



EESC Info

European Economic and Social Committee

A bridge between Europe and organised civil society

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EESC info SPECIAL - Civil Society Prize 2021

[The Grassroots View – S3 Episode 16 - Green, how I love green](#)

A just and green transition is only possible with civil society's contribution. People and organisations across the EU are dedicated to developing innovative and people-centred ways of fighting climate change. In 2021, the EESC decided to award its Civil Society Prize to five organisations who greatly help with meeting the challenges of climate change. In this episode of The Grassroots View, we've invited them to tell us their stories.

Cillian Lohan, EESC Vice-President for Communication, explains why it is crucial not to disregard climate action taken by countless individuals and communities on the ground. **Guy de Koninck**, from first place winner Grootouders voor het klimaat (BE), told us more about their project "Our Savings for their Future" and their efforts to promote intergenerational solidarity. **Mònica Guiteras**, from second-place winners Engineers without Borders in Catalonia (ES), talks about their fight against energy poverty by helping the energy poor find and articulate their voices. Romania's **Costin Dragne** talks to us about the 'educlick' project, run by the NGO Workshop Without Borders, which promotes circular economy and tackles social injustice. Urban studio "Prostorozh" fights the problematic rising temperatures in Ljubljana, Slovenia; **Zala Velkavrh** told us all about their creative project which earned them the prize. Finally, we hear from **Madis Vasser**, from the coalition of green NGOs in Estonia, who speaks about bringing different interest groups to the table to discuss the country's transition from shale oil to greener energy, without leaving

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EDITORIAL



Editorial

BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM!

Dear readers,

The EESC's most recent Civil Society Prize was dedicated to a theme that is especially close to my heart – climate action. One would think that the reality of the climate crisis would have struck home by now and would have become such a widely accepted fact that the whole world would have already been united in the attempt to avoid its own destruction. But although many efforts have been undertaken in this direction, we are still not doing enough.

This is why it is important to keep repeating that climate change may soon reach a point of no return and that it may well threaten the existence of the world as we know it.

This is why I can never stress enough how important it is to unite all our forces to do something about climate change. And it is a responsibility that none of us is exempt from.

The EESC believes that the success of the European Green Deal – under which the EU has pledged to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 – depends on action and commitment by all actors. Grassroots organisations and individuals play a critical role in helping to bring about a shift in norms and behaviours, making local economies greener or driving the transition at the local or regional level.

By dedicating the Civil Society Prize 2021 to climate action, the EESC wanted to honour and showcase the non-state climate efforts made so far.

We sought the winners among projects that support a just and green transition to a low-carbon economy. The goal was to encourage ongoing projects and inspire new ones, and I believe we have achieved it!

What we received is a wealth of ideas that give us hope that maybe we can win this battle. We have received projects from all corners of Europe battling climate change in inspiring and creative ways. It was not easy to pick the winners and we feel that each of our candidates deserves recognition. You can read more about all of them in our brochure dedicated to this year's prize.

We chose to crown five projects which are all impressive, each in their own way, and which tackle some of the most pressing issues we are facing when we talk about transition to a climate-neutral economy and society.

Through their important work, our five winners encourage sustainable investments and point to the valuable role of older generations; they tackle energy poverty by giving a voice to the energy poor; they make circular economy happen on the ground while at the same time actively promoting social justice; they combat urban heating by launching inventive and interactive apps or bring to the table all players in the energy transition, forcing them to have meaningful debates and find a plausible solution.

At the award ceremony held on 9 December in Brussels, I therefore felt especially privileged to have had the honour of handing out the prizes to our five winners. In this issue you can read more about their fantastic projects and you can get to know them in the interviews we did with them. We will also be launching a podcast where each of them will tell us about their future plans and how the EESC prize has motivated them to continue with their work.

In this issue you can also read about one of the winners of 2020 Civil Solidarity Prize who have just been given a prestigious climate award in the UK. We were especially touched to hear how the EESC prize made a difference for them, enabling them to continue with their projects and embark on new ones, which have started to earn them praise and recognition. This is what makes us not only proud but also even more determined to continue with our prize and with shining a spotlight on the fantastic work that civil society organisations and people are doing on the ground on all sorts of issues and across our European Union!

Enjoy the read and remember – we all have to chip in and give our due in this fight against climate change, however small or big our efforts or even sacrifices may be. We are all a part of the solution, let's stop being a part of the problem!

Cillian Lohan

EESC vice-president for communication

NEWS FROM PREVIOUS WINNERS

2021 CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE IN THE MEDIA

Here is a selection of headlines that have appeared in the media to date about the 2021 Civil Society Prize.

Belgium – De wereld morgen: [Grootouders voor het Klimaat wint belangrijke Europese prijs](#)

Bulgaria – Politika: [Асоциация на пенсионери получи европейска награда за гражданско общество и опазване на климата](#)

Croatia – Tportal.hr: [U Nagradu civilnog društva posvećenu klimi osvojila je belgijska udruga “Bake i djedovi za klimu”](#)

Italy – Apiceuropa: [Premio CESE per la società civile 2021](#)

Spain – El Diario: [Las assembleas contra la pobreza energética en Barcelona, premiadas por la UE](#)

Romania – Bursa: [Țara noastră a fost premiată de Comitetul Economic și Social European pentru implicarea în acțiuni climatice](#)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

[Watch the 2021 Civil Society Prize projects](#)

You can watch the video on the winning projects here.



[Towards a just transition – where there's a will, there's a way...](#)

The EESC has published a brochure showcasing all five winners of its 2021 Civil Society Prize. Those wanting to know more will also find interesting facts about many other outstanding climate projects we received, together with a wealth of background information about the EESC's work on climate and about the prize itself.

You can download the brochure at:

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/qe-01-21-440-en-n.pdf>

(II)



EESC NEWS

[The 2021 EESC Civil Society Prize on climate action goes to the Belgian association Grandparents for the Climate](#)

On 9 December the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) awarded prizes to five non-profit organisations and associations whose creative and inspiring climate projects promote a just and green transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

The EUR 50 000 prize was shared among five winning projects. The Belgian association Grandparents for the Climate took home the first prize of EUR 14 000. The other four associations each received EUR 9 000.



The four runners-up ranked in the following order: the Spanish association Engineers Without Borders Catalonia, the Romanian association Workshop without Borders, the Slovenian urban planning studio Prostorož, and the network of Estonian NGOs Estonian Green Movement/Estonian Fund for Nature and the Estonian Environmental Law Centre.

At the award ceremony held online and in Brussels, EESC President **Christa Schweng** congratulated the five winners and all candidates who applied: *"The projects we received demonstrate value and creativity in a variety of areas linked to climate. We firmly believe that projects like these will help achieve climate neutrality and a just transition. As a strong supporter of the European Green Deal, the EESC is deeply convinced that it is necessary to place citizens and businesses at the centre of the green transition and to make sure that nobody is left behind."*

EESC Vice-President for Communication, **Cillian Lohan**, said: *"To tackle climate change, we need the active participation of all parts of society. And we need to shift from consultation and top-down engagement towards a model of co-design, co-creation and empowerment. Positive stories such as the projects of our winners show this co-design and co-creation. They also engage people and organisations. This wealth of ideas gives us faith that the battle against climate change is far from lost."*

2021 CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE WINNERS

This year's winner is an association of grandparents from Belgium's Flanders region. [**Grootouders voor het Klimaat \(Grandparents for the Climate\)**](#) say they are trying to leave a better, more sustainable world for their grandchildren. With their campaign *Our Savings for their Future*, the association encourages some 2.4 million Belgian grandparents to redirect their savings, which amount to an estimated EUR 910 billion in assets, to more sustainable projects.

The campaign is also directed at the financial sector and the government, encouraging sustainable behaviour from investors and institutions and calling for their shift toward sustainable finance. They also promote financial literacy among students. The association wants to emphasise the vital role that older people can play in climate action.

Accepting the prize, Grootouders voor het Klimaat spokesperson **Guy De Koninck** said: *"It is an honour for us to receive the prize with four other amazing projects. We are concerned about the planet. We heard the cries of the youth and we joined their marches for the future. If money makes the world go round, the world is now spinning in the wrong direction. We need to turn it around and that is the goal of our campaign. The money we have can make the change and this is the message we have been sending to governments, banks and our fellow grandparents. Winning the prize is an important moral and financial support for our campaign."*

Second prize went to Spain's [**Associació Catalana Enginyeria Sense Fronteres \(Engineers Without Borders Catalonia\)**](#). At a time when 11% of Spanish households are struggling with energy poverty, this Catalan association is fighting for climate justice based on human rights. They include those suffering energy poverty in ongoing debates on climate emergencies and aim to empower disadvantaged people to exercise their fundamental right to have access to basic utilities.

The Romanian association [**Ateliere Fara Frontiere \(Workshop Without Borders\)**](#) went home with third prize. Their *educklick* project tackles social injustice and raises awareness of the advantages of the circular economy. The association employs marginalised people to refurbish waste electrical and electronic equipment. They then donate the equipment to schools in disadvantaged areas, and to organisations

working with vulnerable children.

Fourth place went to the Slovenian urban planning studio [Prostoroz](#), which has mobilised residents of the Slovenian capital Ljubljana to act against the effects of climate change in their town – one of the fastest-warming cities in the world. Their *Hot Spots* project invited people to pinpoint the city's hottest locations on a digital map, receiving a huge amount of feedback about what needs to be done to avoid overheating.

Fifth prize was awarded to the network of Estonian NGOs [Estonian Green Movement/Estonian Fund for Nature](#) and the [Estonian Environmental Law Centre](#), which is fighting to change perceptions about renewable energy in a country with one of the biggest carbon footprints in the EU. They created a platform for dialogue between all sides on energy transition in north-east Estonia, where the oil shale industry will have to be phased out, which has not been met with much enthusiasm.

ABOUT THE CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE 2021

This year's theme *Climate Action* attracted dozens of candidates from 24 countries. A wide range of projects were submitted, highlighting innovative approaches that civil society organisations and individuals are taking to tackle the climate emergency.

The prize showcased the critical role played by the grassroots level to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, as pledged by the EU under the European Green Deal. The EESC hopes its prize will encourage civil society to help make local economies greener, and to keep changing norms, behaviours and systems that led us to the brink of the climate crisis.

The Civil Society Prize is awarded for "excellence in civil society initiatives". Each year, the prize covers a different aspect of the EESC's work. The theme in 2019 was gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2020, the EESC launched a one-off Civil Solidarity Prize dedicated to the fight against COVID-19.

Further details about the Civil Society Prize 2021 are available [here](#). (II)



Did you know?

- The winner of the Civil Society Prize 2021, "Grandparents for the Climate", has many ambassadors who support its work. Many of them are well known, but its most famous ambassador is Jane Goodall, the legendary chimpanzee researcher and the world's foremost expert on the species. Ms Goodall was chosen as the Grandparents' 100th ambassador in October 2020.
- Every computer that is refurbished instead of made into waste saves 144 kg of CO₂. From 2008 – 2021 our Romanian winner, Workshop without Borders, refurbished and donated almost 25 000 computers - so try to calculate how many kilos of CO₂ they have saved so far!

- The Hot Spots project of our Slovenian winner tackles urban heat islands in Ljubljana which, as recent projections have shown, is slated to become the fastest-warming city in the world. According to the projections, the weather in Ljubljana in 2050 will resemble that of Virginia Beach, US. The same fate awaits the whole of central Europe and the Balkans, which are expected to see the most notable temperature rises, with the climate in the region resembling that of Texas cities in the US.
- The Spanish association "Engineers Without Borders Catalonia" fights against energy poverty by giving voice to the fuel poor who make up 11 % of all Spanish households. Figures show that more Spanish people die prematurely from energy poverty rather than in car accidents. In 2019, the number of Europeans dying each year as a result of a cold home stood at 100 000, and over 50 million were living in homes with a leaking roof, damp walls or floors. The same year, close to 80 million people in the EU were late or unable to pay their utility bills.
- Our winner, the network of Estonian environmental NGOs, is promoting the shift to renewable energy sources by organising meaningful dialogues between all stakeholders. The EU champion in renewable electricity generation is Sweden, although both Norway and Iceland have so far had a higher share of renewables in primary energy supply. Malta has the lowest proportion of renewables out of all the EU countries. (II)



[News from previous winners](#)

On a waste reduction mission: nothing new in 22

One of last year's winners of the EESC Solidarity Prize, Cherwell Collective from the UK, has just been granted a prestigious climate award in the UK for its new circular economy project. This Oxford-based, not-for-profit company won our prize in 2020 for supplying food to residents in need during COVID, while teaching them how to grow their own food and make the best use of all surplus foodstuffs.

They have since used the EESC prize money to increase their support for the vulnerable, but also to move forward on their mission to reduce the carbon footprint of their community. They have become the lead partner in the new Waste Innovation Station Headquarters (WISH) project in Oxfordshire, UK.

The project is a vision of a circular economy where nothing new is purchased until absolutely all the options for keeping items in circulation have been exhausted. It has already begun, with a campaign entitled "Nothing new in 22", which asks individuals to make a pledge, in only one single industry, to buy nothing new in 2022. The project has already met with great enthusiasm and has received broad recognition in the UK. On 25 January Cherwell Collective received money from the National Lottery Community's Climate Action Fund, which will finance the

WISH project.

Cherwell Collective's founder, **Dr Emily Connally**, told the EESC about how receiving the EESC prize had made a huge difference for this not-for-profit company.

"The EESC prize was part of the inspiration for our next project, and serves as match funding for the work. I know in my heart our success would not have been possible without the doors the EESC award opened. As a new company, it gave us legitimacy and recognition for our innovation. It gave us funds free of restriction so we could ask the community what they wanted. We saved those funds and used them to follow the wishes of our users", said **Dr Connally**.

In the surveys carried out, users revealed there was no consensus around need for specific food items, but rather a shared desire to receive "whatever might otherwise be wasted".

In line with their wishes, **Cherwell Collective** and its partners came up with the WISH project, which reaches more than 50 000 people collectively and is designed to guide the community towards a reduced carbon footprint through outreach and demonstrations on how to reduce waste.

WISH also has an interactive science museum, where each and every exhibit is made from waste, informing the public of the carbon footprint of that waste, and providing demonstrations as well as DIY kits to reduce waste, repair items, and reduce consumption/demand for new production lines.

"We ask people to pledge to support a circular economy. To repair or repurpose items, to pass on their own items, and above all, to resist the urge to buy new items when so many preloved possessions are available," **Dr Connally** said.

Congratulations, Emily and Cherwell Collective! The EESC is more than proud of you, and humbled and pleased to have been able to contribute to your fantastic project! (II)

IN THE WINNERS' WORDS



Leaving behind a sustainable legacy

"Grandparents for the Climate" think that the over 55s have a major role to play in the fight against climate change - their winning project "Our Savings for their Future" encourages older people to invest their money wisely for the good of our planet and to leave a better, more sustainable world for their grandchildren. "Grandparents" are now working on other exciting projects which all promote intergenerational solidarity and sustainable investing.

EESC info: What prompted you to start your project or initiative?

Guy De Koninck: The awareness, as people aged 55 and over, of our responsibility for the climate and of the strength of our collective financial capacity to contribute to the transition to a climate-friendly economy. It is difficult to know how exactly this capital, i.e. our savings, is used and it is difficult for us as customers to exert an influence over this. At the same time, society needs capital in order to structure itself according to more sustainable principles. These two mechanisms could be better coordinated.

How has your project been received? Have you had any feedback from the people you've helped? (Can you give us an example, if you have any?)

The campaign we carried out was well supported by the press and by senior citizens' associations, such as NEOS, who organised a workshop with us and included a publication in their members' magazine. Our insights and incisive discussions with the financial sector and ministers were greatly appreciated.

How will you use this specific funding to provide further help in the community? Are you already planning any new projects?

We are currently working on a guide to sustainable investment, an intergenerational workshop for secondary education, and cooperation with other NGOs. We want to further develop the campaign with presentations and workshops for seniors' associations and schools, and to promote and support them more widely. We are also considering alternative forms of dissemination, such as a board game and a French-language version of the campaign.

What advice would you give to other organisations in terms of achieving results with such activities and programmes?

Set up a competent and enthusiastic campaign team and do enough research to support your message. Make sure that the expertise of your team is recognised, but communicate through all modern channels to reach the grass roots.

How optimistic are you about the prospects of the EU achieving the objectives of the Green Deal?

This is a historically important contribution to the ecological transition. Putting the objectives into practice is the biggest challenge. As grandparents, we would like to contribute to climate action.



Hot in the City

Curious to learn how Ljubljana residents felt about the overheating of their city and frustrated by the inaction of municipal authorities to do something about it, urban studio Prostoroz launched the project *Hot Spots*, inviting people to pinpoint the city's hottest locations on a digital map. The project received a surprisingly huge response from residents and the media, with concrete proposals on how urban overheating should be tackled. Prostoroz's Zala Velkavrh shares with us the secret of the project's success as well as the studio's future plans.

EESC info: What prompted you to launch your project or initiative?

Zala Velkavrh: 50% of our initiative was born out of frustration and 50% out of curiosity. Despite the fact that the effects of climate change and urban heat islands were well known by the municipal government, few measures have been taken. On the other hand, we were curious to see if and how the people of Ljubljana experience urban heat during summer.

How was your project received? Did you have any feedback from the people you helped? (Can you give an example if you have?)

We built a very simple web app and were expecting a modest response. To our surprise, the residents of Ljubljana as well as the media showed interest and joined the initiative. People added 700 hot spots (hot locations around city) in less than three weeks!

How do you intend to use this specific funding to provide more help to the community? Are you already planning new projects?

We will invest it back into the city of Ljubljana. One of the areas where urban heat islands are particularly problematic is the university clinical centre, the largest medical centre in the country. Because of COVID, public space around the clinics has taken on a new role - it has become a waiting space, a space where workers spend their breaks and, in times when the number of COVID infections were lower than today it was also a space where patients met their relatives. We want to work with the city of Ljubljana, representatives of the clinics, patients and health workers to improve at least some microspaces for the cooler and the better.

What advice would you give to other organisations to get results in activities and programmes of this type?

Instead of talking about the future, we tried to understand how people experience the effects of climate change today. We used common language and focused on the everyday (lived) experience of pedestrians, cyclists and other users of public space, and the response was very good. Climate change is not an abstract threat anymore.

How optimistic are you about the prospects for the EU to achieve the Green Deal targets?

Very pessimistic, regarding the new year's developments around green energy and regarding the fact that no EU country achieved goals set by the Paris Agreement.



Stepping into the Game

Tired of listening to the same excuses, three Estonian NGOs - the Estonian Green Movement, the Estonian Fund for Nature and the Estonian Environmental Law Centre - decided to step into the game and bring together different stakeholders for a debate on a just transition in a country which has until recently had one of the biggest carbon footprints in the world. Their communication project put a focus on the north-east region where oil shale is still the king of fuels and in which most jobs depend on the oil shale industry, which will have to be phased out. It was not going to be an easy debate, but the results have been encouraging.

EESC info: What prompted you to launch your project or initiative?

Madis Vasser: Estonian environmental movements had been calling for the phase-out of fossil fuels for decades, but the requests were always met with the same excuses - what about jobs? what about the economy? it is too difficult, who should be responsible? etc. So in 2018 three NGOs decided to launch a joint project to lead a meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders about just transition away from our main fossil fuel, which is oil shale.

How was your project received? Did you have any feedback from the people you helped? (Can you give an example if you have?)

The reception was good - representatives from all sides did actually come together to discuss the issues. As one representative of a municipality in the oil shale mining region later recounted, he was expecting another useless environmental meeting, but the event was actually really meaningful. During and after the project we have had close contacts with local people, industry representatives and government officials - partly due to this networking Estonia was one of the first Member States to finalise their territorial just transition plan for the just transition fund.

How do you intend to use this specific funding to provide more help to the community? Are you already planning new projects?

We will use the funds to extend some of the activities from the initial project, such as coordinating a large NGO climate network that fosters cooperation between local organisations on climate issues. The support is also used for developing follow-up projects, now focused more on the local level.

What advice would you give to other organisations to get results in activities and programmes of this type?

As one training session from the EUKI programme stated well: "step into the game" and "embrace conflict". This means do not be afraid to approach different stakeholders, as right now might be exactly the time that they are thinking along the same lines as you.

But at the same time you must remember that some stakeholders might not trust each other at first, or have very different ideas about the best outcomes of this cooperation, so prepare for such conflicts and work through them instead of avoiding the issues.

How optimistic are you about the prospects for the EU to achieve the Green Deal targets?

I think ultimately the state of the environment will make us first be even more ambitious than now, and then to achieve these goals by way of more systematic changes to lifestyles and consumption patterns, as there is no other feasible way to mitigate the worst effects of the ecological and climate crisis.



[A win-win solution from Romania](#)

Romania's Ateliere Fără Frontiere's amazing project 'educlick' combines two of today's burning topics - social justice and the circular economy - in an impressive way: it employs people from vulnerable backgrounds to refurbish waste electrical and electronic equipment. Once refurbished, the equipment is then donated to schools in disadvantaged areas. Costin Dagne from the NGO tells us more about the workshop and what the EESC Prize means for their work.

EESC info: What prompted you to launch your project ?

Costin Dagne: 'educlick', the first workshop of Ateliere Fără Frontiere, was founded in 2008 to address two social and environmental issues: the low employability chances that people from vulnerable backgrounds have and the high number of electrical and electronic equipment that ends up

being wasted, without going through a recycling or reusing process.

The computer donation program that we run today with schools across the country, responds to these two social issues directly: it supports education in disadvantaged areas, and at the same time, it promotes the concept of reusing, a process that is by far more environmentally friendly, with a lower carbon footprint.

How was your project received? Did you have any feedback from the people you helped? (Can you give an example if you have?)

Schools, NGOs and public institutions that participated in our projects responded positively to our call. With their help, in the 13 years of our activity, we have formed a network of educational partners through which we have donated over 23 000 computers to more than 500 000 beneficiaries.

Many of the educational partners we work with drew our attention to other equipment they need in order to keep up with the digitalisation era: copiers, video projectors, interactive whiteboards, etc. Therefore, last year we started to diversify the activity of the workshop, trying to introduce new types of equipment into the process of refurbishment and donation to schools.

How do you intend to use this specific funding to provide more help to the community? Are you already planning new projects?

The team is already working on organising new projects to equip over 200 schools in Romania in 2022 with digital equipment refurbished in the 'educlick' workshop. This specific financing will be used for the implementation of these projects, especially for modernising the infrastructure of the refurbishment workshop (protective equipment, logistics material, utensils, etc.).

What advice would you give to other organisations to get results in activities and programs of this type?

We believe that our business model is one that can be easily replicated in any of the Member States of the European Union, and that is why we encourage organisations everywhere to form sustainable partnerships with private and public actors.

Collaborating with institutions and companies that want to have a positive impact on combating climate change and the digitalisation of education by reusing IT waste devices, is the most important step towards success in programs such as 'educlick'.

How optimistic are you about the prospects for the EU to achieve the Green Deal targets?

The positive environmental impact of civil society that we have seen from our colleagues in other countries has made us undoubtedly more confident in the EU's chances of achieving the Green Deal goals.

As long as we continue to promote and learn from the experience of other actors in the green sector, we have every chance of turning the EU into a model of environmentally friendly space.

Personally, winning third place at the Civil Society Prize increases our desire to contribute even more to this goal in the coming years, especially now that we know that we have support and encouragement at European level.



Empowering the energy poor

Resolute to change the perception of people experiencing energy poverty as helpless victims, the Catalan association "Engineers Without Borders" started organising collective assemblies to give a platform to those with little access to energy or water, and those struggling to pay the bills. The association's Mònica Guiteras told us how the assemblies provided a safe and nearby space to these people and made them realise they were not the victims, but rather the protagonists and agents of change in the energy transition.

EESC info: What prompted you to launch your project or initiative?

Mònica Guiteras Blaya: The impact of energy poverty has so far been approached from a welfare perspective, which often labelled those affected as victims, or even as being guilty of "bad" consumption. For us, it was necessary to bring a more cross-cutting approach to the table, and

to empower families experiencing energy poverty as protagonists and agents of change in the current energy transition.

How was your project received? Did you have any feedback from the people you helped? (Can you give an example if you have?)

The participants see this initiative as much needed, because they often feel that they are helpless against large supply companies, or they perceive the administration as having a highly bureaucratic approach. Collective assemblies on energy poverty offer the people concerned a safe, nearby space, where nobody is judged and nobody knows more than anyone else does. Instead, they are spaces for building an understanding of the experiences of all people in order to help us to live better, with more information at our disposal, while participating actively in society.

How do you intend to use this specific funding to provide more help to the community? Are you already planning new projects?

The prize received is of great help in increasing the project's outreach. We still fail to reach many people living on the margins - those who are not even aware that these assemblies exist. It will also help us to reach out to affected people in innovative and meaningful ways. This is something that we have had to reinvent during this pandemic, bringing partly in-person, partly remote assemblies into play. Work on innovation, dissemination and communication, with a view to bringing together more and more diverse people, is one of the main goals we have set ourselves with this recognition and funding.

What advice would you give to other organisations to get results in activities and programmes of this type?

Close contact with grassroots organisations, outside the usual sectors in which our organisations work, has proven to be key for us. While we are an environmental NGO, we have set up major local partnerships on this project, with movements for decent housing and neighbourhood associations.

How optimistic are you about the prospects for the EU to achieve the Green Deal targets?

Social justice must be key to achieving these targets, as it is the only thing that will make the transition ahead just, as well as green. As a society, we need to make great efforts to have an impact on governments and administrations at different levels in order to achieve the targets by guaranteeing social safeguards, as well as citizen participation and empowerment.

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