

Key learnings

Climate and energy measures implemented in Europe



SUMMARY

Change is underway, with renewables flourishing and demand for fossil gas declining, while coal has no future in sight. National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) are the right opportunity to push the fast-forward button and accelerate climate action and energy transition. Inspiring stories from all over Europe showcase how this can be done through national action.

Climate and environment NGOs based in 12 European countries gathered **almost one hundred examples of climate action measures** implemented on the ground. These should inspire all governments and put Europe on track for achieving a safe and stable climate and to ensure we all harvest the benefits of a sustainable life. We urge our governments to include these effective measures in their NECPs and exclude those that civil society deems problematic.



Renewables

Considerable steps to expand renewables deployment have been registered in several countries such as **Estonia, Germany and Poland**. It's extremely important to take the national renewable energy contributions (to the RED) as a bare minimum, and to increase ambition to shift away from fossil fuels to a fully renewable energy based system as soon as possible. Attention should be paid to the existing shortcomings of renewables uptake such as the **lack of engineering capacity to manage their development** and to the **effects they might have on nature conservation**.



Sustainable Mobility

Sustainable mobility improvements can be achieved by boosting public transportation uptake, decarbonising railway, bus and vehicle fleets, and - **as one of our examples shows - even by upgrading the train ticketing system**. Nevertheless, several Member States such as **Belgium and Germany** are not on track with their pledges on public transport. The NECPs are the opportunity to provide a solid policy framework for sustainable mobility.



Buildings

The buildings sector holds considerable potential to lower emissions. The integration of renewable heating systems, energy savings and efficiency improvements in dwellings have a huge potential to alleviate the effects of energy poverty as well as greater resilience to fossil fuel price rises. The momentum to renovate buildings is already high in some countries such as **Spain and Estonia**. Denmark adopted a **measure to shift away from gas in residential heating systems**.



Greening Cities

Greening cities allows inhabitants to lead a healthier life and also adopt more sustainable production and consumption patterns. In **Croatia and Spain** for example, cities are provided with funds to target e.g. waste management, plastic reduction, urban planning and biodiversity, air quality and health. In the meantime urban planning and big development projects should avoid **locking cities into urban sprawl as witnessed in Hungary**. The revised NECPs should provide a framework to make cities greener.



Agriculture

Measures connected to sustainable farming and the agricultural sector are generally lacking in the NECPs and/or in alternatives falling short behind LULUCF and agriculture objectives, **as observed for example in Estonia**. This way, a sector that should contribute to carbon absorption, risks high emissions and dramatic consequences of intensive farming **as observed in Spain**. **Incorporating this sector in the revised NECPs as France did**, and including measures covering also **livestock and food supply chains (Portugal)** is the way to go.



Money for Change

Funds and taxes have a powerful impact on policies and trends at the national level. Public investments planned under the NECPs – coming from either EU funds or national resources – should be directed exclusively toward transformative measures. In Belgium, a subsidy reform where the granting is linked to climate conditionality helped to improve industrial policy. In Denmark, a CO2 tax on industry is projected to incentivise industry to lower their emissions from 2030. On the other hand, some subsidies are still delivered to environmentally harmful fossil energy (Belgium) instead of being received by Research&Innovation (Croatia) and directed to building financing plans (France).



Community Energy

The potential of energy communities is increasingly well-known. Portugal for example would have the potential to supply around 50% of its electricity consumption based on rooftop solar-photovoltaic with technical and economic viability. Nevertheless, the substantial lack of good measures in this category is not comforting. Problematic contexts like inadequate knowledge (Spain) and poor will to implement measures (Hungary, Poland) are concerning and must be addressed in upcoming NECPs.



Energy Poverty

Considerable measures are/will be implemented to tackle energy poverty in different Member States such as Bulgaria through the Energy Poverty Mechanism implementation, Portugal through upgrading the Energy Efficiency Vouchers and Slovenia through the Energy poverty reduction scheme. While there's always room for improvement, in countries such as Croatia a structured planning is still lacking and should be incorporated into the revised NECPs.



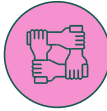
Just Transition

For a holistic and fair transformation, the transition needs to be inclusive and performed with the respect of local communities and vulnerable households. A strong NECP should set out measures to tackle and mitigate any social and/or employment impacts. In addition, in countries such as Bulgaria the more progressive regions should already benefit from the financial support and accelerate their transition.



Public Participation

In the context of the NECPs revision it's crucial and required by law to ensure a meaningful and effective public participation. However, the situation remains concerning: in Bulgaria, Estonia and Hungary for example, access to information and involvement of the public in the crucial revision of the plans is not only ignored, but even hindered sometimes.



Sufficiency

Examples of positive measures related to sufficiency can be found in Hungary where removing the price cap on household energy prices for above-average consumers led to a decrease in energy consumption, and Slovenia that plans to shift away from a meeting-demand to meeting-management approach in the transport sector. Nevertheless, sufficiency is still poorly addressed in NECPs and should be incorporated more.



False Solutions

The revision of the NECPs is taking place at a crucial time: real transformative change is a must, leaving behind false solutions that proved to be unreliable, misleading and to negatively impact people and the planet. In particular - Denmark doesn't want to be locked into CCS, Slovenia doesn't want to prioritise unsustainable biofuel use and large hydropower plants and Hungary shouldn't rely on importing gas and uranium.