



Civil society organisations from the EU27 call for immediate climate action led under their auspices

Civil society organisations from across Europe called at a conference in Paris for just, fair and inclusive climate and energy transitions that involve citizens, civil society organisations and in particular young people. They consider dialogue, cooperation and coordination at all levels a prerequisite for success as well as heavy investment in preparing emergency plans and in adapting to the changing climate and the energy transition. Sustainable financial resources, backed up by strong commitments from public authorities, business, civil society and citizens, should be increased, as should renewable, affordable and home-grown energy and efficient consumption.

The [Diversity Europe Group](#) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised the hybrid conference on 'Climate Change and Energy Transition' on 2 March at the *Académie du Climat*. The event addressed the multi-faceted and inter-related aspects of the topic, including the social and geo-political dimensions, the role of advertising and attitudes of citizens, as well as local, national and European actions.

Séamus Boland, president of the *Diversity Europe Group*, opened the conference by emphasizing the urgency of efficient and immediate action on climate change and the energy transition, not least in the light of the United Nation's IPCC report on climate change, which was published on the verge of the Group's conference. "Climate change and energy transition is a topic which is urgent and that concerns us all. Like peace, it is about our common future. It is about values and our humanity. And for that reason, we need to address it, even in these turbulent times," he said.

Mr Boland stressed the pivotal role of civil society in driving and maintaining the momentum on climate mitigation and adaptation among communities and citizens. He highlighted that civil society organisations have the tenacity to "invest in, accelerate and embrace change with bottom-up initiatives, which respect the opinions and the rights of local people".

Serge Orru, President of the *Académie du Climat's* Advisory Council, explained that the Académie is dedicated to educating young people on developing an economy, which has the least possible impact on climate and the environment. "The multicultural Académie du Climat strives to raise awareness in order to support an energy and environmental transition that will provide a living planet for future generations."

The opening was followed by a keynote speech by **Emmanuelle Wargon**, Delegate Minister to the French Minister for Ecological Transition, in charge of housing. "The energy transition is at the heart of the fight against climate change," the Delegate Minister said and emphasised that work needed to be done at all levels. **Ms Wargon** admitted that the path to an energy and ecological transition was difficult and demanding. While the objectives and milestones were clear, solutions had to be put into place before additional constraints were imposed so that acceptability by citizens could be ensured. The involvement of individuals and communities, energy efficiency, the reduction of emissions and the deployment of

renewable energy sources were some of the key aspects. The Delegate Minister spoke about initiatives of the French government and at EU level to that end.

Guest speaker **Claire Tutenuit**, Director General of *Entreprises pour l'Environnement* (EpE - Enterprises for the Environment), spoke about the role of advertising in changing people's perceptions of energy. "Our perception of happiness and a successful life is widely influenced, or even shaped, by advertising. The representation of people's attitude to energy use is therefore key to the ecological transition. This is why EpE has produced a list of stereotypes, often present in advertising, that encourage a continuation of the status-quo." **Ms Tutenuit** is convinced that changing advertisements will have an important impact on environmental perceptions.

Assia Oulkadi, Climate Expert of the *European Youth Forum*, brought the perspective of European youth. She called for a systemic change and reminded participants that Europe's youth is urging policy-makers to address the issue of overconsumption fuelled by our growth-dependent economic system. "Overconsumption is the real reason causing our climate and biodiversity crises," **Ms Oulkadi** said.

Participants pointed to the need for climate justice with regard to five aspects: social, territorial, inter-state, between generations and also between species. Young people needed to be better involved in political decision-making.

The conference also addressed geopolitical and military challenges in the context of climate and energy. **Jean-Michel Valantin**, Doctor in Strategic Studies and associate researcher at the *Read Team Analysis Society*, said: "Today's global disorder is leading to massive geopolitical, strategic and military shifts." These changes could go hand in hand with the emergence of new conflicts, and give rise to both international and civil 'climate wars'.

The conference was organised in the context of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). It brought together some 120 persons representing French civil society organisations, representatives of local and national authorities, academia and Member of the EESC's Diversity Europe Group.

The conclusions and recommendations of the conference will be part of the Group's contribution to the ongoing CoFoE. They will be published on the event page shortly.

Background:

In September 2021, the Diversity Europe Group issued a statement on climate change in the light of extreme weather events. The statement entitled 'Delivering on the Urgency of Climate Change: nowhere left to hide' is available at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/delivering-urgency-climate-change-nowhere-left-hide>

Moreover, the Group held a conference on the topic 'Improving the sustainability of the European food supply chain' in November 2021. Find out more at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/improving-sustainability-european-food-supply-chain>

Diversity Europe Group Members are active in the EESC's Consumers and Environment Category. Learn more about the Category at: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/members-groups/categories/consumers-and-environment-category-cec>

In 2021, the Category celebrated its 30th anniversary with a conference:
<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/30-years-defending-european-consumers>

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The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.
