

ADVOCATING for Energy as a Common Good

From Regions to Europe



Assises
Européennes
de la Transition
Énergétique

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Ville et Eurométropole de Strasbourg



Faced with the return of war on its soil and a global trade war, Europe is encountering unprecedented challenges in safeguarding its security, strengthening its sovereignty, boosting its competitiveness, and ensuring energy access for all. There is a real temptation to leave the ambitions and objectives of the Green Deal behind.

That would be a strategic mistake.

The energy transition must not be seen as an additional constraint or burden for Europe. It is a lever for power and resilience. It is one of the tools Europe has to ensure its strategic, economic, and political autonomy in an unstable world, while also addressing the major challenge of this century: combating climate change.

Energy transition means a Europe capable of producing the energy it consumes, less vulnerable to geopolitical crises and less dependent on fossil fuel-exporting countries.

Energy transition means a more predictable and stable pricing trajectory, beneficial for long-term competitiveness and providing the visibility businesses need to invest.

Energy transition means decarbonized energy, contributing to climate neutrality, stimulating innovation, creating new jobs, and preparing for the future.

Ultimately, energy transition means a more sovereign Europe, free to make its own choices, aligned with its values and interests.

We must not fall into the false dichotomy between ecology and economy, between climate ambition and strategic security. Energy transition is a cornerstone of Europe's response to the challenges of this century.

But such a transition must also be just.

To be just, energy transition must be based on reduced consumption, greater energy efficiency, the urgent and massive development of renewable energies, and the involvement of citizens and local institutions in the process that will make energy a common good accessible to all.

Convinced that energy must become a common good, from local territories to Europe, the co-organising cities of the 2025 European Conference on Energy Transition (the City and Eurometropole of Strasbourg, the Metropolises of Dijon, Bordeaux, and the Urban Community of Dunkirk), with the support of participants and partners, reaffirm in this document that to reach the Green Deal targets, ensure Europe's energy sovereignty, and guarantee renewable and accessible energy for all, three key levers must be activated:

- Involving citizens,
- Developing local expertise and jurisdiction,
- Financing a just transition,

This manifesto is addressed to decision-making bodies of the EU and France, advocating for stronger support to local authorities and their more direct involvement—alongside their citizens—in shaping European energy policy.



OUR 3 OBJECTIVES :

1 **Involve and Empower Citizens**

To ensure a just energy transition, it is essential to include citizens in the decision-making process. Making energy a European common good requires not only ensuring universal access to energy but also sharing local energy challenges with citizens and consulting them on the choices of energy sources and their deployment¹.

It is necessary to develop educational programs starting from a young age, and implement diverse mechanisms for citizen participation and consultation.



Proposals

Education

- 1. Create a European Academy for Energy Transition²**: this academy would focus on education and training, especially for young people, on energy transition challenges. A key mission would be to raise awareness of energy poverty in Europe and the fact that access to energy is not yet guaranteed for all.
- 2. Implement and enhance continuing education programs on energy transition for professionals, in partnership with local industry stakeholders**: these would target engineers and workers, who need to be trained in renewable technologies and energies, as well as social workers, who require tools to identify and assist households facing energy poverty. These programs should be nationally co-developed, in collaboration with the European Academy for Energy Transition, to ensure coherence and quality.
- 3. Systematise energy information sessions on supply sources and actions to reduce energy consumption in renovation support programs for households in energy poverty**. These sessions, that include information on supply sources and energy-saving behaviors, should be mandatory for accessing European and national funding.

¹ In this ongoing momentum to ensure a just energy transition, the role of citizens and collective intelligence must not be underestimated. Consulted on climate issues within the framework of the French citizens' climate assembly in 2019, the 150 randomly selected citizens were able to take ownership of particularly complex topics and develop concrete public policy proposals. Citizens are also fully capable of engaging in energy-related issues, which they perceive in their daily lives through the increasingly visible effects of climate change but also through the rise in their electricity, gas, and fuel bills, for example. Their involvement in the development of energy projects is also a way to anticipate challenges related to social acceptance, which are particularly important in terms of the development of renewable energy infrastructures on local territories.

² Proposal of the Young Energy Ambassadors of the DG Energy.
https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/clean-energy-transition/energy-and-youth/young-energy-ambassadors-recommendations_en



Participation and Consultation

4. **Anticipate issues of public acceptance by involving associations and citizens in local renewable energy project development:** this includes informing about the issues at stake, setting up exchange platforms between landlords, businesses, public services, and civil organisations, and launching citizen assemblies. Though often initiated by local authorities, such actions must be systematised through national and EU directives.
5. **Establish EU-wide citizen consultation forums :** organise regular public consultations (e.g. youth dialogues) so that citizens can voice concerns and help shape energy policy. Educational campaigns across all learning levels would increase civic engagement beyond the most educated groups.
6. **Develop tools to follow the inclusion of citizen proposals in public policy:** these tools should allow citizens to monitor the progress of their ideas, showing when and where they are debated, and ensure policymakers provide clear responses explaining any rejection or modification.
7. **Enable private investment in renewable energy (RE) projects and reserve citizen shares³ :** beyond being informed and consulted citizens should also be able to play a financial role in the implementation of energy transition. This would involve introducing a compulsory shareholder loan mechanism for local communities, ensured by a corporate guarantee from the project promoter. This measure would apply to all future renewable energy auctions in the EU. Member States should, in accordance with the EU legal framework, set aside a specific percentage (e.g. between 10 and 20%) of shareholder loans for new renewable energy projects, to enable citizens or local communities to subscribe to them.

³ Proposal of the Young Energy Ambassadors of the DG Energy.
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2 Strengthen the expertise and jurisdiction of local authorities

To achieve an effective, just, and tailored energy transition, local actors must retain a level of control over national and EU funding, be granted greater political weight in EU decision-making, and receive support to build expertise in energy issues. Dialogue between EU institutions and local actors must be stimulated through exchange platforms dedicated to energy issues⁴.

Local territories constitute the ideal scale for deploying a European energy model, tailoring energy sources to needs, fighting energy poverty, and ensuring fair energy access by bringing together landlords, companies and households. But adequate financial and human resources are needed to deliver these ambitions.

Proposals

8. **Support local green incubators and accelerators** : fund and assist local structures that help innovative startups and SMEs in energy transition, circular economy, and low-carbon solutions.
9. **Ensure the subsidiarity principle by expanding local authorities' powers** and ensuring national and EU levels provide sufficient human, technical, and financial resources. This includes maintaining subsidies to national agencies with local networks that notably help identify and assist households in energy poverty.
10. **Maintain the role of local authorities in european funds management**: local actors should be the main decision-makers regarding the allocation of EU funds and the **implementation of action plans** that are aligned with territorial needs.
11. **Make territoriality and local approaches mandatory**⁵, in all EU energy policies and financial tools, include environmental and social conditions, and the partnership principle across european policies and financial tools to promote energy equity.
12. **Ensure EU institutions' accountability to local actors** through independent authorities and autonomous tools that assess local input in EU policymaking. This could include **strengthening the role of the European Committee of the Regions** by revising Article 306 of the Treaty on the EU, thus elevating its role beyond consultation to one that genuinely reflects the voice of cities and regions in energy decisions.

⁴ The competences of European local authorities, in connection with local agencies, businesses, and local landlords, to implement energy transition has significantly increased in recent years. To empower local authorities, European funds have been established and are governed by the programs and policies they support. Faced with the complexity of accessing and managing these funds, advisory and information platforms as well as toolkits for local authorities exist. Although these measures are undeniably commendable and geared toward developing the skills of local authorities, they remain essentially top-down in their approach. There are still few dedicated institutional platforms that genuinely allow local actors to raise the specific issues of their territories and to exchange views on the effectiveness and evolution of the tools made available by European institutions. While certain platforms, such as the Rural Pact Support Office, can provide a space for exchange between local and European levels, these initiatives remain insufficiently developed, especially in the energy sector.

⁵ Proposal of the Young Energy Ambassadors of the DG Energy.
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3

Finance the transition towards a sovereign European energy

In 2020, the European Commission created financial mechanisms⁶ to help Member States reach the climate goals it has set up⁷. Now more than ever, these priorities and funds must be reaffirmed to ensure energy that is fair, decarbonized, and accessible across Europe.

To support this transition, a substantial share of EU funding must be directed toward concrete initiatives, supporting investments in energy efficiency, renewables, and technological innovation. Tailored financial mechanisms are needed to overcome investment barriers and attract more public and private resources. Financial instruments must also incentivise companies to reduce their energy consumption.



Proposals

- 13. Reinforce european funds dedicated to local energy transition :** the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should maintain or increase funding for the cohesion policy—via ERDF⁸, ESF⁹, and JTF¹⁰—to support local energy projects. Research and innovation must also be sufficiently supported to meet the « Clean Tech Industrial Deal » goals via targeted tools such as Horizon Europe projects to accelerate industrial decarbonisation. In a context of budgetary tightening at European level, these policies must not be sacrificed. The French government should play an active role in defending these policies during negotiations between the Council of the EU and the European Parliament.
- 14. Increase public investment in RE technologies :** the European Commission, particularly through its R&D branch, must maintain strong support to projects that stimulate the local economic fabric and respond to the needs of territories, particularly in terms of clean energy supply. This investment must therefore be channeled into **research and innovation** focused on the development and **storage** of renewable energies.

⁶ To meet its climate objectives, the European Commission plans to mobilize €1,000 billion euros. This amount will be financed by 30% of the 2021-2028 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the InvestEU program (notably through loans from the European Investment Bank), co-financing from Member States, and revenues from the carbon market (carbon border tax and the Emission Trading System (ETS)). The Commission has also stipulated that Member States must allocate at least 30% of the funds received under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)—which amounts to nearly €600 billion for the 27 countries—to investments and reforms supporting climate objectives.

⁷ See also Green Deal objectives

⁸ European Regional Development Fund

⁹ European Social Fund

¹⁰ Just Transition Fund



15. **Stimulate private investment in energy transition and encourage companies to make use of renewable energy purchase agreements, by improving, notably through simplification and increased public guarantees, the dedicated European financial instruments:** this involves multiplying low-interest loans, credit guarantees, or long-term investment funds to develop reliable technologies at the European level and to mitigate the risks associated with economically and technically viable projects whose realization is currently hindered by high investment costs. Facilitating renewable energy purchase agreements would allow companies to buy electricity produced from renewable sources directly, often at a price fixed over the long term, thereby securing their supply of green energy while contributing to the decarbonisation and environmental responsibility objectives of industrial SMEs.
16. **Establish regulatory tax systems at the European level to reduce energy consumption:** offer tax credits and subsidies to households and businesses that adopt energy-saving practices and more efficient consumption technologies. Multiply and increase the application of financial penalties aimed at combating overconsumption, which would help to stimulate the financing of the transition (e.g. Energy Savings Certificates–ESCs).
17. **Develop intelligent European energy pricing¹¹:** The shift from traditional single-price auctions to a dual-tariff system in renewable energy auctions would encourage demand reduction during periods of high consumption, while supporting periods of high renewable energy production in order to address the challenges posed by their variable nature. This should complement other flexibility measures such as promoting the electrification of uses or the «vehicle-to-grid» system, which are necessary to maximize the potential of renewables.
18. **Establish a tariff equalisation mechanism to support renewable energy at the European level:** Regionalise the purchase tariffs for renewable energy in order to better take into account the regional resource potential.
19. **Optimise the use of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to support energy infrastructures:** Strengthen the CEF so that it more specifically supports cross-border renewable energy infrastructure projects, such as smart electricity grids and renewable energy interconnections. This would promote a faster European energy transition, better management of variable energy sources, and a more resilient network in the face of crises.

¹¹ Proposal of the Young Energy Ambassadors of the DG Energy.
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This advocacy document is supported by the cities co-organising of the 26th European Conference on Energy Transition.

If you would like to support these ideas by becoming a signatory, please contact:

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