

11th meeting of the Citizens' Energy Forum

Dublin, 12-13 September 2019

Conclusions, 24/09/2019

On ensuring a fair and inclusive energy transition for all

The Forum:

- Welcomes the adoption of the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package and the announcement of a European Green Deal by Commission President-elect Von der Leyen, which underline the central role of empowering citizens to facilitate the green transition. In particular, the call for a Just Transition Fund and the effective implementation of the Clean Energy Package provisions on vulnerable consumers, energy poverty and consumer protection rules will be essential to ensuring nobody is left behind.
- Calls on the European Commission to develop further the central role of the consumer and analyse the distributional impact on different consumer groups, particularly those in vulnerable situations, which will be vital at the early stages of the new European Green Deal. Consumers should be encouraged to switch to sustainable energy use, while ensuring that no consumers are left behind irrespective of the source of energy they use.

On engaging citizens in the energy transition

The Forum:

- Highlights the importance of the effective and timely implementation of the Clean Energy Package to help citizens reap the benefits of new generation and consumption models. Encourages all Member States to create pro-actively new opportunities to engage consumers and involve them in the energy transition by promoting innovative market models providing efficient price signals, including for CO₂ emissions. In this sense, recalls the new provisions for active consumers, citizen energy communities and comparison tools in the recast Electricity Directive, as important tools for consumers to engage with retail energy markets in different ways.
- Calls on the Commission to play an active role in the implementation of new citizen-centric models across Europe by facilitating the exchange of good practices among Member States and stakeholders. It also calls on Member States to implement coherent rules for these new models that should ensure consumers' privacy and data protection as well as decrease their environmental footprint and save on their energy bills, while guaranteeing consumer rights and protection.
- Recognises the need for EU-wide interoperability and transparent procedures for safely sharing and protecting data, while ensuring that the consumer has full control over, and full awareness of, the data collected from them or on their behalf.
- Calls on market actors and regulators to promote consumer engagement over the long term. The Forum encourages the removal of market barriers and undue complexities impeding the scalability and financial viability of local and individual energy activities. Pilot projects should offer opportunities to experiment and take risks in a controlled environment.

On sustainable finance for greener and cleaner energy for consumers

The Forum:

- Acknowledges the importance of enhancing support for energy efficiency and clean energy measures directly benefitting consumers and boosting capital flows towards increased financing for more energy efficient public and residential buildings.
- Stresses that more open access to financing will be essential to ensure that the benefits of the green energy transition can be enjoyed by all consumers, and calls for more initiatives to unlock energy investments for consumers for low-value energy efficiency improvements, including investment into community-based projects.
- Calls for the broadening and deepening of private sector engagement into sustainable finance, in particular as regards long-term investors, financial institutions, banks and insurers. Stresses the importance of increased transparency of banks' green investments.
- Acknowledges the need to develop services that facilitate access to financing by final consumers and municipalities for energy efficiency and clean energy investments.

On the next step in the energy transition for consumers

The Forum:

- Calls on policymakers and Industry to assess the value of strengthening the links between electricity and gas retail markets, moving them beyond simple dual-fuel supply contracts
- Calls for a focus on consumers' needs for sustainable energy services, recognising that different technologies or providers can fulfil those needs and that the old roles and responsibilities may no longer be fully appropriate.
- Calls for societal benefits and the impact on vulnerable consumer groups, especially those in energy poverty, to be part of cost-benefit analyses when evaluating new infrastructure projects.
- Underlines the significance of consumers being able to understand, correctly and easily, the costs and sustainability of different options for heating and cooling. Calls on the Commission to analyse and prepare an ambitious, cost-effective and clear path in all areas of decarbonisation, including for heating and cooling.
- Highlights the key role that taxes can play in effectively incentivising decarbonisation and ensuring that the costs of decarbonisation are shared fairly, and welcomes the work of the Commission towards a revised, more coherent EU-wide framework for energy taxation that takes this into account.
- Considers that consumers of gas, electricity, and district heating goods and services should be equally well protected, and benefit from equivalent rights, redress and enforcement, whether they buy individual goods or services, or bundled products within or across sectors (e.g. energy and smart home devices).

On moving towards a carbon neutral energy system – the role of consumers

The Forum:

- Welcomes the valuable contribution to this Forum of youth organisations and youth movements that demand a stronger and faster policy response to destructive climate change. Asks the Commission to ensure that dialogue continues in the future.

- Echoes the call of youth organisations and youth movements within the Forum, to ensure that discourse and policy development regarding the energy transition is framed within the context of the climate emergency.
- Underlines the crucial importance of speeding up the adoption of sustainable consumption, and promoting energy efficiency.
- Calls to strengthen the links between EU-, regional- and local-level policies in the energy sector.
- Highlights the persistent need to give all citizens – including those in energy poverty – real energy choices.
- Recognises the need to help consumers navigate the complexity in the energy market in the context of the circular economy.
- Recognises the need to prevent misleading green claims, and ‘greenwashing’.