



The role for communities in the 2030 climate and energy debate

Molly Walsh - molly.walsh@foeeurope.org

Prepared by Friends of the Earth Europe | October 2014

Why Community Power?

The powerful role that communities can play in Europe's energy future is being overlooked as the European Union debates climate and energy action for 2030.

Decisions on the '2030 package' for tackling climate change and energy issues are due to be reached this month and come at a time when the need to switch to clean renewables is clearer than ever.

The negotiations are happening against a backdrop of:

- scientific consensus from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that very little time is left to take the radical action needed to limit global warming to safe levels;
- increasing energy dependency in the EU and mounting energy insecurity in supplier countries.

But on the upside, it is also more possible than ever for Europe to move to renewable energy, especially by putting citizens at the heart of this transition.

Community and citizen-owned energy has huge potential to help the EU meet climate and energy target for 2030 on the scale needed.

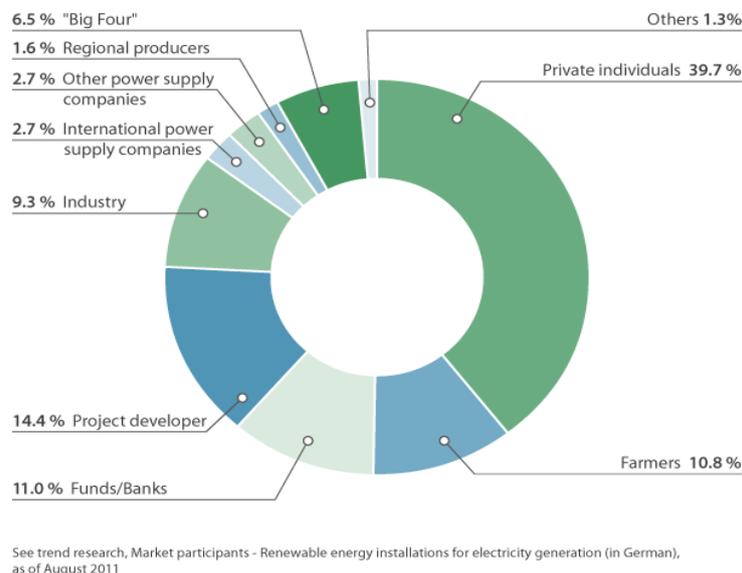


Given the right support, community energy will greatly increase how much renewable energy Europe can produce by 2030, and in the shorter-term.

The European Commission is currently proposing an EU target of between 27% and 30% by 2030. This range is woefully inadequate and represents barely more than business as usual. With the right measures to support community energy, achieving a higher target is a lot more possible.

For example, it is estimated that in the UK there is potential for a further 5 gigawatt of onshore renewables capacity if community owned-energy reaches its potential. This would be a 20% increase in the entire UK renewables capacity.¹ This is a story which is echoed across Europe – with citizens at the heart of the energy transition, it will be able to proceed at the pace and on the scale required.

The benefits of a citizen-led energy transition can be seen in Germany. Over half of German renewable energy is owned by communities or private individuals.² In 2011 electricity prices were found to be up to 40% cheaper compared to 2007. This is attributed to increased production in solar electricity.³



1 http://www.respublica.org.uk/documents/yqq_Community%20Renewables%20Economy.pdf

2 <http://energytransition.de/2013/10/citizens-own-half-of-german-renewables/>

³ This refers to cheaper prices on the spot market. See Ecofys, page 9, http://www.ecofys.com/files/files/ecofys_can_foe_2012_saving_energy.pdf

What's not working?

Unfortunately, at the moment a patchwork of measures exists in different member states to support community energy. In Scotland, for example, many positive initiatives exist to help community energy thrive, including a national target of for community-owned energy of 500MW by 2050.

But in other places the lack of support, and even retroactive policy changes, are contributing to a shaky community energy sector.

The poor coherence exists largely because of the lack of a dedicated international legal framework for community energy.

The Right Framework: Our Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to ensure the right framework so that EU member states can provide appropriate support to community energy. They will also ensure that a strong legal basis exists to address some of the unique challenges that community energy projects face.

1) Community energy should be explicitly recognised as part of the EU 2030 framework

The debate on a climate and energy legislative framework for 2030 should provide for an explicit policy space for community energy in order to ensure member states provide continued support. In particular, community energy should be integrated into the EU Renewables Directive, with a longer-term view of carving out a policy space for community participation and decentralised energy within Europe's energy market.

2) Domestic community energy targets should be promoted under the EU Renewables Directive

In order to promote support for community energy at national level and to improve planning, provisions of the Renewables Directive on the use of regional and local renewable energy targets should be expanded to include:

- the use of domestic community energy targets, and
- community energy considerations in the development of local renewable energy plans more broadly.

With such a framework and the right support at national level, communities' control and ownership in clean energy can increase and flourish.

Putting people at the heart of community energy is imperative to ensure a widespread and speedy transition to the clean energy future that we need.

For more information, you can visit:

- www.communitypower.eu
- www.rescoop.eu
- www.foeeurope.org



Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe
Programme of the European Union

The sole responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors. It does not necessarily represent the opinion of the European Union. Neither the EACI nor the European Commission are responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.