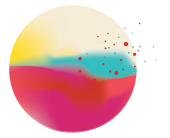


ENERGY CITIES POLICY PAPER



ENERGYCITIES

RENEWABLE

FOR ALL

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A CALL FOR LOCAL  
RENEWABLE ENERGY  
FOR ALL EUROPEANS

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**AUTHOR**

MÉLANIE BOURGEOIS

**REVIEWERS**

CLAIRE ROUMET

MARIE ROYER

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**Disclaimer**

This paper is inspired by the report that Energy Cities wrote as part of the “Just Transition” working group during the Citizens’ Energy Forum. The report is available [here](#).



# INTRODUCTION: ANSWERING THE ENERGY PRICE CRISIS BEYOND EMERGENCY MEASURES

Energy prices have risen sharply in Europe in recent months due to a crisis in fossil fuels. Gas prices have increased six-fold in a year and reached historical levels on the European benchmark market<sup>1</sup>.

This price shock has dramatic consequences for millions of Europeans in vulnerable situations. This should lead Member States to act and propose emergency measures, measures to restructure the energy markets and long-term measures to transform the fossil fuel-dependent system. The European Commission has proposed a [toolkit](#) for this purpose, along with measures in its new [Social Climate Fund Regulation](#) that is being assessed in the European Parliament and Council.

Moreover, all over Europe, energy issues are instrumentalised in the debates and are at the heart of electoral campaigns. This means that Europeans need to be better informed about the energy system and the options available to them, including for the most vulnerable among them.

In this context, it is all the more important to ensure a just transition, to make sure that “nobody is left behind”. In late December 2021, the European Commission has published its [recommendation](#) on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality, which partly reflects some of the key messages of this paper.

This paper aims at exploring concrete measures to foster energy production by low-income and middle-income households; and Identifying the gap in energy education to ensure that all citizens can take part in the energy debates.

## OUR BELIEFS

**We all could be vulnerable to energy poverty one day.** Some groups are more vulnerable, including women, marginalised people, migrants, people with disabilities, children, older people, etc. The risk is also influenced by the energy market and location.

**The energy transition is above all a collective project,** and not only an individual responsibility to change lifestyle and limit personal energy consumption. A just transition must be a local transition that takes the diversity of situations into account.

While energy behaviours and awareness of energy efficiency are often the focus of policies fighting energy poverty, in particular through the renovation of buildings, we lack suitable policies for **giving access to renewable energy production to all Europeans, including the most vulnerable households.**

<sup>1</sup> NGUYEN P-V., PELLERIN-CARLIN T. (2021), [The European energy prices spike overcoming the fossil-fuel crisis](#), Jacques Delors Institute.



In our view, a special focus on energy-poor and vulnerable consumers is justified as:

- » Individual self-consumption through renewable energy production installations can be an important means to reducing energy bills;
- » An increase in decentralised renewable energy production and self-consumption might lead to cost-socialisation of network costs to categories of consumers with limited financial means or ownership rights to have access to renewable energy production and associated benefits, risking aggravating their situation
- » Renewable energy sources are much less subject to geopolitical tensions, the fluctuations of imports and irregular prices, and all the more so in self-consumption.

This paper is largely inspired by the [report](#) written by Energy Cities on the theme of just transition in the framework of the Energy Citizens' Forum. We would like to thank the European Commission for this opportunity and all the participants in the working group for their participation.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

This paper identified concrete programmes and measures that the EU can support through the National Energy and Climate Plans' assessment, through their dialogue with each Member State on their recovery and resiliency plans' implementation and through their Just Transition plans.

» **To increase renewable production for all**, the European Commission along with its European partners could:

» **Enhance the visibility of innovative actions and business models** offering renewable energy solutions to vulnerable households (and we will do so in the initiatives we are involved in, such as the Covenant of Mayors, the EU Renewable Energy Repository...);

- » Create a **special prize at the European level to reward the best local initiatives promoting access to renewable energy production for vulnerable groups**, particularly via energy communities. This could be done within the framework of the EU Sustainable Energy Week;
- » **Set up a "European local energy production contest"** that would encourage the development of self and collective RES production at the local level, developing special schemes for the most vulnerable populations. This could also be done within the framework of the EU Sustainable Energy Week;
- » **Enforce specific conferences**, such as the Citizens' Energy Forum and inter-ministerial exchanges on this issue to gain political momentum.

» **To increase participation to energy choices** Citizens need to gain better understanding of the issues, as the dramatic rise in the price of fossil fuels leading to a general energy price increase, and the most controversial energy topics are ever-present in political debates. Energy education is more than ever necessary to enable citizens to:

- » **Gain confidence** in the energy system and renewables;
- » **Combat misinformation and fake news** about renewables and different energy sources, and be able to participate in the energy debate;
- » **Be aware of the opportunities and solutions** that renewables can offer them (self-consumption, collective production of renewable energy, energy efficiency tips, fossil-fuel alternatives, co-benefits on health, local employment, fight against climate change), and how their local, regional or national authority can support them.



Also, we recommend that the EU and its Member states:

» **Inform all citizens**, taking care that the information reaches the most vulnerable consumers. This could take the form of educational TV, radio or online programmes for all ages, exhibitions in public places (streets, public transport, etc.), energy education programmes for schools, social media, search engines, apps (such as the [RED eléctrica one](#) in Spain).

» **Support measures for concrete support in projects to enforce a practical education.** This “learning by doing” approach would continue sharing information by offering the opportunity to all Europeans, and in particular vulnerable households, to be involved in concrete projects. This could take the form of one-stop shops in very accessible locations and providing concrete information; workshops for the construction and installation of solar panels, collective projects for the implementation of renewable energy in neighbourhoods with, for example, neighbourhood houses or schools by involving the residents or pupils/students.

» **Support measures to enable citizens to participate in governance and decision-making on the energy system.** This can be done by involving citizens in local energy councils. For instance, Cádiz allows citizens to understand and co-decide on prices and governance measures; another example is the French Citizen’s Convention on Climate (see the frame below), which brings together 150 people selected at random and representing the diversity of the French society, to discuss and define a series of measures that aims at a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

These measures should come with a comprehensive financial and technical support framework from the Member States in order to ease the access to renewable infrastructures of the most vulnerable households and the development of energy communities.

### The French Citizen’s Convention on Climate and its replication at regional level

The French Citizen’s Convention on Climate is a democratic experiment in France that brings together 150 people, all selected at random and representing the diversity of the French society, to discuss and define a series of measures that aims at a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It started in autumn 2019 and ended in June 2020 with a [comprehensive and ambitious proposal for legislation](#).

This is being replicated at the regional or city level in France and other countries (in Grenoble, in the Centre-Val-de-Loire region, in Wallonia, in Germany at a federal level, in the UK and in Ireland). The functioning of the convention is truly inspiring in terms of citizen involvement in the energy and climate policy-making process.

It is important to include vulnerable consumers in these discussions, and to ensure that the proposed outcomes of these conventions are taken into account.



# GETTING INSPIRATION: RENEWABLES PRODUCTION FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

In this section, Energy Cities aims to put forward unconventional yet very effective measures and perspectives to enable access to renewable energy for all, including the most vulnerable. First of all, in addition to lacking financial means and knowledge, the most vulnerable households often lack the space to access self-consumption of renewable energy. These households may not own a roof or have access to a well-exposed roof. Moreover, land management in dense urban areas is a real problem for cities. Some solutions could be:

- » The development of **solidarity solar banks**, either at a regional or national scale. This would be fed by donations of surplus production from individuals or professionals, which, accumulated, could reach an interesting amount. These surpluses could be redistributed locally to the most vulnerable households. However, there is a lack of precise data on amount of surplus currently “lost” in the network.
- » Encouraging **local peer-to-peer energy sharing**. This is currently sometimes complicated by issues of taxed surplus donations or grid access tariffs. It may therefore be interesting to develop local grid access prices. In general, it involves facilitating the donation of energy at the local level.
- » Taking measures at the European, national, regional or local level to encourage **the use of unused space to produce renewable electricity in cities**. In particular, the roofs of public buildings, warehouses, department stores and supermarkets should be massively used to produce electricity consumed by the owner of the roof in part and by the households living in the surrounding neighbourhoods, prioritising the most vulnerable

households. This can be done using a smart metering methodology. This could fall under the [Nearly Zero-Emissions Building \(NZEB\)](#) definition in the EPBD as the production would be “nearby” the building in question.

For instance, [in Berlin](#), households are encouraged to install solar panels on their balconies if they have one and it is well exposed. This could be replicated in other dense areas.

Energy Cities also identified other inspiring examples:

- » Measures in **social housing**, working with social landlords and residents. This is indeed a way to reach vulnerable households on a massive scale. The ASTER model in Flanders (see frame below), or the work of the [Energie Commune in Brussels](#), show that this is possible and is a win-win option for social landlords and residents;
- » Financing shares of energy community to diversify the stakeholders, and by helping energy communities to address energy poverty and increase the diversity of their membership, including with currently under-represented groups (see the frame below about Eeklo Ecopower community).

This list of ideas for measures is non-exhaustive and draws heavily on the projects and case study presented in the frame along the paper. These inspiring measures must, of course, be adapted to the local context and feasibility in the Member States.



## THE ASTER PROJECT

### An innovative method to ease the access to renewables in social housing

**ASTER** is a special purpose vehicle, owned by the Association of Flemish social housing companies, that aims to provide solar electricity to people living in the social housing.

The social housing companies developed an **innovative business model** where they invest in solar panels on the roofs of social housing by a consortium of solar companies. The tenants pay for the use of PVs and electricity as a rental cost. It is cheaper than current electricity prices, thanks to the **large scale of the project and the requirement to rent the panels**. The extra solar production that is not consumed by households is sold on the local grid.

This allows the households to use renewable energy without investing a huge amount at once. With an investment of €231 million over 4 years, **647,767 solar panels** will be installed on 58,433 buildings, representing a production of **207,286 MWh** per year. This is a massive project, where the social housing companies are together acting like a **super investment bank engaged in fighting energy poverty in a collective manner**.

The project, supported with **ELENA grant**, is underway, and the first panels are being installed in 2021.

## EEKLO ECOPOWER

### A super energy community supported by the local authority

Eeklo Ecopower is an energy community in Belgium owned partly by the city of Eeklo and its inhabitants. As a non-profit organisation, it provides cheap power to people with wind turbines and heat via a district heating network.

**The city of Eeklo** has decided to fight energy poverty in the region by **providing 750 people with one pre-financed share of the citizen energy cooperative**, based on its 25% ownership of one wind turbine. By doing so, these people get all the advantages of full members of Ecopower, which co-owns the wind turbine and can use electricity at a **lower** cost, lowering their energy bills and allowing them to pay off energy debts.

These members can also save up the cost of an own share (€250) in the cooperative with the savings they make on their energy bill.

The initiative shows how you can involve people who struggle with energy bills, providing them with access to renewable and affordable electricity without having to buy a cooperative share worth €250. Without the risk of social stigma, people can become full members of the energy community and pay the cost of the share as they save.



# GETTING INSPIRATION: STAKEHOLDERS TO INVOLVE TO EMPOWER ALL CITIZENS IN THE ENERGY DEBATE AND PRODUCTION

**Local authorities have a key role to play** in the success of collective self-consumption and the protection of vulnerable households. They have a profound understanding of the situation on the ground, the context, and the needs of citizens.

They also have the opportunity to organise direct grassroots democracy, as in the case of the energy council of the city of Cádiz (Spain) where they established a working group comprised of citizens and local stakeholders to work on the topic of energy poverty and pricing.

## ELÉCTRICA DE CÁDIZ

### A municipal energy company that supports vulnerable inhabitants

The city of Cádiz has kept its local energy company, *Electrica de Cádiz*, mainly public, owning 55% of it. Starting in 2015, this has allowed the city to develop a whole programme to support low-income households in paying their energy bills and ensure the development of renewables.

The city has established a **working group comprised of citizens and other local stakeholders** (NGOs, human rights defenders, members of the administration politicians, employees of the energy company, citizens, energy-poor people...) to work on the topic of energy poverty. This working group has proposed a local price for electricity that has been enforced by *Electrica de Cádiz*.

Combined with training to reduce energy consumption and improve understanding of energy bills, this pricing measure has **reduced the energy bills of vulnerable residents by around 80%**.

This took for example the shape of a popular energy literacy campaign, with a team that comes each week to the targeted neighbourhood to lead a debate on the energy system and consumption with local actors such as women's associations, neighbourhood or youth associations and inhabitants. The city also trained consultants to advise families on their energy consumption and optimise their energy contract.

The example of Cádiz shows **the importance of including public, private and associative actors and citizens in energy action**. It is an example to be replicated while considering that its success is due above all to the **participation of the city** in the local electricity company and to the **political will** of the politicians and citizens.

Small cities in particular lack the financial means to dedicate time and human resources to this issue. If empowered and supported, cities can drive projects to support or even lift their

inhabitants out of energy poverty and protect the most vulnerable ones. Some examples can be found below such as the example of Barcelona, Cádiz, Eeklo, Porto Torres, Sofia, etc.





## PORTO TORRES

### Fighting energy poverty with free PVs

The municipality of Porto Torres in Sardinia developed an effective solution to face energy poverty by installing photovoltaic panels on the roofs of families in need. The city council has created a **revolving fund of €250,000 for 2017**, and the same amount is allocated for 2018. These resources are used to buy photovoltaic panels **leased free of charge to families with financial difficulties** for a maximum of 25 years.

The families will consume part of the energy produced by the panels for free and **the surplus is sold to the national electrical grid**. These revenues are reinjected into the fund, which allows new families to be included the following year. [It has been calculated](#) that in the next 25 years around 400 families will benefit from this initiative and can save each €150 to €200 of their bill per year.

## SOFIA MUNICIPALITY

### Implementing efficient heating systems

In Bulgaria, many vulnerable and low-income households heat their homes with coal and low-quality wood in a very polluting and inefficient way. In 2020, for comfort, cost, efficiency and health reasons, the municipality launched a campaign for the free replacement of wood and coal-based combustion plants with new fully automated and highly efficient installations based on: pellets (incl. pellet boilers and pellet domestic heaters); air-to-air heat pumps; or connection to DH or gas grid, if highly efficient.

It focused on the most vulnerable part of the municipality.

The total budget available for 20,000 households worth €31 M available (in average €1,500 per household, but there is a great variety of situations). It was funded through OP “Environment”.

The scheme has already shown results in terms of reducing the bills of vulnerable households, pollution reduction and lowering energy consumption.

## BARCELONA ENERGÍA

The Barcelona City Council created a new municipal retailer in 2018, [Barcelona Energía \(BE\)](#), to serve as a key municipal tool contributing to the city’s energy transition. It involves citizens in decision-making, and aims to increase energy efficiency, deliver renewable energy at affordable prices and address energy poverty.

[The ultimate goal](#) is to achieve energy sovereignty by installing solar power panels on the roofs of residential and public buildings across Barcelona.

This is a key example of the role cities can play, but also of a way to involve citizens in the decision-making process.



Cities can also support other stakeholders' projects, as explained later, by providing means or different kind of resources (see the frame below about *Energie Solidaire* and the frame above about and Eeklo Ecopower).

Finally, local authorities can take back control to act directly through re-municipalisation of (local) energy companies. Indeed, re-municipalisation and at least **extensive public-private partnerships**

**can multiply the economic, democratic and social benefits at the local level** (see the Cádiz council case in the frame above). Local production and distribution of renewable energies creates wealth and jobs in the territory while involving citizens in local infrastructure decisions and allowing them to benefit from an adapted and inexpensive energy offer.

## ENERGIE SOLIDAIRE

### A French donation model involving local stakeholders

*Energie Solidaire* is a donation fund created in 2017 by the association *Les Amis d'Enercoop* in France. *Energie Solidaire* acts in different ways against energy poverty:

- » **It collects micro-donations** from consumers on the bills of participating Enercoop members;
- » **It collects direct energy donations** from renewable energy producers. Producers give Enercoop their energy surplus, which is balanced and sold on the grid.

In all cases, Enercoop donates the funds to *Energie Solidaire*, which finances ongoing projects run by local associations to help the most vulnerable households escape energy poverty in the long term (e.g. help in reducing consumption, improving energy efficiency).

The *Energie Solidaire* model exists because RE producers and especially local authorities face the following problems:

- » They cannot give their energy surplus to local vulnerable households without going through the grid;

- » The price of access to the grid (needed to sell the surplus) is too high compared to the surplus they have to sell;
- » Local authorities in France cannot sell their surplus without losing their public subsidies or exemption from property tax.

Selling the surplus is therefore not possible and local authorities are required to give their surplus away for free. *Energie Solidaire* therefore intervenes here by proposing to compensate this energy donation by a financial donation to a local association.

It is painstaking and extensive work, as the model is currently constrained by a large administrative burden which requires the supplier to contractually agree to each of these energy donations.

As long as these barriers exist, energy donation can only remain a limited solution. However, it is promising as self-consumption is developing and is being studied in the European project [Community Energy for Energy Solidarity](#).

**Local energy agencies or companies** also are very familiar with the local context, have the necessary know-how on sometimes complex energy issues and can propose solutions to protect and empower vulnerable consumers. Local energy companies can involve citizens in the decision-making process in order to empower

them and have a well-functioning system. This is exemplified by Niš in Serbia, where the local district heating company has settled a citizens' support council to approve prices and the functioning of the bill system (see the frame below).



**Existing local volunteers, associations and social services can also be crucial in the design and implementation of these measures.** Indeed, the latter are in direct contact with the poorest households, which are not always aware of energy issues. At the same time, associations working directly with the most vulnerable households can bring their expertise and experience, as they already have an established relationship of trust with the most vulnerable households.

#### **The democratic journey of the municipal heating company in Niš (Serbia)**

The [local company of Niš](#) managing the heating network has changed its billing system. This was misunderstood by the population, particularly the most vulnerable households, who asked to be disconnected from the network. To address this, the administration organised a citizens' support council to approve the prices and the functioning of the bills in the heating company. This regular consultation of the residents has led to a healthier relationship but also to adapting the billing system to the convenience of the households.

**Energy utilities, regulators, retail suppliers and DSOs** have a key role to play in developing data to identifying vulnerable households, understanding their consumption patterns and sharing them in respect of the European laws with key stakeholders of energy poverty. Local DSOs are closer to these issues and can adopt a much more targeted approach, as the consumers will always be supplied by the same DSO on a specific grid.

**Researchers** play an important role for opening perspectives, observing and recommending action points. This is the case for example of the network ENGAGER, which is working on energy poverty issues and has recently produced a [toolkit](#) "for a just transition with the people".

**Social housing managers**, because they are in direct contact with the most vulnerable households and can, through the housing management, improve their access to RES consumption or production, and provide information about it.

Finally, the role that **energy communities** play in providing access to renewable energy for the most vulnerable groups and in combating fuel poverty should also be highlighted. Today, some of them are already offering services to help reduce consumption, improve energy efficiency or increase access to renewable energy for vulnerable households, for example with reduced or free community access shares. This is illustrated in the study case of the Torreblanca community under construction.

#### **Torreblanca's energy and educational community**

This [project](#) is driven by Som Energia and the Andalusian Energy Agency in the framework of the POWERTY Interreg Europe programme. It aims at creating a small energy and educational community in Torreblanca, a very vulnerable area in Seville, by April 2022. The aim is to provide access to RES for vulnerable groups and help them save on their electricity bills. It needs to create the legal entity, to involve the local and social stakeholders and citizens, and install the PVs.

Indeed, an Energy Service Company will supply the neighbourhood at least 500 m away from the school where PVs will be installed. In the end, the school will directly use the power of PVs and the surplus will be distributed in the neighbourhood.

There is a **need for structural enabling of national policies** to support the initiatives at the local level and to develop national schemes targeting vulnerable groups. These different case study in the frames throughout the paper and reflections show **the importance of considering and including a wide variety of local actors to ensure a just transition.**



## THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO GET STARTED

Cities can find public resources or innovative financing to fund and manage this just transition and provide access to renewable energy for all. Our [EU funding opportunities guide](#) explores the different funding opportunities (such as regional cohesion and development programmes, traditional funds, including Horizon Europe and LIFE programmes,). Details and best practices surrounding the different EU funding programmes and in particular alternative financing schemes (EPC, revolving funds, municipal bonds, on-bill-financing schemes, soft loans) can be found on the [Covenant of Mayors website](#), particularly for cities carrying out these actions as part of their SECAPs.

At the European level, if the Social Climate Fund takes shape, it should provide national social climate plans (€72.2 billion are foreseen in EU funding over the 2025–2032 period, but this could be adapted). It would finance field actions related to energy efficiency and renewability, targeting vulnerable households in particular. This is a golden opportunity for local and regional authorities to finance measures to fight energy poverty and to offer long-term and renewable solutions for all citizens.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF THE EXISTING & PENDING EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

**Our key ask to the European Institutions: in order to support the Member States in the effective implementation of these directives, the European Commission could set up inter-ministerial exchange groups in order to allow Member States to exchange best practices and difficulties encountered, notably concerning access to renewable energy production for all, and in particular the most vulnerable.**

The European Union has already put in place a certain legislative framework, to consider and protect vulnerable households, to combat energy poverty and to collectively produce renewable energy through collective self-consumption schemes or energy communities. These provisions can be found in different legislations, in particular in the Internal Market for Electricity Directive ([IMED](#)), the Energy Efficiency Directive ([EED](#)), and the Renewable Energy Directive ([RED](#)).

The European Commission has, in its new set of legislations called [Fit for 55 package](#), also proposed some new provisions regarding energy poverty and vulnerable consumers, in particular in the [EED Recast Proposal](#), the Energy Performance Buildings Directive ([EPBD](#)) [Recast Proposal](#) and the proposed Social Climate Fund Regulation ([SCRF](#)). These ambitious new provisions, if adopted in an ambitious form, will be key to completing the EU framework on energy poverty, protection of the vulnerable households and collective and self-renewable energy production.

Thus, the body of existing or pending European legislation already provides an enabling framework for active participation in the energy system by all citizens, including the most vulnerable. Energy Cities underlined that this is particularly the case for energy communities.



However, it is key that this framework gets transposed at a national level in a way that is conducive to the objective of increasing the active participation of citizens, including the most vulnerable. Indeed, before even thinking about the potential need to create new European texts on these topics, it is important to implement the decisions already taken and to see their effect on the ground.

For Energy Cities this implementation of the directives in all the Member States must:

- » Be done in an **ambitious, effective and rigorous way**, in order to remedy certain shortcomings in the national framework;
- » **Be very clear and simple**. If we want citizens and energy communities to be able to take hold of this law, understand and use these measures, they must be simple and easy to use;
- » Consider the **voice of the most vulnerable consumers and include representation from social support organisations in the**

**implementation discussions**, for example through associations representing the interests of the poorest and consumers in general. This will allow their interests and difficulties to be better considered;

- » **Be adapted to the national context** e.g. rate of owner-occupation, rate of collective or individual housing, existing energy infrastructure, standard of living and vulnerability. This is for example of the case of the [Greek law](#) (see frame below) that defines energy communities including energy net metering provisions suited to the Greek urban context characterised by high density, a very low share of homeowners and the island context, which make space for renewable energy production a challenge. The implementation of the EU legislation should also help to overcome specific national barriers (e.g. in Portugal, local peer-to-peer energy sharing is forbidden, making it difficult to implement an energy donation model).

## THE GREEK POLICY ON ENERGY COMMUNITIES

### A case study adapted to the national reality

As a first step towards collective energy consumption, Greece passed a law in 2016 on energy virtual net metering applicable to farmers and municipalities. In 2018, it was extended to energy communities. What is very unique about the [Greek law](#) is that the definition of energy communities (profit or non-profit) provides that they **actively participate in the reduction of energy poverty** and the promotion of production, storage and self-sufficiency on the islands. To this end, vulnerable consumers and citizens living below the poverty line are also entitled to virtual

net-metering and can benefit from the energy produced by the community without being part of it (if they are geographically close). This is a very **powerful tool for linking vulnerable households to energy communities and empowering them** (as illustrated in the case of Thessaloniki below). The energy net metering system is very well suited to the Greek urban context, characterised by high density, a very low share of homeowners and islands, makes space for renewable energy production a challenge.

Energy Cities assumes that it would also be important to measure the impact and progress of these directives at a national level and that Member States could benefit from an inter-ministerial exchange groups to exchange

best practices and difficulties encountered, notably concerning access to renewable energy production for all and in particular the most vulnerable.



# SHARING EXTENSIVELY THE EXISTING BEST PRACTICES AND INNOVATIVE MODELS

Working with local and regional authorities, we are very aware of the numerous, **innovative, functional business models and projects that have been set up on a small scale to allow collective access to renewables for all**. Successful examples are extremely diverse and tailored to the local context: entrepreneurial projects with an innovative business plan, associative or energy community projects, projects by the city or by public or semi-public

energy companies, etc. In the frames above and in this paper, Energy Cities proposes a non-exhaustive list of best practices that inspired us, including the ASTER project in Belgium, which is installing 650,000 solar panels on the roof of social housing; or the energy community Thessaloniki in Greece or Eeklo ECOPOWER in Belgium, which are engaging with vulnerable communities.

## THESSALONIKI

### **An energy community to support vulnerable citizens**

Greenpeace Greece in collaboration with the municipality of [Thessaloniki](#), the energy supplier and the local communities, have developed a 10kW PV system on the roof the 18th Thessaloniki High School, “Emmanuel Kriaras”. The energy produced by the system fully covers the electricity needs of the social structure “Shelter for Abused Women and their Children”. The energy community is therefore using virtual net metering system. [Greenpeace highlights](#) the role of municipalities and energy suppliers in the development of such models. Often in Greece, [Public Power Corporation \(PPC\)](#) (main Greek power company) participation is necessary to start such a programme.

This offers several advantages for the companies, as it is a solution for household debts towards the provider, it can strengthen their role in the democratisation and transition process of the energy sectors and can finally help the provider to meet its obligation in terms of Energy efficiency interventions or renewable installations.

The barriers they faced in the project were of an administrative nature, the lack of political willingness in the early stages, and the difficulties in engaging with the DSOs. On the other hand, the favourable Greek legislative landscape eased the completion of the project.

It has enabled these vulnerable people to access reliable and cheap renewable energy.



**However, these projects lack EU-scale visibility. They need to be known and streamlined in order to inspire other regions, national and local actors and to be replicated.** Europe needs inventiveness and inspiration to adapt solutions to each context.

Some organisations are already trying to identify and list the existing best practices regarding the access to RES for vulnerable populations:

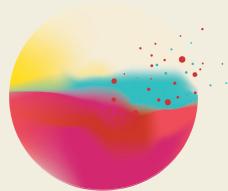
» The **Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EPAH)** on its [website](#), identifies, promotes and analysis relevant initiatives on alleviating the energy poverty in Europe but also in other parts of the world, including projects on collective access to renewable energy, particularly for the most vulnerable;

» The Interreg project **POWERTY (“Renewable energy for vulnerable groups”)** is already listing some local and small-scale innovative initiatives on its [website](#), highlighting their replication;

» The **EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy** has also gathered best practices in [different guides](#) inspired from initiatives of the signatories.

We must continue to do this and promote these good examples even more on a European scale. As shown in the takeaways, the European Commission and its European partners can play a key role in the large-scale dissemination and replication of these examples with events and competitions. The increased visibility of successful projects would be a quick win for the EU.

**To conclude this paper, there are already great things happening on a small scale and we need to boost these efforts to enable access to renewables for all, especially the most vulnerable, and to end energy poverty.**



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**BESANÇON**

2 chemin de Palente  
25000 Besançon, France

**BRUSSELS**

Mundo Madou  
Avenue des Arts 7-8  
1210 Brussels, Belgium

Energy Cities' mission is to empower cities and citizens to shape and transition to future-proof cities. We showcase concrete alternatives deployed by cities, we advocate changing policy and economic governance at all levels and we foster wide cultural change leading to a future-proof society. Energy Cities community is composed by local leaders of thousands of cities in 30 European countries.