**The energy transition can only be successful if everybody is involved, say stakeholders at EESC debate on accessible energy**

**The role of people in the energy transition was at the heart of the agenda of the February meeting of the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), where energy experts showcased their experience of working for citizens.**

How can the energy transition work for citizens? How can energy be accessible for all? The energy transition means a fundamental transformation of our societies and affects everybody's day-to-day life. It is not only about climate change, greenhouse gas reduction and the use of new technologies. It represents an opportunity for structural change where citizens need to play a key role. The issue of citizen participation is central. "The energy transition cannot be successful if all stakeholders are not on board - we have to take into account the needs of all actors involved," declared the president of the TEN section, **Pierre Jean Coulon**. "The reason we have energy is to serve a final purpose, to simplify citizens' life, including families and businesses. Without energy, our basic needs are not met: there is no education, health system or transport."

The energy transition has huge economic and social potential, especially at regional level. The rapidly declining costs of decentralised renewable technologies offer a large wealth of opportunities to less advanced regions to boost their local economy and to citizens to become energy "prosumers". In other words, people do not only purchase (consume) clean energy, but they also play an active part in the process and engage in energy production. "If a citizen installs seven solar panels on the roof, he produces as much electricity as a normal electric car will need for one year in the future," said EESC member **Lutz** **Ribbe** in a video message.

On the other hand, it is important to stress the concern that some regions, cities, and vulnerable groups may be left behind in this process. This is why it is crucial "to pursue a new path, by creating regional renewable energy cycles and interconnecting energy and regional policies," continued **Mr Ribbe**. "We can help address energy poverty via renewable energy production if there is the political will."

The package on "Clean Energy for all Europeans" was the first ever to put consumers at the centre of the energy transition, underlined **Klaus-Dieter Borchardt** from the European Commission's DG ENER. A concrete example is consumer information: the option to switch electricity supplier within 24 hours from 2026 at the latest, free-of-charge access to at least one energy price comparison tool and clearer and more user-friendly bills.

**Vincent Berrutto**, representing EASME, the European Commission's executive agency for SMEs, was on the same wavelength, pointing out that the energy policy agenda was no longer headed by awareness-raising but by empowering consumers, helping them take action and supporting them with new energy services.

People could produce 45% of the EU's electricity by 2050, indicated **Josh Roberts** from REScoop, who elaborated on the potential citizen ownership of renewables in the EU and mentioned the example of energy cooperatives.

According to **Alix Bolle**, a representative of Energy Cities, stronger support for local governance innovation is needed: cities can have a direct role as policy and regulatory enablers, direct project partners and energy operators.

The subject of the energy poor was highlighted by **Magda Tancau**, representing the European Anti‑Poverty Network, who wondered how civil society could bring energy closer to citizens, especially to those who are vulnerable, arguing that more resources should be made available to NGOs for capacity-building: while citizens' participation is important, it cannot be taken for granted.

The energy system should be affordable, sustainable and democratic, emphasised **Ruth London**, a volunteer from Fuel Poverty Action, presenting some examples of how green initiatives had often clashed with political and economic energy objectives, and mentioning green policies that had been imposed on citizens with no accountability or consultation.

Lastly, **Roberto Zangrandi**, from the Association of European Distribution System Operators for Smart Grids (EDSO), focused on the role and current issues of electricity distributors, highlighting that the progress of electrification must be thoroughly planned to avoid grid collapses.

**Background**

For further information on the work carried out by the EESC on the energy transition, please consult our website:

* [TEN/660](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/effects-new-carbon-free-decentralised-and-digitalised-energy-supply-structure-jobs-and-regional-economies-own-initiative) - The effects of a new carbon-free, decentralised and digitalised energy supply structure on jobs and regional economies
* [TEN/583](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/prosumer-energy-and-prosumer-power-cooperatives-opportunities-and-challenges-eu-countries) - Prosumer Energy and Prosumer Power Cooperatives: Opportunities and challenges in the EU countries
* [TEN/516](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/coordinated-european-measures-prevent-and-combat-energy-poverty) - For coordinated European measures to prevent and combat energy poverty