



CONFERENCE

#AffordableEnergy

Delivering affordable energy in Europe

11.06.2025 | 9:30-16:30 | EESC JDE62 | Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99, 1040 Bruxelles

Conclusions

Even though in 2024, thanks to EU measures, the number of Europeans unable to keep their homes adequately warm fell for the first time since 2021, energy affordability remains a major concern for European people. According to [Eurostat](#), in 2024 9.2% of Europeans reported not being able to keep their home adequately warm, down from 10.6% in 2023, 9.3% in 2022 and 6.9% in 2021. This represents more than 40 million people, a staggering figure. In addition, climate change and heat waves generate summer energy poverty.

To try to protect vulnerable consumers from electricity disconnection, the European Commission presented the [Affordable Energy Action Plan](#) in February 2025, as part of the Clean Industrial Deal. The plan focuses on decreasing energy prices for citizens, businesses and communities across the EU and proposes a series of measures to lower energy bills, fast-track cost-saving and reinforce structural reforms for our energy system.

Against this backdrop, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission held a joint conference on affordable energy on the 11th of June 2025. This event built on the previous EESC conferences on [Energy poverty at the crossroads of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Green Deal](#) (2021), [Tackling energy poverty at the heart of the ecological and energy transition](#) (2022), [Tackling energy poverty for a just transition](#) (2023), and [Affordable Energy: Turning civil society views into action](#) (2024).

Aiming at shedding light on the much-needed efforts to give citizens the power to be actively engaged, and make energy production more inclusive and affordable, the annual conference has looked at:

- How to ensure that the EC Action Plan for Affordable Energy drives a just transition responding to the rising geopolitical and environmental challenges;
- How policy makers can involve and activate SMEs, households and vulnerable citizens, making them primary actors of the EU green and competitive transformation.

In synergy with the EU Sustainable Energy Week, the Conference reflected upon the concrete tools which can enhance energy affordability in three dimensions:

- *Achieving Energy Resilience through Consumer Engagement*
- *Delivering reductions on energy poverty*
- *Sustainable Investments to secure Affordable Energy*

Key messages

Suggestions and best practices were highlighted during the conference with a view to promoting affordable energy effectively, notably:

1. Consumers should receive concrete information on whether their contract typology is suitable in terms of their level of consumption and the procedure for switching should not be burdensome. In particular, the bundling of services should not be an obstacle to choose other service providers.
2. To boost the deployment of energy communities Member States should carry out an assessment of the existing barriers in order to be able to timely and comprehensively adopt an enabling framework in line with EU legislation.
3. Member States should carry out analyses and adopt effective measures to avoid the “Corporate Capture” of funding aimed at the development of energy communities. Energy communities should be helped to have access to the grids and to build up storage capacities.
4. Energy companies should be encouraged to spot the early signs of energy poverty in view of alerting and mobilise public authorities who can support vulnerable consumers.
5. Local authorities should fully involve Youth Organisations when they are considering projects relating to grids, energy communities or permitting.
6. Giving smart capabilities to buildings, such as technical building systems with automatic control, insulation thermostats, install smart devices providing modulation capabilities will contribute to reduce energy poverty and alleviate costs.
7. Community workers who work in direct contact with the local population can provide them with access to information, energy efficiency, social housing, support, trust. Multilevel governance with one-stop-shops established by the local authorities is needed, alongside the provision to set local heating and cooling plans.
8. The investment to achieve Europe's climate target is estimated in the range of €800 billion per year. While public finance can lead, private capital is essential to close the gap and must be effectively mobilised.
9. Upgrading and expanding grids is essential to rapidly handle rising renewable generation. Anticipatory investment and planning, and stakeholder engagement are key to resolving existing bottlenecks and preparing for future needs.
10. Market volatility threatens industrial investment, immediate stabilisation and long-term pricing mechanisms are crucial. However, the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) market remains limited and must be supported by guarantee schemes, such as the pilot to be launched by the European Investment Bank.

1. *Achieving Energy Resilience through Consumer Engagement*

EU Institutions acknowledge that completing the energy union implies taking care of European consumers besides building interconnectors and strengthening the grids. High energy prices for consumers and businesses require effective action to protect and empower the most vulnerable. Furthermore, while the EU has achieved great results in increasing the production of renewable energy, citizens' participation remains low. Participation is key to tackle energy poverty in association with protection and empowerment. The Commission has noticed that joining an energy community can make a consumer save annually around one thousand euros. In the EU there are only circa 9000 energy communities involving around two million citizens. This means that there is a huge untapped potential for citizens' involvement in the green transition.

For these reasons, Commissioner Jørgensen was instructed in his mission letter to develop a Citizens' Energy Package, aimed at increasing citizens' participation in the energy transition and enhancing the social dimension of the Energy Union. He was also tasked with proposing measures to tackle energy poverty. The [Citizens Energy Package](#) is an opportunity to make rights effective for all by having a well-functioning retail market and by increasing participation. Against this backdrop, the European Commission has also requested the EESC to draft an Exploratory Opinion to identify potential obstacles to prosumerism or to the creation of energy communities, and to outline the conditions necessary for an effective support framework for citizens' engagement.

First of all, the hindrances to consumer empowerment and participation are related to the lack of awareness, the need of technical support and financial barriers. More specifically it has emerged from the discussion that the low trust of consumers in energy markets is leading to inertia preventing the switches and the uptake of innovative products and services which could enable substantial savings.

Secondly, consumer rights, which are enshrined in the EU legal framework, should be considered. The clean energy package has been adopted in 2019 and adapted in 2024 with the revision of the electricity and gas markets. This revision has still to be fully transposed by the Member States. Therefore, guidance to the Member States on implementing some legislative consumer provisions as well as an action plan to boost the deployment of energy communities will be part of the Commission efforts. In this way affordability, sustainability and security will go hand in hand. In particular, consumers should receive information on whether their contract typology is suitable in terms of their consumption level and the procedure for switching should not be burdensome for them.

Thirdly, the important role of the industry has been recognized. The electric industry has underlined that they consider a priority to deliver the modernization and the digitalization of the service provision as well as to assist consumers in easily monitor their consumption. Energy companies are in a good position to gather and identify the relevant information. They should be encouraged to spot the early signs of energy poverty in view of alerting and mobilise public authorities who can support vulnerable consumers. In the end consumers should be seen as citizens entitled to enjoy energy rights.

The specific situation of young people is the fourth aspect considered in the reflection on achieving resilience. Youth organisations stressed the necessity to enhance the ownership of young people in the energy transition, including in the evaluation of EU energy policies. Data should be gathered on the specific young consumer needs. Local authorities should fully involve youth representatives when they are considering projects relating to grids, energy communities or permitting. Therefore, a consultation should be set up.

Moreover, the untapped potential of energy communities has been highlighted during the debates. The clean energy package of 2019 contains a definition of energy communities and requires member States to adopt an enabling framework. However, so far none of the member states has done an assessment of the existing barriers and a considerable part of the funding for energy communities is being captured by big corporates who are pursuing profits. In addition, energy communities are often having trouble in getting access to the grid. Storage capacities can be very helpful for them, even though this is an expensive solution.

The future of energy should be both democratized and decentralized. Once empowerment is effective it will be probably possible to dedicate less resources to the protection measures, since citizens will become able to achieve affordability on their own.

2. *Delivering Reductions on Energy Poverty*

The overview of the current state of energy poverty in the European Union has shown the challenges and best practices which could be promoted to tackle it. According to the latest Eurostat data on energy poverty, 9,2% of EU population or more than 40 million people cannot keep their homes warm. The European Economic and Social Committee has been tirelessly working on addressing energy poverty throughout the years with its annual conferences on energy poverty and the subsequent opinions on the matter.

The future Citizens Energy Package will look at consumer protection and empowerment, measures to address energy poverty and the enhanced protection from electricity and gas disconnection stated in the Fit for 55 Package, the electricity market design, the Energy Efficiency Directive, and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. Funding instruments such as the upcoming EU Emission Trading System (ETS) for buildings and transport, Cohesion Policy and the Repower chapter of the Recovery and Resilience Fund play a central role for energy poverty alleviation and consumer empowerment and protection.

Case studies from building renovations in Spain (Getafe and Zaragoza) and France (Besançon) have been discussed. It emerged notably that the role of local authorities is key for the implementation and the outcome of the projects supporting vulnerable consumers as well as buildings' energy performance, accessibility and conservation.

In particular, on housing and building renovations, the *energy efficiency first principle* is crucial, together with the reliance on a well-prepared European workforce. Measurement and verification protocols are needed to ensure the quality of the outcome of the renovation and the liability of the constructor.

Almost half of the population on energy poverty are workers. Many of them are young people, have low incomes with non-standard contracts, and people with caring responsibilities. Workers under these conditions are on a cycle that reduces quality of life, threatens economic security, and reduces productivity. Targeted policies for middle-income population need to be implemented. Certain segments of the population may be on the edge of the energy poverty line, and whenever the conditions change slightly, for instance due to price volatility, they may fall into poverty.

It has been noted as well that the European Action Plan for Affordable Energy continues to rely only on market mechanisms, which are insufficient to address the volatile energy, prices while a deeper reform of the energy market is needed to prevent windfall profits.

3. *Sustainable Investments to secure Affordable Energy*

The key message that arose from the conference discussions is that the transition to a green economy must not come at the cost of social inclusion or economic stability; instead, these objectives must work in harmony. Nonetheless, the Union remains energy dependent on external suppliers and vulnerable to extreme price volatility. This, in turn, increases costs for citizens and businesses, undermines competitiveness and reduces the capital available for investment.

Against this backdrop, clean energy investment is central to the European Union's priorities, but the scale required is unprecedented. The Draghi report estimates that an additional €800 billion per year is needed, mostly from private capital. Public funding can help catalyse this, but it will not be sufficient on its own. To address this, the European Commission will present a Clean Energy Investment Strategy later this year to boost private investment, tackle barriers, and explore targeted regulatory and financial measures.

A critical area for targeted investment is the energy grid infrastructure, the backbone of our energy system, connecting generation with consumption. With this in mind, the Commission has published guidance on anticipatory investments to develop forward-looking energy networks. What is needed is long-term grid planning that also addresses potential regulatory gaps. Additionally, such planning must consider public acceptance and citizen engagement: transparency and involvement are essential to building support for transition projects.

Investment challenges are severe for energy-intensive industries, affected by market volatility. Urgent action is required to stabilise prices and reduce pressure on industrial consumers. Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) can provide long-term price signals, enabling investment and cost certainty. They offer stability for both producers and buyers, protecting against fluctuations. However, the market is still developing, and SMEs and mid-caps often also struggle to access PPAs due to limited creditworthiness. To address this, and develop the market effectively, the European Investment Bank will launch a pilot guarantee scheme to enable stable pricing for smaller buyers, reduce exposure to wholesale markets and support renewable technologies, particularly when paired with storage.

Local authorities also have a vital role to play in delivering the energy transition, as they are responsible for implementing the majority of climate-related measures. Yet they often lack the tools, resources and legal or fiscal flexibility to act effectively. It is crucial that these entities are involved from the outset in shaping both European and national energy and climate policies. To empower them in this role, better access to finance must be ensured, and frameworks created that encourage private investment in local clean energy projects.

Lastly, sustained investment in innovation must be a strategic priority, intertwined with our competitiveness goals. Advancing renewable energy technologies, through instruments like the Innovation Fund, is essential to overcoming current barriers such as weather dependency. Viable alternatives are also needed to provide back-up capacity and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. In this regard, storage technologies represent the crucial missing link in the energy transition.