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# Energy Union

## The EU should put its citizens at the core of the energy transition

A few weeks ago, the EU Commission presented the 'winter package', a series of eight legislative proposals which will enable the **Energy Union** project to be put in place. For the Greens, **renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and the citizens of the EU are the three key elements that should be at the heart of this project**.

**First, the good news:** the EU is on track to hit its 2020 target of 20% of energy coming from renewable sources. Wind power quadrupled between 2004-2015 (as wind energy prices dropped more than 30%) and solar prices fell by 80% between 2010 and the end of 2015. However, investment in the EU in renewables is falling and countries like Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are likely to miss their binding national 2020 targets...

## The central role of citizen and regional cooperation

As set out in the Energy Union strategy, households, businesses, communities and cooperatives are crucial enablers of the energy transition. However, the policies and regulations currently in place are not facilitating the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, and are still overly focussed on national authorities.

In times of growing euro-scepticism, the Greens believe that the Energy Union offers a great opportunity to get closer to EU citizens and restore their faith in the European project, while protecting our climate and natural resources. To make this happen, a **regional approach to energy policy is key.**

To ensure that the EU benefits quickly from the energy transition, it must first recognise that, **despite the resistance from the big polluting energy companies, many very positive clean energy initiatives led by citizens are mushrooming across Europe**. In many cities and regions, people are meeting their neighbours to search for new ways of producing and consuming energy, but also to cooperate.

Instead of focusing on national authorities, the Commission and the EU Member States should look at the great potential that exists at a smaller level and realise that citizens' involvement is a key ingredient to achieving Europe's transition to renewable energy. This is because they are not only consumers, but because they can also take part in supporting and financing the deployment of new infrastructure and

technologies. Local governments - who are currently taking a lot of initiatives to fight against climate change and make their regions nicer places for their populations to live in - have a lot to offer and will really put the European idea in practice on the local level, enhancing the added value of Europe.

Collectively, all these voices carry weight: with the appropriate support, smaller structures will be able to come together and trust will be enhanced among stakeholders from various parts of the EU, who will get the chance to exchange ideas and support each other. This approach will benefit the entire EU energy project as it is more likely to create a secure plan which everyone can support and benefit from.

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**At EU level, the Greens are asking for:**

- A clearer definition of regional cooperation;
- The right legislation to be put in place so that cities and regions can further spur the energy transition and benefit from it;
- The cooperation of other sectors (such as transport, ICT etc...), which are equally important to support the energy transition, is made possible;
- The knowledge and expertise of cities and regions to be better recognised when it comes to work on national climate and energy action plans;
- Micro-level cooperation to be made possible;
- Local governments to be considered on equal footing when it comes to making the energy transition a reality.

**More information**

- “Enhancing Regional Renewables Cooperation in the EU” - Heinrich Boel Foundation
- “The covenant of Mayors initiative on climate and energy”

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