă acestei inițiative un nou impuls politic, ca parte a Pactului verde european.

## Comitetul Economic și Social European (CESE) a dorit să facă uz de prerogativa sa de a întocmi un raport de informare în legătură cu evaluarea uniunii energetice europene, care acoperă numeroase aspecte economice, sociale și de mediu. Comitetul a ales să abordeze dimensiunea socială și societală a tranziției energetice. Pentru îndeplinirea acestei sarcini au fost identificate trei direcții de analiză: sărăcia energetică, implicațiile tranziției energetice asupra ocupării forței de muncă și comunitățile energetice. O atenție deosebită a fost acordată procesului de transpunere a pachetului „Energie curată pentru toți europenii” și implicării societății civile organizate în pregătirea măsurilor legislative adoptate de guvernele naționale.

## Metodologia utilizată de Comitet și toate informațiile colectate de la organizațiile societății civile care au participat la sondaj pentru acest proiect sunt detaliate în anexa tehnică la prezentul raport de informare.

# **Concluzii**

## În sens general, au fost identificate două mari teme recurente pentru fiecare domeniu de analiză: în primul rând, lipsa de finanțare necesară – atât la nivelul UE, cât și la nivel național – și investițiile necesare – publice sau private – pentru a efectua transformările sociale și societale necesare pentru finalizarea tranziției energetice; în al doilea rând, lipsa voinței politice atât la nivel local, cât și la nivel național.

**Sărăcia energetică**

## Uniunea energetică europeană joacă un rol esențial în punerea în aplicare eficientă a Pactului verde european. În același timp, ea trebuie să poată contribui și la îndeplinirea țintelor stabilite în obiectivele de dezvoltare durabilă ale Agendei 2030 și să fie interconectată cu acestea. Această contribuție trebuie să fie realizată printr-o abordare cuprinzătoare, care să integreze aspectele economice, sociale și de mediu și să promoveze buna guvernanță.

## Sărăcia energetică este un fenomen care nu a fost încă definit și/sau recunoscut legal în mai multe state membre. În multe cazuri, autoritățile publice nu au definit încă indicatori clari pentru identificarea celor care se confruntă cu o situație de sărăcie energetică. În plus, lipsa unei definiții comune la nivel european contribuie la adâncirea disparităților. Crearea Observatorului european al sărăciei energetice, o solicitare mai veche a CESE, este un prim pas binevenit pentru colectarea de date și coordonarea celor mai bune practici naționale și locale pentru combaterea sărăciei energetice.

## Sărăcia energetică este, în principal, rezultatul unei combinații de factori: prețuri ridicate la energie, venituri scăzute ale gospodăriilor, calitatea modestă a clădirilor și instalații energetice învechite. Îmbunătățirea calității clădirilor este cea mai bună modalitate prin care autoritățile publice pot interveni în mod eficient și structural.

## Planurile naționale privind energia și clima elaborate de guvernele naționale în contextul pachetului privind energia curată nu sunt considerate a oferi suficiente soluții concrete pentru provocarea reprezentată de sărăcia energetică. Conținutul acestor planuri rămâne vag, iar Comisia propune deja recomandări pentru a le îmbunătăți.

## Dimensiunea legată de sănătate a sărăciei energetice nu este deloc luată în considerare. Acest lucru este, însă, esențial în momentul de față pentru lumea politică europeană în timpul și după criza COVID-19. În plus, provocările legate de sărăcia energetică sunt privite adesea doar din punctul de vedere al încălzirii locuințelor, deși răcirea spațiilor devine o problemă din ce în ce mai mare, din cauza efectului dublu al încălzirii globale și al îmbătrânirii populației europene. Problema mobilității rămâne, de asemenea, insuficient explorată.

* 1. **Impactul tranziției energetice asupra ocupării forței de muncă**

## Tranziția energetică afectează lucrătorii și piața forței de muncă. Chiar dacă tranziția energetică duce la noi oportunități de locuri de muncă și la o mai bună calitate a muncii, ea implică și transformarea locurilor de muncă existente, dispariția unor locuri de muncă și închiderea unităților de producție care nu au reușit să își găsească locul într-un viitor energetic ecologic.

## Sistemul de educație și formare se confruntă cu dificultăți în a se adapta la cererea de noi competențe. Prin urmare, provocarea din punctul de vedere al locurilor de muncă este aceea de a garanta că lucrătorii potriviți au competențele potrivite, la locul potrivit și la momentul potrivit. Orice decalaj în acest domeniu limitează crearea de locuri de muncă în sectoarele aflate în tranziție energetică și implică riscul ca penuria de forță de muncă să împiedice tranziția energetică. Este nevoie de o creștere cantitativă și calitativă a investițiilor publice și private în capitalul uman pentru ca societățile europene să poată răspunde acestor provocări.

## Tranziția energetică înseamnă, de asemenea, sprijinirea regiunilor dependente de industria cărbunelui, precum și a altor sectoare pentru care tranziția energetică nu reprezintă o opțiune.

* 1. **Comunitățile energetice și energia produsă de proiectele cetățenești**

## Comunitățile energetice se dezvoltă în moduri diferite în statele membre ale UE. Cu toate acestea, chiar și în statele membre cele mai avansate din punct de vedere al energiei din surse regenerabile și al prezenței comunităților energetice, contribuția acestora la aprovizionarea cu energie este încă minimă.

## Comunitățile energetice pot fi o posibilitate de a crea o legătură socială între cetățeni prin crearea de valoare la nivel local. Ele pot contribui, de asemenea, la revitalizarea regiunilor care evoluează mai lent și pot fi o modalitate de a face față provocării reprezentate de sărăcia energetică. În același timp, ele pot deveni și un instrument de revitalizare a democrației economice și a celei locale.

## Comunitățile energetice se confruntă la rândul lor cu o lipsă de promovare și de stimulente pentru dezvoltare din partea autorităților publice, ceea ce duce la un nivel modest de acceptare socială.

## Adesea, cadrul legislativ al statelor membre nu este suficient de adecvat pentru buna dezvoltare a comunităților energetice.

* 1. **Punerea în aplicare și consultarea societății civile organizate**

## Comunicarea privind pachetul „Energie curată pentru toți europenii” este satisfăcătoare, într‑o anumită măsură, în condițiile în care organizațiile societății civile au fost, în marea lor majoritate, informate într-un mod transparent.

## Deși procesul de punere în aplicare se află în stadii diferite în statele membre, consultarea publică ar fi trebuit să fie mai bine efectuată, fie mai cuprinzătoare, fie mai devreme în cursul procesului de punere în practică. Același lucru este valabil și pentru elaborarea de către guvernele naționale a planurilor lor energetice și climatice naționale.

# **Recomandări**

## CESE reiterează necesitatea urgentă a unui dialog eficient privind politica energetică europeană. Pandemia de COVID-19 dovedește nevoia urgentă de a garanta că cetățenii și organizațiile societății civile pot juca un rol activ de informare cu privire la deciziile politice care pot contribui la transformarea Europei într-o societate mai rezilientă, mai durabilă și mai echitabilă. CESE reamintește de propunerea sa de instituire a unui dialog permanent cu cetățenii, ca element pregătitor obligatoriu pentru toate deciziile politice majore și toate inițiativele de legiferare pertinente, la nivel european, național și subnațional. Contribuția la dialog și modul în care acesta este luat în considerare ar trebui să fie vizibile în mod public. Pentru a asigura vizibilitatea dialogului, este necesar ca responsabilitatea pentru acesta să revină unui factor de decizie politică al Comisiei Europene, de exemplu comisarului pentru energie sau vicepreședintelui responsabil pentru Pactul verde.

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## CESE reiterează importanța acțiunilor UE de asigurare a unor informații de înaltă calitate pentru cetățenii europeni. În acest scop, Comisia Europeană ar putea iniția realizarea unui portal online unic, care să ofere gospodăriilor europene informații fiabile și credibile în toate limbile UE în ceea ce privește soluțiile energetice curate, inclusiv despre panouri solare, pompe de căldură, eficiența energetică etc., de exemplu, sub forma unei aplicații ușor accesibile pe un telefon inteligent.

## CESE sprijină propunerea Comisiei Europene de a institui un pact social care să nu lase pe nimeni în urmă. Cu toate acestea, pandemia de COVID-19 a adâncit și a extins inegalitățile în societatea noastră și a dus la creșterea sărăciei în Europa. Ea scoate în evidență urgența unor măsuri hotărâte în favoarea celor 50 milioane de gospodării din UE care se confruntă cu sărăcia energetică, în special persoane care sunt obligate să trăiască în locuințe neizolate și degradate, în care umiditatea și mucegaiul le pun în pericol sănătatea. Pactul verde european le oferă perspectiva unui viitor mai bun. În acest scop, el ar trebui să includă un scop foarte simplu: garanția că niciun cetățean european nu va suferi de frig în timpul iernii. Prin urmare, Comisia Europeană ar putea stabili obiectivul de „sărăcie energetică zero” în Europa până în 2030. O astfel de măsură ar fi cu atât mai urgentă în cazul unei pandemii, care impune unuia sau mai multor state membre să pună în aplicare o politică de izolare în timpul iernii.

## CESE solicită Comisiei Europene să propună introducerea la nivel european a unor elemente de definire a sărăciei energetice și a unor indicatori comuni, ceea ce ar constitui un prim pas în vederea măsurării mai eficace a acestui fenomen. Pentru a adapta această definiție la diferitele contexte naționale, statele membre trebuie să elaboreze mai multe instrumente statistice pentru a identifica în mod eficient gospodăriile aflate în situație de precaritate. Pentru a sprijini aceste gospodării, tarifele sociale sau cecurile energetice reprezintă doar un sprijin temporar și ar trebui înlocuite treptat cu subvenții publice, pentru a sprijini soluțiile structurale, cum ar fi renovările aprofundate ale clădirilor.

## CESE sprijină inițiativele Uniunii Europene și ale statelor membre de a elabora strategii ambițioase de renovare a clădirilor în vederea renovării unei cote de 3 % din parcul imobiliar în fiecare an. Această modernizare necesită inovare și face posibilă crearea a numeroase locuri de muncă la nivel local. În plus, odată cu pandemia de COVID-19, sectorul construcțiilor din Europa a suferit cea mai mare scădere a activității de la începutul crizei financiare, multe șantiere fiind închise, lanțurile de aprovizionare perturbate și milioane de lucrători aflându-se în prezent în regim de șomaj tehnic. Prin urmare, CESE salută propunerea Comisiei Europene de a pune la dispoziție fonduri din cadrul Mecanismului de redresare și reziliență, pentru a renova parcul imobiliar. De asemenea, UE poate avea rol de pionier în domeniu, îmbunătățind viața de zi cu zi și sănătatea a 50 de milioane de familii care suferă din cauza sărăciei energetice. Ca parte a viitoarei campanii de renovare, planul de investiții din cadrul Pactului verde european ar putea finanța, până în 2024, renovarea amplă a unui milion de clădiri în care locuiesc familii afectate de sărăcia energetică, pentru a le scoate din această situație, creând în același timp o ofertă suficient de amplă pentru a permite o renovare temeinică a clădirilor, mai bine organizată, inovatoare și cu realizarea unor economii de scară care îmbunătățesc raportul competitivitate-preț.

## CESE subliniază importanța unei formări de înaltă calitate pentru lucrători și necesitatea ca sectorul energetic să devină mai atractiv pentru tinerii europeni. În plus, odată cu criza economică, șomajul este așteptat să crească la 9 % în UE, afectând în special tinerii și lucrătorii cu un nivel scăzut de calificare. În acest scop, UE poate crea centre europene de excelență pentru ucenici în locuri de muncă specifice tranziției energetice (de exemplu, audituri energetice, instalarea pompelor de căldură). Prin acordarea de granturi și prin extinderea programului ErasmusPro, UE îi poate transforma pe tinerii europeni în actori-cheie ai tranziției energetice.

## CESE solicită Comisiei Europene să realizeze o analiză-pilot pentru a identifica competențele lucrătorilor din sectoarele în declin care ar fi utile pentru noile locuri de muncă. Competențele ar trebui actualizate cât mai des posibil pentru a limita durata și costul formării și pentru a actualiza competențele existente ale lucrătorilor. Astfel, CESE salută propunerea Comisiei privind CFM, oferind finanțare suplimentară pentru Fondul pentru o tranziție echitabilă. În plus, CESE încurajează cu fermitate dialogul social în sectoarele cu emisii mari de dioxid de carbon, pentru a anticipa mai bine mutațiile industriale și pentru a facilita reconversia profesională a angajaților în cauză.

## CESE reamintește că competitivitatea întreprinderilor europene se bazează pe capacitatea lor de inovare. Cercetarea și inovarea sunt, de asemenea, esențiale pentru creșterea rezilienței societății noastre, puternic afectată de pandemia de COVID-19. În acest scop, CESE salută noul „Mecanism de investiții strategice”, care sprijină tranzițiile către tehnologii curate, cum ar fi hidrogenul, energia din surse regenerabile și tehnologiile de captare a dioxidului de carbon. Cu toate acestea, CESE subliniază că trebuie să se pună la dispoziție resurse bugetare adecvate pentru a sprijini cercetarea, dezvoltarea și utilizarea industrială în cadrul programului Orizont Europa, astfel încât să se accelereze transformarea întreprinderilor în sectoarele energiei și transporturilor.

## CESE îndeamnă UE și statele sale membre să sprijine întreprinderile nou-înființate din economia ecologică, în special cele perturbate de pandemia de COVID-19 și de consecințele acesteia. CESE salută crearea planului de redresare al Uniunii Europene, denumit „Next Generation EU”, oferind un sprijin suplimentar lucrătorilor și IMM-urilor, dar își exprimă îngrijorarea cu privire la disponibilitatea acestor fonduri pentru întreprinderile nou-înființate tinere și inovatoare, care sunt esențiale pentru crearea de locuri de muncă și pentru activitatea economică. Prin urmare, UE ar trebui să pună la dispoziție o serie de contribuții suplimentare de care să beneficieze întreprinderile nou-înființate și IMM-urile din economia ecologică. În această privință, pot fi mobilizate cinci instrumente existente ale UE: Fondul pentru inovare, Fondul european de investiții, Consiliul european pentru inovare, InvestEU și Institutul European de Inovare și Tehnologie.

## CESE sprijină inițiativele Uniunii Europene de a anticipa și de a atenua consecințele economice și sociale inevitabile ale eliminării cărbunelui, în special prin intermediul platformei pentru regiunile carbonifere aflate în tranziție. Părțile interesate consultate au subliniat impactul pozitiv al acesteia asupra proceselor de învățare. Pentru a consolida acest instrument-cheie, UE ar putea facilita accesul la finanțare și ar putea asigura corelarea adecvată cu noul Mecanism pentru o tranziție justă. Comisia Europeană trebuie să creeze sinergii cu alte inițiative ale UE, în special cu misiunile de cercetare și inovare ale UE. Astfel, dacă UE decide să pună în aplicare o misiune de cercetare și inovare pentru a transforma 100 de orașe din UE în orașe neutre din punctul de vedere al emisiilor de dioxid de carbon până în 2030, ar fi foarte rezonabil ca mai multe dintre aceste orașe să fie situate în regiunile carbonifere ale Europei.

## CESE solicită Comisiei Europene să implice comunitățile energetice în misiunea de cercetare și inovare privind orașele neutre din punct de vedere climatic, să analizeze cum aceste comunități energetice și potențialul lor de inovare pot fi puse în serviciul unei tranziții energetice rapide, echitabile și democratice.

## CESE solicită Comisiei Europene să se asigure că directivele UE privind comunitățile energetice sunt transpuse în mod corespunzător în legislația națională, astfel încât să fie pe deplin recunoscute în toate statele membre ale UE. CESE încurajează autoritățile locale și naționale să efectueze mai multe evaluări ale impactului comunităților energetice și ale efectelor acestora asupra comportamentului individual.

## CESE solicită Comisiei Europene să analizeze instrumentele de care dispune UE pentru a sprijini dezvoltarea comunităților energetice în Europa, inclusiv capacitatea sa de a colabora mai mult cu statele membre pentru a facilita accesul la tehnologia panourilor solare, prin reducerea costurilor de tranzacție (de exemplu, simplificarea birocrației, sprijinul pentru evaluarea situației gospodăriilor și selectarea produselor și a instalatorilor) și prin acordarea de sprijin economic (de exemplu de către Banca Europeană de Investiții) și subvenții, în special în cazul gospodăriilor cu venituri reduse.

Bruxelles, 16 iulie 2020

Luca JAHIER  
Președintele Comitetului Economic și Social European

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\* \*

N.B.: Urmează anexa tehnică (disponibilă doar în limba engleză).

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# **Introduction**

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The [Energy Union](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/energy-union_en) is an initiative launched in February 2015 by the European Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker, which included a large number of legislative proposals (e.g. energy efficiency, renewable energy, security of gas supply, and energy market design) and policy initiatives (e.g. strategy documents in relation to promoting energy innovation and research or financing smart buildings and platforms for discussions between regions, individuals and islands).

The [European Economic and Social Committee](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en) has drawn up a [**report on European Energy Union policies**](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/evaluating-european-energy-union-social-and-societal-dimension-energy-transition), which assesses the **social and societal dimension of the energy transition** as politically framed by the Energy Union. *'Energy transition'* is generally defined as a long-term structural change in energy systems. In this report, we refer to the transition of a predominantly centralised, fossil fuel-fired energy supply system to a more decentralised energy system, predominantly supplied by energy from renewable sources. In particular, the report analyses to what extent policies adopted since the launch of the Energy Union in February 2015 have addressed and will be addressing three issues: **the issue of energy poverty, the implications of the energy transition for employment, and the development of energy communities**.

Based on the evaluation criteria identified by the European Commission, the EESC has decided to focus its assessment on **relevance, EU added value, and whether and how effectively civil society is being involved in designing, implementing and transposing Energy Union policies in the Member States.** This assessment has enabled the EESC to take stock and is now able to inform other EU institutions of the **appraisal, critical observations, concerns and demands of the organisations represented within the EESC and other civil society organisations** with regard to the aforementioned policies.

# **Data collection and sampling**

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Following the *Decision on the* *arrangements for the European Economic and Social Committee's involvement in the European institutions' assessment of EU policies and legislation* adopted by the EESC Bureau in 2019, the members of the EESC study group collected the views of civil society organisations across the EU through two channels: an **online** **questionnaire** and five **fact-finding missions**.

## **Fact-finding missions**

EESC members of the relevant study group visited five Member States in order to interview stakeholders and take stock of their views on the Energy Union: **France (19 November 2019), Germany (2 December 2019), Romania (27 January 2020), Poland (3 February 2020) and Greece (13 February 2020).** These Member States were selected by the study group on the basis of criteria adopted by the EESC Bureau and after consultation on their appropriateness with European Commission representatives (DG ENER, DG EMPL and DG JUST).

The fact-finding missions included semi-structured interviews with local and national civil society organisations and representatives of public authorities (and other stakeholders in some cases), generally following the structure of the online questionnaire.

## **Online questionnaire**

In order to complement information collected during fact-finding missions, the EESC prepared an online questionnaire composed of **21 questions**. The questionnaire was created on the EU Survey online portal, using a combination of question formats (filter questions, closed open-ended questions, a grid and the most significant change method). Open from November 2019 to February 2020, the questionnaire was sent to organisations from the Member States selected for the fact-finding missions (not only to those participating in the mission meetings, but also to other relevant organisations).

## **Breakdown of respondents**

During the five fact-finding missions, the EESC delegations consulted **71 civil society organisations and representatives of public authorities**.

In addition, **34 civil society organisations and public authorities** responded to the questionnaire, including **8** representatives of employers, **7** representatives of workers, **1** consumer association, **6** environmental non-governmental organisations, **4** research organisations, **1** social/welfare non-governmental organisation**, 2** public authorities and **5** describing themselves as "other". Regarding the origin of the respondents, **9%** of the questionnaire respondents come from France, **24%** from Germany, **24%** from Greece, **12%** from Poland and **32%** from Romania.

The complete list of organisations that participated through the questionnaire or in meetings during the fact-finding missions is available in chapter 4 of this report.

# **Primary data: findings and analysis**

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## **State of play of the energy transition in the Member States visited**

### France

*Energy poverty*

Recent figures[[2]](#footnote-3) on energy poverty in France show that **15% of the population suffered thermal discomfort** for at least 24 hours during the winter in 2017, mostly due to bad insulation (4 out of 10 households). In 2018, 11.6% of French people spent more than 8% of their income paying energy bills for housing. Moreover, roughly **570 000 households underwent intervention** (power reduction, supply suspension or contract termination) by the energy supplier in 2018 due to unpaid energy bills. Several social policies have been implemented in France to effectively address energy poverty issues[[3]](#footnote-4). These include the *Habiter Mieux* (Better Living) scheme for **housing renovation grants** of up to EUR 1 600, targeted at low-income homeowners and launched in 2011, social tariffs for electricity and gas, and energy cheques.

*Implications of the energy transition for employment*

France is considered to be a country where **green policy** has been **taking** **into account social issues**, with systematic **stakeholder engagement** and particular **attention to skills**. The 2017 Climate Plan includes the creation of *ecological transition contracts* for workers whose jobs are threatened, green skills development and targeted Technical and Vocational Education and Training policies, and the participation of national and regional authorities, social partners and NGOs in the transition debate. Estimates in 2016[[4]](#footnote-5) showed that, while leading to the loss of 76 000 jobs by **cutting nuclear energy** **production**, the climate transition in France would **create one million new jobs in aggregate**, thanks to growth in sectors such as construction, renewables, social action, recycling and small-scale agriculture.

*Energy communities*

Between 2015 and 2018, *citizen projects* in renewable energy in France jumped from 160 to 300[[5]](#footnote-6). Over the same time span, *Energie Partagée Investissement*, the main investment fund for local projects, doubled its capital to reach EUR 17 million. Participatory financing of renewable energy projects collected EUR 35 million in 2018 (compared to EUR 20 million in 2017). Additionally, there are **300 energy cooperatives** bringing together **11 000 shareholders** and producing **0.2% of France's annual renewable electricity production**. These figures are considered to be modest and **participatory models still represent a small niche in the national energy market**, as in 2015 they represented 3% of the total installed capacity of wind power and 0.7% of photovoltaic solar energy in France[[6]](#footnote-7).

### Germany

*Energy poverty*

In Germany, **340 000 consumers were cut off from the electricity grid** **and 38 000 were cut off from the gas supply network in 2017**[[7]](#footnote-8). Some observers point out that half of the consumers cut off from the electricity grid are on a social benefit scheme (Hartz IV) and that since the introduction of this programme, electricity costs have risen more than the standard price of electricity[[8]](#footnote-9). Moreover, **electricity prices** paid by German households are among the **highest** in the Union. The bulk of the bill is comprised of surcharges, taxes and grid fees, which have increased dramatically over the past years[[9]](#footnote-10).

Measures to mitigate energy poverty and high electricity prices in Germany have been limited to recent legislative proposals for an *electricity cost allowance* and against power cuts. However, the Climate Action Programme 2030, adopted in 2019, entails a 10% increase in the housing benefit as a cushion for rising energy prices.

*Implications of the energy transition for employment*

The German planned energy transition from coal and nuclear to renewable energy, called ***Energiewende***, has stimulated investment in the energy sector. The impact of the energy transition on employment has been estimated to be positive over the period 2014-2020, with a yearly net increase of 18 000 jobs[[10]](#footnote-11). Germany remains the European country with the **highest number of jobs in the renewable energy sector**, with **over 290 000 jobs in 2017**, almost one quarter of the total estimated 1.2 million jobs in the EU[[11]](#footnote-12). However, jobs in renewables experienced significant losses between 2012 and 2016, and there was weak expansion in the German onshore wind power industry, the country's most important renewable energy branch. Moreover, a significant share of jobs might be at risk due to the **weakening of the German onshore wind power industry**. This could also lead the country to miss its 2030 target for emission reduction and lose its leading market position.

*Energy communities*

Germany has a **strong tradition of financial participation of communities and individuals in the decentralised production of renewable energy**, due to the early introduction (in the 1990s) of instruments such as the renewable energy sources (RES) Installations and the Feed in Tariff (FiT) regime. The legal framework allows for different business models, with the citizen energy cooperative (*eingetragene Genossenschaften*, or *eG*) being the closest to the EU definition of citizen energy community.

The **870 German energy cooperatives**, which bring together independent citizens **(180 000 members) to finance renewable power projects (with EUR 2.7 billion currently invested)**, are considered to have driven the development of renewables in Germany and are crucial to maintaining and reinforcing public support for the energy transition. However, their investment capacity in renewable energy sources is at risk due to newly increased regulation (reduced support payments and license auctions)[[12]](#footnote-13).

### Romania

*Energy poverty*

In 2017, **11.3% of households were unable to keep the home adequately warm in Romania, while around 16% were in arrears on utility bills**. These percentages are significantly higher than European averages, but show a decreasing trend from 33% and 24%, respectively, in 2007-2008[[13]](#footnote-14). Other sources[[14]](#footnote-15) point out that almost a quarter of Romanian households have problems in securing energy, due to affordability or **difficult access to utilities grids**. Moreover, fewer than 5% of households receive state aid to cope with their heating needs. Estimates for 2019 show that 42% of households cannot pay their utilities and that 25% of the population is unable to keep their home adequately warm due to low purchasing power and efficiency standards. Indeed, while being relatively low, gas and **electricity prices in Romania still represent a significant financial burden**, especially for poorer households[[15]](#footnote-16). Both financial and non-financial measures have been undertaken to counteract energy poverty in Romania, such as roughly **EUR 27 million in heating support over the winter of 2017**, freezing wholesale gas and electricity prices in 2018, banning electricity suppliers from disconnecting vulnerable consumers from networks, and the building energy efficiency programmes to be implemented especially in low-income communities.

*Implications of the energy transition for employment*

In Romania in 2018, there were approximately 18 600 workers in the coal mining industry, 15 000 in mines and 3 600 in power plants[[16]](#footnote-17). The **coal energy sector** is characterised by low productivity and is under strong economic pressure, but it **is heavily subsidised**. In 2015, the share **of renewable energy-related employment represented about 0.21%** of Romania's total employment (EU average is 0.54%)[[17]](#footnote-18). The renewable energy industry turnover was estimated at EUR 1.57 billion, with 70% attributed to the biomass sector, 12.4% to biofuels and around 10% to the wind industry. Furthermore, Romania ranked 8th in the world in terms of employment in liquid biofuel production in 2018[[18]](#footnote-19).

*Energy communities*

Romanian legislation makes no reference to any notion similar to "citizen community" (EU Directive 2019/944) nor to "renewable community" (EU Directive 2018/2001). **The first green energy cooperative in Romania** *Cooperativa de Energie*, was launched in October 2019, to become fully operational by the first half of 2021.

### Poland

*Energy poverty*

According to the definition given by the Institute for Structural Research, **energy poverty affected 12.2% of the total population in Poland in 2016**, down from 14.5% in 2012[[19]](#footnote-20). Around two-thirds of those affected by energy poverty lived in rural areas, and single-parent families, people living in large houses or in old buildings in towns, users of central heating systems and migrants are considered to be more at risk.

Vulnerable consumers, as legally defined by the Polish government, are entitled to financial support for 30% of their energy bill and to subsidies for fuel. Energy prices in Poland are increasing faster than households' income and inflation is high (at 3.4%). Climate policies might further **increase energy prices**. Furthermore, **coal and wood are the predominant energy sources for households in Poland**. The resulting pollution, which is especially high in small urban areas, negatively impacts people's well-being and the healthcare system. **Households pay on average EUR 1 000 per year on energy**, that is, 18% of the Polish average household annual income. 1% of households have no access to hot water and 13% of households are considered to be under-heated. Nonetheless, some interventions have started to be implemented, such as the Stop Smog programme, launched in 2018, and the Clean Air programme, which provides households with financial support for the adoption of energy efficiency measures and clean energy. The Clean Air programme has been modified to be accessible to vulnerable households as well.

*Implications of the energy transition for employment*

**Poland's strong dependency on coal** represents a huge challenge for a just climate transition. Structural changes need to be supported financially by the EU, as companies are unlikely to pay to reskill their workers. Indeed, around **200 000 jobs are expected to be lost**. Moreover, 30% of the cement industry will disappear by 2025. Competitiveness would affect SMEs in particular.

*Energy communities*

**Energy communities and the prosumer movement is underdeveloped in Poland**, and specific legislation should be put forward to promote them. Around 200 energy clusters are estimated to exist in Poland (as they do not need to register, contrary to energy cooperatives which are specifically devoted to renewables).

### Greece

*Energy poverty*

In 2018, **almost 30% of Greek households suffered from energy poverty**, a high share compared to European averages. The Hellenic Statistical Authority also reports that, among economically vulnerable households, one out of two is not capable of heating their home. The phenomenon has increased recently due to the **impact of the economic and financial crisis** and is characterised by strong geographical variations (with topography and islands playing an important role). Energy poverty has only been indirectly addressed by national social policies due to **lack of funding, research and policy design**. The Greek National and Energy Climate Plan plans to fold energy poverty into social welfare, with the possible introduction of an "energy card" for consumers and measures to improve the energy efficiency of buildings.

*Implications of the energy transition for employment*

The energy transition in Greece presents some challenges. The energy sector represented 0.4% of total employment in 2015. In the same year, the **share of renewable-related employment was 0.37%**, with workers concentrated in the biomass (25.5%) and wind (29.3%) sectors, followed by solar thermal (21.4%) and biofuel industries (13%)[[20]](#footnote-21). In Greece, the shift from coal to renewables overlaps with the need to diversify regional industrial production (shifting from a unidimensional to a multidimensional model of economic activities). This requires significant investment, especially as the economy still bears the scars of the economic and financial crisis, which has also weakened social dialogue. **Western Macedonia**, where energy production through **lignite combustion and hydroelectric energy** is the main economic activity and unemployment is already very high (31.5% in 2016), is directly involved in the coal regions phase-out platform launched by the European Commission in 2017[[21]](#footnote-22). However, **close ties with the coal industry are maintained at national level**, as the largest lignite producer in Greece, Public Power Corporation (PPC), is a majority state-owned company, and the government is actively supporting the construction of a new lignite plant, *Meliti II*. In the Economic Adjustment Programmes, the agreement signed with the EU, the IMF and the ECB after the sovereign debt crisis, lignite use was considered to be an instrument to improve competition in the Greek energy sector. In January 2019, the Greek government established a National Just Transition fund for lignite areas. The transition remains locally led, with the support of civil society organisations.

In such a context, Greece has the highest potential for renewable energy in Europe, especially for the production of solar and wind energy. **In 2016, renewables supplied 30% of power in continental Greece**, surpassing lignite (29%)[[22]](#footnote-23) for the first time.

*Energy communities*

Net energy metering systems for autonomous producers were first introduced in Greece in 2014. The first European legislative initiative defining and incentivising energy communities in Europe entered into force in 2018, with the specific aim of promoting the social economy, innovation and sustainability. **Vulnerable consumers are encouraged to become renewable energy producers, especially on islands and in remote areas.** The number of energy communities is rising in Greece, thanks to legislation and taking advantage of wind and sun. Specifically, the Greek Eunice Energy Group (EEG) is investing in renewable energy sources projects in 44 energy communities in 28 different municipalities. Rescoop, the European federation of renewable energy cooperatives, brings together energy communities including Electra Energy (Attica), Sifnos Island Cooperative (Sifnos Island), Energy Cooperative of Karditsa (Kardistsa) and Good Energy Community (Athens).

Before delving into the three areas of concern for this evaluation, stakeholders were asked to answer two general questions. Respondents to the online questionnaire rated **energy poverty as the most pressing social and societal challenge associated with Europe's Energy Union in their Member State (70%).** The second most pressing challenge to address is **consultation of citizens**, who do not have a say in energy policymaking (50%).

Graph 1 - What are the most pressing social and societal challenges associated with Europe's Energy Union in your Member State?



In addition, stakeholders were asked to specify the most effective way for their Member State to accomplish a transition to a low-carbon energy system that addresses the challenges mentioned above. Respondents agreed mainly on the **need for public investment in low-carbon technologies** (65%). Then, they considered that **public authorities needed to intervene on prices** in order to target carbon-intensive products and behaviours (45%). Finally, **financial assistance to individuals** enabling them to switch to low-carbon behaviour is also considered important (45%).

Graph 2 - How can your Member State most effectively accomplish a transition to a low-carbon energy system that addresses these challenges?



## **Energy poverty**

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According to the EU Energy Poverty Observatory,[[23]](#footnote-24) "*energy poverty is a distinct form of poverty associated with a range of adverse consequences for people's health and wellbeing - with respiratory and cardiac illnesses, and mental health, exacerbated due to low temperatures and stress associated with unaffordable energy bills.*" Moreover, the Observatory observes that "*energy poor households experience inadequate levels of (...) essential energy services, due to a combination of high energy expenditure, low household incomes, inefficient buildings and appliances, and specific household energy needs*." The findings of the online survey showed that **70% rated** **energy poverty as the most pressing social and societal challenge associated with Europe's Energy Union** (Graph 1 - Q2.1). In particular, respondents to the questionnaire almost unanimously indicated that energy poverty was most notable in heating/warm and dry houses.

Graph 3 - In what specific segment of the energy supply sector is poverty most notable in your Member State?



*Definition and legal recognition of energy poverty in national legislation*

In the Member States visited, disparities were observed as to whether the concept of energy poverty was clearly defined and/or legally recognised in their national legislation. Stakeholders underlined that only 10 EU Member States have a legal definition of energy poverty and, given the lack of a common definition at EU level, definitions vary from one country to another.

France is the only Member State visited during this evaluation to have a clear definition of energy poverty. Since 2010, the [law on national involvement for the environment](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000022470434) defines as energy-poor "*a person who has particular difficulties in obtaining the energy supply necessary to meet his basic needs because of the inadequacy of his resources or his conditions of habitat*". The French definition is accompanied by two criteria categorising people as energy-poor: when energy makes up more than 10% of the household income, and when the household is classified as vulnerable[[24]](#footnote-25) (40 % of the poorest). In Romania, a definition of energy poverty, linked to the concept of vulnerable consumer, has been enshrined in legislation[[25]](#footnote-26). However, stakeholders considered this definition to be unclear and subject to interpretation (the ceiling for energy poverty is not defined accurately). The topics of vulnerable consumers and energy poverty are not very well known to the actors who are supposed to organise the energy transition, as the energy strategy is often more related to poverty itself than to the energy sector. In addition, this definition is not yet applicable, as the entry into force of this legislative act has been postponed until 2021 (when the national computer database system for social assistance is expected to be finalised). Moreover, one of the indicators of energy poverty used in Romania is the minimum income for social inclusion, which does not match the definition of vulnerability given in Romanian legislation. This index is different from the usual index for measuring energy poverty. There is thus a need for coherence in both aspects.

In other Member States, the concept has yet to be officially recognised and defined in national legislation (Germany, Poland, Greece). In Germany, there is no definition because the government considers that sectoral poverty should not be measured. German stakeholders considered this stance to be highly problematic given that around half of the energy-poor do not belong to the group of households receiving social security transfers. However, Germany generally uses disconnection from power supply as an indicator of energy vulnerability. In Greece and Poland, stakeholders stressed the need to develop a definition of energy poverty and precise indicators in their Member State, and referred to the definition adopted by the United Kingdom as a good example[[26]](#footnote-27).

In Member States with no definition of energy poverty, stakeholders noted many research studies seeking to develop indicators and recommendations. In 2018, the Romanian employers' confederation Concordia published an independent study on vulnerable consumers and energy poverty, which maps the status quo and identifies a series of measures to be implemented over a period of 18 months; if mainstreamed into all policies, it could produce real results. This study was submitted to the former Romanian government in May 2018 and again to the current government. In the same way, the Romanian body ENEL developed a strategy to divide the energy bill equally every month[[27]](#footnote-28), based on an estimate of the household's consumption over the last two or three years. Paying the same amount each month would be easier for both low-income households and pensioners. In Poland, the Institute for Structural Research has worked on a definition[[28]](#footnote-29) linked to energy poverty. However, the definition developed by the Institute is not used systematically at policy level, meaning that it is used more for research purposes.

*Causes of energy poverty*

In the view of all stakeholders, energy poverty has increased and worsened over the past few years, primarily as a result of a combination of high energy prices, low household incomes and poor solutions to help the energy poor, as well as inefficient buildings and energy appliances. These results match the responses to the online survey. When asked about the main barriers to addressing energy poverty, respondents ranked **energy costs and prices in first place** (53%) and the **quality of housing stock in second place** (44%). In third place, respondents put the **lack of or poorly targeted solutions** (both public and private) **to finance households affected by energy poverty** (44%) and finally **declining/stagnating income levels** (29%).

Graph 4 - What are the main barriers to addressing energy poverty in your Member State?



Firstly, there was a general and common agreement across all Member States that energy prices are too high, and will continue to increase faster than household incomes. In addition, some stakeholders believed that the implementation of the 2030-2050 climate objectives and the Green Deal measures will result in an even bigger increase in energy prices, having a negative impact on consumers and industry (Poland, Romania, Greece). In Romania, stakeholders stressed that given the rates of remuneration, the effort made by Romanian citizens to pay their energy bills is huge: more than 12% of the net revenue of a household goes to energy (compared to 5% in Germany, for instance). Stakeholders from the chemical sector also mentioned the high price of natural gas, used as a raw material by Romanian companies and representing 75% of the total costs. Therefore, any deviation (increase or decrease) in the price of raw material has a massive impact on the end product and on the operation of companies. Many companies have ceased activity because of this difficulty. Moreover, it is more expensive for companies to buy natural gas in Romania than in other countries because of the cost of transport (20 to 25% of the total price). In addition, Romania has a deficit of capacity. Therefore, energy prices very often increase due to the deficit of production or capacity to generate energy in order to meet demand. In Germany, household incomes have been heavily affected by the switch to Hartz IV (social security transfer system) which provides a global budget for households (to cover new appliances, heating, power and more) as opposed to previous systems in which requests for financial support could be submitted for specific items.

People are already struggling to pay their energy bills, and so there is no social acceptance of the new environmental Green Deal measures (Germany, Poland, Romania, Greece). Indeed, **74% of survey respondents indicated that addressing the issue of energy poverty is very important for increasing social acceptance of the energy transition**. 21% of respondents considered this issue to be somewhat important, and only 3% rated it as not important at all.

Graph 5 - How important is the issue of addressing energy poverty for increasing the social acceptance of the energy transition in your Member State?



*Addressing the issue of energy poverty*

The EU's Clean Energy Package requires Member States to describe energy poverty in their country in their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) and, if necessary, to set up an action plan to reduce it. Stakeholders were asked via the online questionnaire to what extent their Member State's draft plan offered tangible solutions for addressing energy poverty. **6% of respondents believed the draft plan offered tangible solutions to a large extent, while 44% believed it did so to some extent.** However, 26% considered that it did not do so at all.

Graph 6 - The EU's Clean Energy Package requires Member States to describe energy poverty in their country in their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) and, if necessary, to set up an action plan to reduce it. To what extent does your Member State's draft plan offer tangible solutions for addressing energy poverty?



Moreover, respondents to the online questionnaire rated the importance of some existing and envisaged initiatives to combat energy poverty. According to them, the **two most important initiative are national social policy measures (58%) and EU structural funds (54%).** Respondents also rated as very important social tariffs (48%), the EU's Social Pillar (44%) and rules to prevent disconnection at critical times (38%).

Graph 7 - How important are the following existing and envisaged initiatives to combat energy poverty for your Member State?



In light of these issues, stakeholders drew up some suggestions to overcome some of the problems raised. In particular, stakeholders recommended that all EU Member States develop a system to assess the consequences of increasing energy costs and prices. Furthermore, even though there was no common view among stakeholders, some of them believed that taxation could play a role in reducing energy poverty: lowering taxes could promote a reduction of the price of energy (Romania, Poland). However, some stakeholders warned that this tax revision should be done carefully, in order not to reduce revenue for the national budget and affect other policies (Greece). Finally, stakeholders suggested implementing compensatory measures (subsidies, energy clusters, etc.). In Germany, local governments also offer help - where possible - by negotiating with power suppliers to change the conditions of payment. Moreover, some municipalities use their control of social security transfers to help tenants in municipality-owned apartments cope with the higher rent resulting from renovations.

Secondly, all stakeholders considered that energy poverty is closely linked to energy efficiency. Some people are faced with huge energy bills because their houses are not properly insulated and require renovation, or because of their outdated lighting and electric appliances which consume a great deal of energy. Stakeholders recommended that the EU and national governments help the energy-poor to renovate buildings and replace old appliances as a priority (France). This will require a considerable amount of state aid to help poor households. In France for instance, there are a number of subsidies for energy-poor households (whether in monetary or non-monetary form). There is also aid at local level. The only difficulty lies in combining the various types of aid and people being aware of their rights. Therefore, there is a need for a single point of contact who can provide all the information at the same time. However, stakeholders considered that national subsidies cannot be sufficient to reach this objective, and huge investment is needed (Poland, Greece, Romania).

Finally, some stakeholders stressed that energy poverty is often addressed only in terms of being able to pay energy bills at the end of the month. The related health dimension (although it has been taken into account in other Member States such as Germany) is somewhat less evident (France, Poland). Issues often related to substandard housing such as poor ventilation which generates pollutants, moisture, mould or poor insulation can cause breathing difficulties and other health problems. In addition, heating homes with a polluting source of energy is also a public health issue, as smog is identified as a major problem (especially in Poland), creating additional costs for the healthcare system. In addition, the subject of mobility in relation to energy poverty is only marginally addressed, or only from the environmental standpoint of reducing greenhouse gases (France). Academic studies exist but are very rarely taken into account, meaning that there are no incentives to change behaviour in relation to transport precariousness.

*EU added value*

In France, the participants are in favour of exchanging best practices between EU Member States, or even modelling efficient policies to reduce energy poverty. A good example is the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has a well-developed, efficient statistical tool, which annually extracts public data that can be used by everyone. In France, the tools are not effective enough to target either precarious households or specific solutions. In Germany, stakeholders welcomed EU 'governance' regulation as it requires Germany to define and explicitly address energy poverty.

## **Implications of the energy transition for employment**

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Achieving the energy transition leads to several challenges, such as dealing with the issue of energy poverty. However, it also comes with many consequences for employment. The energy transition requires structural changes related to jobs, skills and training for the labour market of tomorrow, and companies and regions must be supported through the transition. According to respondents to the online survey, the first consequence of the energy transition affecting workers and labour markets is the **increase in skill requirements** (33% to a large extent, 45% to some extent). The next main factors affecting workers and labour markets are **improved occupational health and safety** (35% to some extent) and **rising in-work poverty** (32% to some extent). However, respondents did not consider that the decline in job quality affected workers and labour markets (47% rated it as not affecting workers and labour markets at all).

Graph 8 - Beyond changes in terms of net employment, how and to what extent does the energy transition affect workers and labour markets in your Member State?



In addition, in the online survey, stakeholders rated the **net effects on total employment as mainly positive**, especially in their respective sector (29%) and for their region (25%). However, many stakeholders did not know or could not assess these effects, which does not give a clear picture of the reality (e.g. almost 30% of respondents could not assess the net effects on total employment in their respective sector).

Graph 9 - What have been the net effects on total employment of the energy transition since 2015?



*Obstacles* *to achieving the energy transition in the field of employment*

However, a prerequisite for achieving the energy transition is overcoming many obstacles still preventing Member States from moving forward. One of the obstacles mentioned across all the Member States analysed is the importance of increasing social acceptance of the energy transition. The majority (68%) of respondents considered that it was **very important to address the negative effects on workers and employment in order to increase social acceptance of the energy transition.**

Graph 10 - How important is it to address the negative effects on workers and employment in order to increase social acceptance of the energy transition in your Member State?



The main difficulty highlighted by stakeholders is the lack of a skilled workforce able to fill the new jobs created by the energy transition, especially when it comes to digital skills (Romania, Greece, France). In Romania, employers' organisations even mentioned hiring retirees as they can no longer find skilled staff. The lack of personnel is mainly due to the following reasons: inappropriate education and training system for both teachers and learners (France, Romania, Greece), lack of attractiveness and brain drain (Romania, Greece) and lack of institutional capacity (Romania).

Stakeholders across all the Member States visited agreed that the most pressing issue is to reform the education and training system so as to better equip the staff of today and tomorrow for the energy transition, and to accompany workers in a long-term vision of jobs. The energy sector comprises many technical jobs, with evolving skills and competencies. Few replacement solutions and little job creation are expected, and many job skills are being lost (France, Germany).

In this way, stakeholders recommended that the European Commission invest in more policies to encourage training, in order to prevent staff from losing their jobs or being reassigned to other positions (Greece, Romania). In France, stakeholders insisted on the need to rethink academic content, which needs to be more oriented towards behavioural and services skills. In addition, it is vital to take into consideration the emergence of digitalisation in the new system (Romania, France).

Secondly, stakeholders stressed the need to attract more youngsters to the energy sector and to involve them more in the energy transition, so as to avoid a major brain drain of the workforce (France, Romania). According to stakeholders in France, the main objective is to give more visibility to the energy sector. Thus, stakeholders began visiting schools and universities to present jobs in the sector. In Romania, stakeholders recommended involving students from the Faculty of Power Engineering and other energy electro-technical universities.

However, in order to implement systemic measures to support labour market adaptation and the reskilling of workers, stakeholders considered that more financial support is needed from the EU (Poland, Romania, Greece). The energy transition requires huge investments that Member States are not able to bear themselves, in order to use leverage, loans and subsidies (Poland, Greece). Moreover, the current figures discussed for the Just Transition Fund and for the general Multiannual Financial Framework are considered not sufficient (Poland, Greece, Romania), partly because many companies are unlikely to pay the costs for reskilling workers (Poland). In addition, some stakeholders pointed out that the European Commission should review its state aid rules for energy and environmental interventions so that energy and climate policy can be more easily linked and integrated with industrial policies (Germany).

The responses to the online questionnaire highlighted three measures for boosting green(able) job growth and reducing unemployment caused by the energy transition**: National social security policies; EU funds; and National education and training policies**.

Graph 12 – In your view, how important are the following policy initiatives used to boost green(able) job growth and reduce unemployment caused by the energy transition in your country?



*Restructuring coal mining regions*

Achieving the energy transition also implies restructuring certain regions which are heavily dependent on coal mining and which will need strong support from their national government. The restructuring of coal regions brings an important new dimension to the employment/energy transition debate, which has often been reduced to comparisons of new green jobs versus lost coal mining jobs. In fact, the challenge is to substitute value creation chains built around carbon-intensive industries with those operating around low-carbon economic structures (Germany). In several Member States, stakeholders indicated that the energy transition will have a negative impact on those regions and are expecting many job losses (Poland, Romania). Therefore, the reskilling and retraining of workers is a major challenge. In addition, those Member States relying on coal mining for energy will have to face damage to their economic competitiveness compared to other countries (especially neighbouring countries such as Ukraine or Belarus, who are not required to implement Green Deal measures).

In order to help those regions move forward, many initiatives have been proposed by stakeholders. For instance, in Romania, the Wind Energy Association is carrying out a project for workers of the Valea Jiului coal mining region to attend courses in order to update their skills on wind energy. They also opened a school for technicians in Constanța and would like to replicate the initiative in several places in the coal mining regions of Romania. However, stakeholders indicated that although some reskilling programmes had been implemented in their Member States, they were not properly monitored (France, Romania). Thus, it was impossible to identify how many jobs had been created, how many employees benefited from the programme or which new skills they were able to acquire (Romania).

*EU added value*

The Clean Energy Package proposed by the European Commission mentions for the first time the socio-economic issues included in its preamble, which stakeholders welcomed. Stakeholders in France were all in favour of exchanging best practices at European level, in particular with Germany. They also proposed common tools at European level. In conversion areas, it would be necessary to look again at the value chain to think of the added value that the European Union can bring. The European Union must have time in order to anticipate proactive objectives and to accompany the energy transition in the Member States as far as possible. In Germany, while barriers and challenges to a fair and inclusive transition were widely recognised, the stakeholders consulted also stressed the positive effects of the Coal Regions Platform on learning processes. Stakeholders were expecting that this platform would also be strengthened in terms of access to funding. Finally, stakeholders also highlighted the importance of the inspiration provided by the EU's global leadership role in climate action.

## **Energy communities and citizen energy**

Energy communities normally refer to initiatives where people come together to tackle various aspects of low-carbon energy transitions, including the development of projects to generate heat and power renewable energy sources. There are two new official EU-level definitions of "energy communities": *Citizen Energy Community* (CEC) and *Renewable Energy Community* (REC). They share many characteristics, such as being local, open to new voluntary membership, democratically governed, owned by individuals and smaller organisations, and normally set up for non-commercial purposes. Citizen energy communities are a new type of entity due to their membership structure, governance requirement and purpose (the purpose being the provision of services/benefits for members or the local community – as opposed to profits). Similarly, RECs are a new type of entity that can be distinguished from other market players based partly on size and ownership structures[[29]](#footnote-30).

During this evaluation, EESC members wanted to understand how important energy communities in the Member States are and to what extent they contribute to the supply of renewable energy. It emerged that the development of energy communities across the Member States visited is highly diverse. As was confirmed by the online questionnaire, around **half of respondents considered that it was important for their sector, region or country**.

Graph 14 How important are renewable energy communities and citizen energy communities in supplying energy in your Member State?



*Development of energy communities in the Member States visited*

On the one hand, some Member States visited are already quite advanced in the development of energy communities. One of the best examples of good practice was observed in France. Energy communities (more commonly referred to as citizens' projects) started developing in 2015 after the [Energy Transition Act](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000031044385). The French ecosystem of citizens' projects is being put in place and structured under the aegis of "*Energie Partagée*"[[30]](#footnote-31), which coordinates regional networks in order to facilitate the emergence of these projects. The most recent statistics identify 300 citizens' projects in France at various stages of development and the trend is growing each year (some of them are already in the pipeline; others are still at the planning stage). In France, energy communities receive direct financial aid from the region and local authorities. In addition, the [Electricity and Gas Regulatory Commission](https://www.creg.be/fr) introduced bonuses: where at least 40% of the own funds of a project are provided by citizens and/or local authorities, the project receives a buyout bonus for each MWh produced (EUR 3/MWh). This bonus can encourage some developers to involve citizens. Energy communities have also experienced dynamic development in Germany, which already has a rich tradition of cooperatives beyond the energy field. Since 2005, agricultural producers have taken a pioneering role, especially in terms of photovoltaic panels on rooftops.

On the other hand, other Member States are lagging behind in terms of energy communities and/or even renewable energy sources. Stakeholders in some Member States said that the development of energy communities and clusters is low and the prosumer movement quite weak (Poland, Romania). Another reason is the strong expansion of central heating in the country. However, individuals or families choosing another heating system is not always desirable for the Member State as it could lead to two negative effects. First, people could move towards a more polluting energy source such as wood or waste burning. Second, the price of central heating could increase because of a reduction in the number of network users. The topic in Romania is so little considered that it was only mentioned once. Stakeholders underlined a lack of investment and a lack of schemes in the field of renewable energy, and favoured strong development of this field. They also mentioned that mono-industrial regions in Romania could effectively organise themselves to develop energy communities. However, people first have to understand how to do it and they need support from the government and civil society, which is lacking.

*Benefit of energy communities*

Many stakeholders put forward the several advantages of creating energy communities. The main benefit of those communities is that they create wider social acceptance and social links among individuals via local value creation, who then become "prosumers". This in turn is credited with a revitalisation of rural areas lagging behind (France, Germany). In addition, the creation of local solidarity circuits in the form of a significant dynamic is a necessary condition for achieving the energy transition objectives (France). However, it is important to bear in mind that the contribution of energy communities to the country's energy needs is usually very limited. In Germany for example, only 183 000 individuals are members of energy communities and their investment only amounts to 1.2% of the country's total investment in renewable energy. Moreover, as the EU and Germany move towards carbon neutrality, many industrial processes – along with transport and heating – will become electrified. This requires large-scale deployment of renewables, such as offshore wind parks. In fact, again requiring increased power supply, carbon neutrality probably involves heavy reliance on hydrogen (especially for transport). As a result, it was argued that while decentralised supply structures can respond to power demands from commerce, the service sector, and households, larger structures will continue to be necessary for industrial supply, especially chemical and other energy intensive structures.

According to the responses to the online questionnaire, more than half of the stakeholders consulted (53%) considered that **energy communities contribute (to a large or some extent) to more equal distribution of the benefits and costs of the energy transition**.

Graph 15 To what extent do energy communities contribute to more equal distribution of the benefits and costs of the energy transition in your Member State?



*Obstacles to the creation of energy communities*

Stakeholders drew attention to various barriers and difficulties to expanding energy communities. The main obstacle is the lack of promotion of energy communities from public authorities in order to increase social acceptance of these initiatives.

Most stakeholders (85%) consulted agreed that promoting energy communities is **'very important' or 'somewhat important' for increasing social acceptance of the energy transition**.

Graph 16 How important is the issue of promoting energy communities for increasing the social acceptance of the energy transition in your Member State?



Stakeholders underlined a certain reluctance on the part of the public as regards energy communities, and local authorities are not doing enough to inform and convince them. Sometimes, people are also misled (as was pointed out in Greece) into protesting against renewable energies under the influence of other interest groups. The failure to promote such initiatives is also built into the legislative framework, which is not suitable for encouraging the development of energy communities. In Poland for example, there are no schemes in place for micro-loans or micro-funding for people owning renewable energy production facilities (for example solar panels) and who could sell their surplus energy.

In Germany, stakeholders highlighted the bureaucratic hurdles to legislative intervention (such as the required distance between settlements and the wind turbine). In fact, it was argued that the latest revision of the EEG (in 2017, renewable energy law) led to a collapse of investment in Germany's renewable sector. Another aspect mentioned in Germany was that, while the vast majority of people are in favour of climate action and the decarbonisation of energy systems, there is a gap between these attitudes and action. In fact, while there are excellent conditions (low interest rates, rates of return) for investing in renewable energy in Germany, investment volume is failing to increase substantially. Secondly, while ambitious goals are formulated at EU and national levels, the local level has difficulties putting them into effect.

Finally, technical obstacles were also mentioned, such as the difficulty for energy communities to connect to the grid due to a lack of material and workforce in the distribution system operator (Greece). Stakeholders also highlighted that renewable electricity generation using sun and wind power is not stable and thus requires good storage capacity (Greece).

*Promoting energy communities*

In order to address the obstacles still preventing the development of energy communities, stakeholders suggested a number of proposals. The two suggestions that were highlighted are ensuring **'a lighter administrative burden for energy communities**' (62%) and promoting '**local identity of energy community with a clear benefit to the local community**' (50%).

Graph 18 What matters most for ensuring that the participation of citizens in energy communities increases in your Member State?



The most important proposal is the need to develop measures to better promote and encourage such initiatives in order to increase social acceptance (Poland, Greece). In Germany, stakeholders recommended focusing on ensuring value creation at local and regional level. Some referred to existing mechanisms, such as mobilising capital through the publicly owned KfW Bank, but others were more oriented towards empowering municipalities vis-à-vis external investors. For example, mirroring the legally codified ownership/exploitation by the state of coal below the surface, it might be an idea to assign ownership of the air (wind) above the ground to the state, which could then – as done in coal mining – sell concessions to interested parties, stipulating conditions including local and regional benefits for concession holders. In Poland, the government is considering the possibility of launching a campaign to promote energy communities and revising the Legal Act on Energy Renewal (link), with a dedicated Act for energy clusters. In addition, the concept of prosumers is expected to be defined and included in the next legal amendment. Thanks to these legal advances, the Polish government is expecting around 300 self-sufficient energy communities. Currently, there are around 200 energy clusters. Finally, stakeholders recommended carrying out more assessments to measure the impact of energy communities and evaluating the indirect effects that they have on individual behaviour in the long term (France).

## **Transposition and involvement of civil society**

Stakeholders were asked to give their views on the adoption of the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package and its transposition at national level. As the graph below shows, the majority of respondents to the online questionnaire were aware of the adoption of this group of EU directives. In particular, more than **80%** of respondents are aware of the Energy Efficiency Directive.

Graph 19 Are you aware of the recent adoption of EU directives in the energy policy field under the umbrella of the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package that are to be transposed into national legislation in 2020 or 2021?



National stakeholders assessed their involvement in the adoption of the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package and the process of transposition (this process is at a different stage in each of the Member States analysed). Half of the respondents considered that the government has informed **to a large extent (9%) or to some extent (41%) their organisations in a transparent and comprehensive manner**. However, a significant proportion of organisations (41%) did not consider that they were informed in that way.

Graph 20 To what extent has your own organisation and/or other organisations representing the same interests/sector from your Member State been transparently and comprehensively informed by the government about the process leading to the adoption of the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package at EU level and (if already launched) the process of its transposition into national legislation?



When asked if they had been consulted in a meaningful and fair manner, respondents are less positive. Half of them (50%) thought that **they had not been consulted** in that way. Only a small proportion (6%) felt they had been consulted as described.

Graph 21 To what extent has your own organisation and/or other organisations representing the same interests/sector from your Member State been consulted meaningfully and in a fair manner by the government in the process leading to its adoption at EU level and (if already launched) the process of its transposition into national legislation?



These results show that stakeholders at national level are generally well aware of the new developments at EU level in this policy area. However, it seems that there is room for improvement in promoting greater involvement (to various extents) in the ongoing transposition process at national level.

*Involvement of civil society in addressing energy poverty*

Addressing the issue of energy poverty requires the combined work of public authorities and civil society organisations, in particular when Member States are planning their national energy strategies. When asked if they were actively involved in defining energy poverty and designing energy poverty action plans in the NCEP process of their Member States, **only 6% of respondents declared that they were involved to a large extent**. The majority of stakeholders (38%) considered that they were not involved at all, or only to some extent (35%). **15% of respondents could not answer the question** as they mentioned that there were no policies specifically targeting energy poverty in their Member State.

Graph 7 To what extent was your own organisation and/or other organisations representing the same interests/sector from your Member State involved in defining energy poverty and designing energy poverty action plans in the NCEP process in your country?



In the Member States visited, good practices of civil society involvement have been observed. In France, there is currently an inter-ministerial delegation on accommodation and access to housing that travels through France in search of solutions. This delegation meets public authorities and regional civil society to identify good practices that can be standardised at national level. Another initiative, the “[*Pacte du pouvoir de vivre*](https://www.pactedupouvoirdevivre.fr/)”, also holds meetings on housing and energy poverty. Even where public authorities fail to involve civil society organisations, some measures to deal with energy poverty, initiated only by civil society, were presented. In Germany for instance, about 10 years ago CARITAS (social NGO) - in cooperation with the association of Germany's energy agencies - launched the *Stromsparcheck* where long-term unemployed help energy-poor households to reduce energy consumption and costs. These technical/advisory initiatives are complemented by legal advice from consumer associations to households cut off from power supply. Other Member States concluded that there was a lack of consultation, transparency and communication in the process of drafting the national energy strategy (Romania, Greece). In Romania, stakeholders also noted that when public consultation took place, it was often carried out too late in the drafting process, and recommended doing so at an earlier stage.

*Involvement of civil society in addressing the implications of the energy transition for employment*

Stakeholders in all Member States believe deeply that the national governments need the help of civil society organisations in order to achieve the energy transition, and that - as a source of many projects and ideas - they should be given more room and support for innovation. Both questionnaire results and discussions with civil society organisations showed a great division as to whether or not they were involved with public authorities in their Member States. The survey findings showed that **35% of respondents considered that they had been involved to some extent** in designing policies to boost green job growth and reduce employment caused by the energy transition. However, **29% of respondents considered that they had not been involved at all** in this matter, while 18% did not know.

Graph 13 To what extent was your own organisation and/or other organisations representing the same interests/sector from your country involved in designing policies to boost green job growth and reduce unemployment caused by the energy transition in your Member State?



In the Member States as well, results vary from one Member State to another. In Germany, following the coal phase-out and carbon neutrality objectives, institutional mechanisms including civil society organisations have been put in place to plan structural change (such as the *Kohlekommission* or the *Zukunftsagentur Rheinisches Revier*). The [*Kohlekommission*](https://www.bund.net/themen/kohle/kohle-ausstieg/kohlekommission/) serves as a case study for involving civil society in a meaningful way. It prepared a report with recommendations after eight months of intensive negotiations involving trade unions, environmental NGOs, industry, government(s) and more. The recommendations have now been converted into two pieces of legislation (one on finance, the other on planning structural change) that are expected to be adopted in early 2020. This connection of planning and financing was warmly welcomed by stakeholders in Germany because it ensures that new value chains are planned, supported financially and created before the old ones disappear. In France, stakeholders are also joining forces to anticipate structural change. For instance, in the electricity field, several professional branches have signed with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Ecological and Inclusive Transition a [Commitment to Develop Employment and Skills (EDEC)](https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/emploi/accompagnement-des-mutations-economiques/appui-aux-mutations-economiques/edec). This agreement aims to implement a negotiated action plan, on the basis of a shared analysis of needs which is designed to anticipate the consequences of economic, social and demographic change on jobs and skills, and to take concerted action in the regions. The first results of the study are expected in March 2020 and publication in June 2020.

However, several stakeholders indicated a lack of or partially conducted social dialogue within their country (Greece, Romania, Poland). In Greece, stakeholders mentioned that despite the social dialogue at business level between employers and trade unions, the country is lagging behind in terms of social dialogue regarding law-making processes and public dialogue. Moreover, the national collective agreement planned for discussion on green jobs and the energy transition, but it has not happened yet. Therefore, the national strategies or plans of Member States for the energy transition should necessarily include consultation with civil society. In Romania, non-governmental organisations underlined their difficulties in opening a dialogue with public authorities, especially in the coal mining regions. Therefore, stakeholders stressed the need to discuss the energy transition with all social actors (Poland, Romania). In order to conduct a slow, fair and just transition for local communities and tackle the problems that workers are facing, intensive work and good planning between civil society and public authorities are necessary (Greece).

*Involvement of civil society in developing energy communities*

Stakeholders were also asked via the online questionnaire to what extent their organisation was involved in designing national policies to regulate and promote energy communities. Results showed a great division among respondents. **41% considered that they had not been involved at all in this matter, while 41% felt that they had been involved to some extent**. Only 6% of respondents declared that they were involved to a large extent, while 12% did not know.

Graph 17 To what extent was your own organisation and/or other organisations representing the same interests/sector from your Member State involved in designing national policies to regulate and promote energy communities?



# **Secondary data: Literature review of EESC work**

The EESC has expressed its views on the Energy Union and related topics in several opinions. Specifically, it has commented at the appropriate juncture on the **four reports on the State of the Energy Union (SEU)** sent out annually by the European Commission since the start of the initiative in 2016. The EESC has also commented on the governance of the Energy Union and, more recently, on its institutional framework. Furthermore, the EESC has expressed its views on the integrated national energy and climate plans (NECPs), sustainable mobility, energy prices and costs, and essential services (which include energy and transport) as mentioned in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Strategic Action Plan on Batteries and the Clean Energy for All package have also been scrutinised.

In these opinions, the EESC has consistently flagged up the pivotal role played by **strong and shared governance** in delivering the Energy Union objectives. This entails:

1. the **systemic, continuous and multilevel involvement** **of** citizens, businesses, the social partners, the scientific community and wider **civil society**;
2. the **commitment of Member States** to jointly reach the targets, through legally binding national provisions;
3. the need for **adequate investment** to ensure that a **socially sustainable transition** is achieved.

Particularly, in [TEN/695](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/report-state-energy-union)[[31]](#footnote-32), the EESC reiterated its full support for the objectives underpinning the Energy Union, highlighting however that it has not yet become a reality in Europeans' daily lives. The EESC stressed that **engaged governance is essential** to the delivery of this policy framework and thus to the achievement of a **fair transition**. Specifically, the EESC called for a ***Social Pact for Citizen-driven Energy Transition*** to be agreed by the **EU, Member States, regions, cities, social partners and organised civil society**. The Pact should cover all social aspects connected with the Energy Union, becoming its sixth dimension and being integrated into the European Pillar of Social Rights. The EESC also called for a closer link with the long-term targets of the 2050 Strategy and for more accountability on the part of the Member States. Additionally, the Committee called for more careful scrutiny of the EU's energy dependence and its geopolitical effects.

The EESC appealed for truly democratic energy policy-making, which should encompass all the social implications of the energy transition, including:

* the provision of **adequate funding** to support workers at risk of losing their jobs;
* the eradication of **energy poverty**, tackling its root causes (that is, both high prices and limited access to energy efficiency investment);
* the creation of "**green jobs**" through specific training, especially for young people and young unemployed people (proposal for a Green Erasmus Pro programme);
* **rethinking mobility** through electrification, cutting back on unnecessary demand (home-workplace commuting), promoting walking, biking and public transport, with particular attention to low-income owners of polluting vehicles;
* the **re-allocation of financial resources** from high-carbon to zero-carbon assets and infrastructure across all segments of the economy, especially involving utilities, energy-related and energy-intensive industries;
* encouraging public and private investment in Energy Union **research and innovation**.

With regard to the tools available in the Regulation on Energy Governance, the EESC proposed that **a permanent citizens' dialogue be made a compulsory preparatory element of all major political and legislative action pertinent to climate change.** Internet consultation should be complemented by meetings and direct contacts (such as deliberative polling and ECIs) with the general public. The transformation of Europe's energy system could be swifter and cheaper if powered by people who increasingly become active consumers, prosumers, workers, crowdsourcers and crowdfunders. This governance shift is considered to be particularly achievable given the **rise in climate awareness** among EU citizens and businesses. In this regard, the EESC welcomed relevant European Commission initiatives, such as Clean energy for EU islands, Coal regions in transition, the Energy Union Tour, the Battery Alliance (see also [TEN/696](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/strategic-action-plan-batteries-report)[[32]](#footnote-33)) and the establishment of the Energy Poverty Observatory.

In [TEN/657](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/third-report-state-energy-union)[[33]](#footnote-34), the EESC stressed that EU society's full ownership of the Energy Union was crucial to achieving a real sustainability transition. Therefore, it welcomes the emphasis put on citizens' engagement and mobilisation in the Third Report on the State of the Energy Union. As already stated in the opinion on the Governance of the Energy Union ([TEN/617](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/governance-energy-union)[[34]](#footnote-35)), the EESC called for **nationally binding targets** which should be adequate and **consistent, with a long-term strategy**. Adequate measures imply adaptation to regulatory and technological change, and should be set taking into account the interests and views of all stakeholders in society, and vulnerable groups in particular. Institutional and market barriers should be lifted, coordinated industrial plans and affordable prices should be given priority. Moreover, financial support must be ensured to make this industrial shift possible: European enterprises need a stable business environment to fully exploit the opportunities coming with the energy transition. The EESC asked for the **social dimension to be included among the state of the Energy Union's evaluation criteria**. In this opinion, the EESC acknowledged the need to further democratise the drafting and implementation of national energy and climate plans, with a specific regional approach. Policy should be informed correctly and in a timely manner through **high quality data**. In this regard, the EESC has proposed the creation of "European Energy Information Services" within the European Environmental Agency. In this opinion as well, the EESC put forward the idea of a jointly drawn *Social Pact for a Citizen-driven Energy Transition* calling for a smooth transition, as also advocated by the European Parliament. Active support should be provided to community-owned projects for accessing EU financial instruments. In this opinion as well, the EESC stressed the need to consider the Energy Union's geopolitical dimension and to sustain transitional scientific research.

In [TEN/626](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/state-energy-union)[[35]](#footnote-36), the EESC stressed the need for an Energy Union assessment carried out not only in terms of policy objectives, but also in terms of real benefits to consumers and businesses, including SMEs. The EESC also called for the swift adoption and timely implementation of initiatives launched so far, at the level of the EU and in Member States.

As highlighted in [TEN/580](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/state-energy-union-2015)[[36]](#footnote-37), the EESC has been supporting the idea of a European Energy Union from its very outset, and welcomed the report on the SEU as an important tool not just for monitoring, but also for **keeping energy at the top of the political agenda** across the European Union. In particular, the EESC called for the report not to boil down to a mere administrative exercise. It could instead help to identify aspects crucial for the advancing of the Energy Union, pursuing objectives relevant to EU civil society. Starting from this opinion, the EESC has been flagging up the lack of a **social dimension** in the Energy Union's five evaluation criteria adopted by the European Commission – namely, decarbonisation of the economy; energy efficiency as a contribution to the modernisation of energy demand; an internal energy market; energy security, solidarity and trust; research, innovation and competitiveness; implementation of the Energy Union. The EESC called for the social partners, citizens, businesses, associations, NGOs, scientists and researchers to be involved in the annual report process, with the intention of setting up a European Energy Dialogue to touch upon social implications connected to the delivery of the Energy Union.

Views on the **Energy Union governance**, as proposed by the Commission, were collected in [TEN/617](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/governance-energy-union). In this opinion, the EESC specifically acknowledged that the involvement and engagement of civil society, the cooperation and support of Member States and the agreement and commitment of the social partners are essential to achieving a just energy transition, which meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement. In this regard, the EESC asked for a clearer definition and strengthening of the provisions envisaged to build **social consensus at national, regional and local level**. The need for the democratisation of European energy policy has long been emphasised by the EESC, starting from exploratory opinion [TEN/503](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/needs-and-methods-public-involvement-energy-policy-field)[[37]](#footnote-38) on the then-called [**European Energy Dialogue**](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/resources/docs/european-energy-dialogue_en.pdf). In the preparatory phases of the Energy Union, the EESC repeatedly stated the need for strong and shared governance, entailing a coordinated multilevel, action-oriented dialogue within and across all Member States ([TEN/562](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/governance-system2030-climate-and-energy-framework)[[38]](#footnote-39) and [TEN/570](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/energy-union-strategic-framework)[[39]](#footnote-40)), also concerning the definition of the European Strategic Energy Technology Plans ([TEN/579](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/integrated-set-plan-accelerating-european-energy-system-transformation)[[40]](#footnote-41)).

Back to [TEN/617](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/governance-energy-union), one further aspect needing to be reinforced is the establishment of a clear and shared **energy diplomacy** and policy towards third countries, in order to **ensure European energy solidarity and security.** Moreover, the definition of "regional" cooperation should not be confined to geographic proximity but include groupings of states with complementary energy resources, including non-Member States. Coordination efforts within the Union, according to which individual Member States are responsible for contributing adequately and proportionally to the overall European medium- (to 2030) and long-term (to 2050) targets, should imply clear monitoring and the incorporation of such targets into national law.

For these reasons, in [TEN/700](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/integrated-national-energy-and-climate-plans)[[41]](#footnote-42) the EESC welcomed the launch of the assessment of the draft **National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) submitted by the Member States** to the European Commission. The exercise is meant to update the new governance model launched by the Council and the Parliament in December 2018 and aimed at achieving an EU-level coordinated environmental transition through a multilevel interactive society-wide dialogue. The European Union is thus the first major global economy to adopt, via specific NECPs, a **legally binding framework** to deliver on its 2015 climate commitments. The EESC called for this integrated and systemic governance approach to be clearly defined and fully shared with all parties involved in order to achieve a broad and sound social consensus.

Similarly, in [TEN/694](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/new-institutional-framework-energy-and-climate-policy-2025)[[42]](#footnote-43), the EESC welcomed the Commission's proposal to use the *passerelle* clauses to shift from unanimity to **qualified majority voting within the Council** (with the accompanying ordinary legislative procedure) when **energy-related tax matters** are at stake. This new set-up would make EU energy and climate policy more democratic and more efficient. The EESC could also play an important role in supporting the trilogue and should be involved. Such gains in the policy-making process need however to be complemented by the active engagement of all stakeholders. The EESC regrets that the types of tax decisions to be discussed under qualified majority are not specified. The EESC was concerned that decisions taken at EU level could trigger **adverse distributional effects**, differently affecting Member States according, for example, to their dependence on fossil fuels. In such cases, new measures may require compensatory funding from the EU in line with local circumstances, so that workers, consumers and communities are not left behind. However, the EESC calls on the EU when using qualified majority voting to remain committed to the subsidiarity principle and, in areas where it does not have exclusive competence, to concentrate on areas in which shared objectives cannot be achieved more effectively at national, regional or local level.

Two opinions ([TEN/666](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/sustainable-mobility-europe-communication)[[43]](#footnote-44) and [TEN/643](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/clean-competitive-and-connected-mobility-all-communication)[[44]](#footnote-45)) evaluated measures concerning **transport and mobility**. In the most recent, the EESC reviewed the Commission's Third Mobility Package, regretting however its exclusive focus on road transport. The EESC supported the Commission's project to build an automated, connected and safe road network (Strategic Action Plan on Road Safety), recommending that it be extended to urban centres and pointing to problems arising in a "mixed traffic" regime. Specifically, the EESC acknowledged that full vehicle automation raises numerous questions of ethics, economics, employment, social acceptance and legal liability, concluding that only humans can, by definition, make "ethical" choices. Lastly, the EESC made it clear that **cleaner and safer vehicles should be affordable for everyone**. Replacing the vehicle fleet also gives rise to disposal and recycling issues that should be central to European circular economy strategies.

In [TEN/643](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/clean-competitive-and-connected-mobility-all-communication), the EESC evaluated the Commission communication *Europe on the move*, focusing mainly on road networks. The EESC stressed the importance of balancing environmental sustainability, the abolition of market barriers for the creation of an efficient Single European Transport Area and social rights of workers on road networks. Specifically, the EESC predicted positive effects both from **land transport technology digitalisation and automation** and from the establishment of a flexible, fair, transparent, non-discriminatory road pricing system compliant with the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles, provided that revenues are earmarked.

In [TEN/623](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/energy-prices-and-costs)[[45]](#footnote-46), the EESC claimed that, in order for **consumers to be at the heart of the Energy Union** as wished, they need to be thoroughly informed about **energy prices** (i.e., exchange values within markets) **and costs** (linked to production). Moreover, the situation of vulnerable consumers threatened by **energy poverty** should be explicitly taken into account. Public support for renewable energy should not lead to burdensome tax measures for households. These two kinds of measures could be funded from the profit margins of large companies in the energy sector, rather than taxpayers. The EESC also regretted the considerable lack of uniformity in energy products and services across the Member States.

In [TEN/692](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/better-implementation-social-pillar-promoting-essential-services-own-initiative-opinion)[[46]](#footnote-47), the EESC welcomed the inclusion of the **right to access good quality essential services** (or Services of General Economic Interest, as defined in Protocol 26, annexed to the TFEU) in the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principle 20). Essential services/SGEIs include energy and transport. These are considered to be a vital component of **social justice and territorial cohesion** of the Union and underpinned by the principles of equal treatment, solidarity, universality, continuity, proximity to the user and affordability. The EESC thus called for these rights to be given legal substance, partly by developing shared indicators for monitoring and by including them in the Social Scoreboard of the European Semester, which is supposed to assist the Member States in implementing the social rights proclaimed in the European Pillar.

In [TEN/624[[47]](#footnote-48)](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/clean-energy-all-europeans-package), the EESC welcomed the Commission's initiative of a **"clean energy" package**, aiming at a **decisive, fair and socially interactive EU clean energy transition**, but questioned whether the regulatory framework was fitted to reaching these objectives. The engagement of citizens in Energy Union governance is vital, as it has been further weakened by the lack of binding and coordinated national energy and climate plans. In particular, the EESC was disappointed with the non-specification of public consultation (see opinion [TEN/503](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/needs-and-methods-public-involvement-energy-policy-field)).

The EESC asks that the **risks and opportunities** connected with the transition (job losses and job creation) not be underestimated, especially at regional level, and points out that bold steps need to be taken to ensure that a level playing field is achieved in the energy market (i.e., **support for renewables** and energy efficiency products and services). The EESC appreciates that the package addresses heating and cooling of buildings, eco-design, the electricity market and transport. Furthermore, the Commission's focus on energy efficiency should take into account the needs of vulnerable consumers, who often cannot afford **energy saving investments** (building retrofits) and face high energy prices, thus ending up trapped in energy poverty. **The EESC encourages "presumption" and the concept of the energy community**, and energy security should be carefully considered when the energy mix changes sharply. The EESC has also issued opinions on the aspects regulated by the Clean energy package ([TEN/618](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/revision-energy-efficiency-directive)[[48]](#footnote-49), [TEN/619](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/accelerating-clean-energy-innovation-communication)[[49]](#footnote-50), [TEN/620](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/revision-energy-performance-buildings-directive/timeline)[[50]](#footnote-51), [TEN/621](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/cooperative-intelligent-transport-systems)[[51]](#footnote-52), [TEN/622](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/revision-renewable-energies-directive)[[52]](#footnote-53), [TEN/625](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/electricity-market-design)[[53]](#footnote-54)).

# **List of organisations consulted**

The EESC would like to sincerely thank the following organisations for their contributions:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation name** | **Member State** | **Group** | **Consultation via** | |
| **Questionnaire** | **Meetings** |
| Electricité de France (EDF) | France | I | x | x |
| Association Française du Gaz (AFG) | France | I |  | x |
| Union Française de l’Electricité (UFE) | France | I |  | x |
| Fédération des Services Énergie Environnement (FEDENE) | France | I |  | x |
| Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF) | France | I |  | x |
| ENErgic SCIC SA | France | I | x |  |
| Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA) | France | II |  | x |
| UR CFTC AURA | France | II | x |  |
| ENERCOOP | France | III |  | x |
| Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Energie Environnement | France | Public authority |  | x |
| Landesverband Erneuerbare Energien NRW | Germany | I | x | x |
| Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie | Germany | II | x | x |
| Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH | Germany | III | x | x |
| German Biomass Research Center | Germany | III | x |  |
| University of Oldenburg | Germany | III | x |  |
| Verbraucherzentrale NRW e.V. | Germany | III | x | x |
| Caritas | Germany | III |  | x |
| BBWind Projektberatung | Germany | III |  | x |
| City of Jülich | Germany | Public authority | x | x |
| SWW Wunsiedel GmbH | Germany | Public authority | x |  |
| DGB Nordrhein Westfalen | Germany | Public authority |  | x |
| Employers' Confederation of Romanian Industry (CONPIROM) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Employers' Confederation (CONCORDIA) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Federation of Associations of Energy Utility Companies (ACUE) | Romania | I | x | x |
| General Union of Romanian Industrialists (UGIR) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Employers' Organisation of the Renewable Energy Producers (PATRES) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Romanian Energy Center (CRE) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Employers in the Cement Industry and Other Mineral Products for Construction in Romania (CIROM) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Romanian Steel Producers' Union (UniRomSider) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Employers’ Federation of Producers in the Chemical Industry (Fedchim) | Romania | I |  | x |
| Employers' Federation for Petrol and Gas (FPPG) | Romania | I | x |  |
| Metallurgical Employers' Federation (PATROMAT) | Romania | I | x |  |
| National Trade Union Confederation (MERIDIAN) | Romania | II | x | x |
| National Mines and Energy Federation (FNME) | Romania | II | x | x |
| National Trade Union Bloc (BNS) | Romania | II |  | x |
| Confederation of Romanian Democratic Trade Unions (CSDR) | Romania | II |  | x |
| Trade Union of Muntele | Romania | II | x |  |
| Romanian National Committee of the World Energy Council (CNR-CME) | Romania | III | x | x |
| Bankwatch Romania | Romania | III | x | x |
| Romanian Wind Energy Association | Romania | III |  | x |
| Greenpeace Romania | Romania | III | x |  |
| Association "Kogayon" | Romania | III | x |  |
| Energy Cities in Romania (OER) | Romania | III | x |  |
| Ministry of Energy of Romania | Romania | Public authority |  | x |
| Romanian Gas and Electricity Market Operator (OPCOM) | Romania | Public authority |  | x |
| Business Center Club | Poland | I | x | x |
| Polish Craft Association | Poland | I | x | x |
| Lewiatan Confederation | Poland | I |  | x |
| OPZZ | Poland | II |  | x |
| ZZG | Poland | II |  | x |
| Solidarnosc | Poland | II |  | x |
| KADRA | Poland | II |  | x |
| Institute of Renewable Energy | Poland | III | x |  |
| Institute for Sustainable Development Foundation | Poland | III | x | x |
| Ministry of State Assets of Poland | Poland | Public authority |  | x |
| Public Power Corporation (S.A. Hellas) | Greece | I |  | x |
| Hellenic Association of Independent Power Producers | Greece | I |  | x |
| Hellenic Electricity Distribution Network Operator | Greece | I |  | x |
| Panhellenic Energy Federation | Greece | II |  | x |
| General Confederation of Labour of Greece (GSEE) | Greece | II | x | x |
| University of Piraeus | Greece | III |  | x |
| University of West Attica - Research Center | Greece | III |  | x |
| Union of Greek Industries | Greece | III |  | x |
| General Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEBEE) | Greece | III |  | x |
| Consumers' Protection Center (KEPKA) | Greece | III |  | x |
| Consumers' Association "The Quality of Life" (E.K.PI.ZO.) | Greece | III |  | x |
| National Confederation of Disabled People | Greece | III |  | x |
| Greenpeace Greece | Greece | III |  | x |
| Economic and Social Council of Greece | Greece | Public authority |  | x |
| Regulatory Authority for Energy (RAE) | Greece | Public authority | x | x |
| Association of Greek Regions | Greece | Public authority |  | x |
| Independent Power Transmission Operator (IPTO/ADMIE) | Greece | Public authority | x |  |

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1. În scopul elaborării prezentului raport de informare, Unitatea pentru transporturi, energie, infrastructură și societatea informațională (TEN) și Unitatea Prospectivă, studii și evaluarea politicilor (FSA) și-au asumat în comun funcția de secretariat. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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5. *Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales, 2019.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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15. E3G, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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23. <https://www.energypoverty.eu/about/what-energy-poverty>. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. The definition of "modest household" is given by the National Housing Agency <https://www.anah.fr/proprietaires/proprietaires-occupants/les-conditions-de-ressources/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Law No. 196/2016 regarding the minimum income of inclusion (issued by the Romanian Parliament) defines energy poverty as "*the impossibility of the vulnerable consumer to cover the minimum energy needs regarding the optimum heating of the house during the cold season.*" [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. In the United Kingdom, according to the first official definition (1991), which is still unofficially used in other countries, "a household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth". [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
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52. Revision of the Renewable Energies Directive (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Electricity Market Design (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)