

# Highlights CT6

## Citizen's Engagement

### 3<sup>rd</sup> CA-RES IV Plenary Meeting

9th-10th November 2022

Core Theme 6 (CT6) “*Consumer/Citizen’s engagement*” addresses measures to empower individual consumers and Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) to participate in renewable energy markets. These topics are covered mainly by Art. 21 (Renewables self-consumers) and Art. 22 (Renewable Energy Communities) of RED II.

In May 2022 the European Commission announced the ‘*RePowerEU*’ action plan, an ambitious strategy to put an end to Europe’s dependency on Russian fossil fuels. The massive deployment of solar energy and other RES technologies, produced by autonomous systems owned by final consumers as well as the lifting of barriers for Renewable Energy Communities, is among the basic goals of *RePowerEU Solar Energy Strategy*. In this regard, the effective implementation of articles 21 and 22 in all member states becomes a crucial issue.

Two hybrid sessions (both in person and online) were organized by CT6 during CA-RES 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Meeting.

The first one (**Session 6**) aimed at the investigation of barriers for self-consumption as well as its respective contribution to the ‘*Solar Energy Strategy*’ while the second (**Session 12**) attempted to discuss, in detail, the enabling framework required for Renewable Energy Communities uptake in all member states, as well as their contribution to Energy Poverty Alleviation.

#### Session 6: Lifting the barriers for self consumption - Contribution to RePowerEU plan

The acceleration of the rollout of RES, is an important priority of the RePowerEU plan. Focused on this mission, the ‘*EU Solar Energy strategy*’ determines that the rapid development of small and building integrated RES applications may exploit a huge RES potential and strengthen Europe’s energy independence.

Self-consumption provides European citizens with autonomy to produce their own energy either individually or collectively and protects them from the volatility of fuel prices, therefore, the operation of an enabling framework for self-consumption, as described in article 21 of RED is of great importance for European Energy policy.

The session opened with the presentation of RePowerEU ‘*Solar Energy Strategy*’ proposals by a European Commission officer, giving the opportunity to all participants to discuss in detail the main priorities of this European policy in the field and assess the requirements for their urgent implementation.

The CT6 leader followed, by issuing a short analysis of the responses to the questionnaire filled by CA-RES4 national contact points in each Member State. The questionnaire aimed at monitoring the developments for the establishment of a robust enabling framework for self – consumption, focusing on the policy targets, the legal and regulatory framework for collective self-consumption as well as the identification of the non -technical barriers.

An invited speaker, from the Greek Distribution System Operator (DSO) introduced the participants to the main obstacles faced by the DSOs in the process of vast expansion of self- consumption systems. Participants discussed the main barriers for the integration of self -consumption into the grid. Discussion concluded on the need for acceleration of the communication between DSOs and policy makers as well as the rapid expansion of the grid infrastructure required for distributed generation integration.

The participants then broke into discussion groups in order to exchange ideas & proposals for **the ‘Immediate actions required for the acceleration of self consumption deployment’**. The online participants used project’s online tool as virtual board in order to post their proposals.

The main outcomes from discussion tables and the virtual board were:

- There is a need to subsidise actively small storage facilities in order to facilitate integration into the grid.
- The implementation of measures that integrate efforts on a building level including the installation of Roof-top PVs, Energy Efficiency improvements and installation of storage systems are required.
- Creation of a clear legislative framework for roof top systems ownership, is essential in order to avoid bottlenecks and accelerate permitting procedures.
- Actions to decrease the administrative barriers need to be planned.
- New market rules including the dynamic and proportional pricing, need to be practiced inside the energy market.
- Improvements on the permitting procedures for prosumers of the same building. Creation of One-Stop-Shops and training programmes to improve systems installers qualifications will accelerate new systems installation.

### Session 12: Renewable Energy Communities – Creation of an effective supporting framework - Contribution of RECs in energy poverty alleviation

During this session, participants had a close insight of challenges for the transposition of article 22, focused on both, the legal interpretation as well as the creation of a supporting framework in each Member State.

The specific discussion topics for this session were:

- The contribution of RECs in ‘EU Solar Strategy’ and the presentation of European Initiatives and projects
- The contribution of Renewable Energy Communities in energy poverty alleviation and the presentation of best practices
- The investigation of the main barriers for RECs deployment acceleration.

The CT6 leader issued a short analysis of the responses to the questionnaire filled by national representatives. The questionnaire aimed to profile the development status of Article 22 transposition in each Member State, and raise the most important barriers. Specific questions for the contribution of RECs in energy poverty alleviation stimulated the discussion that followed.

An officer from the European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) presented the outcomes of significant projects supporting the promotion of RECs funded by LIFE & Horizon 2020 programmes where *'involving and empowering citizens in the clean energy transition'* is among their basic priorities. These projects facilitate the exchange of experience and provide best practices and innovative ideas for the implementation of RECs in all member states.

Following this discussion, a European expert presented the experience, the practices and the business models used so far, by innovative efforts undertaken by existing RECs aiming to support for energy poverty alleviation. The four models introduced were:

- Provide a share in the Energy Community for vulnerable consumers.
- Sharing the RES electricity produced by energy communities with vulnerable communities in the nearby.
- Providing energy savings improvements and advices to vulnerable consumers by RECs.
- Adoption of a donation & solidarity model among energy community members.

The participants then broke into three separate discussion tables in order to discuss their experience, ideas and proposals to strengthen the role of RECs in energy poverty alleviation.

The three discussion tables, together with on-line participants who posted their ideas on project's online tool (used as virtual board), discussed on the following questions:

- How vulnerable consumer citizens could be engaged in RECs?
- How REC activities, services and profits, could best support vulnerable groups?
- What are the groups that need our special attention and require further actions for their engagement?

Finally, all participants concluded on three policy priorities that need to be further promoted. The immediate alignment of national policies with 'RePowerEU Solar Strategy', is a necessary step that would provide the policy background for the acceleration of RECs deployment efforts. The promotion of RECs actions to support vulnerable consumers is essential for the strengthening of their role as actors working for local development, social cohesion and RES acceptability, while, the lifting of barriers for the active involvement of local municipalities in REC creation and operation will provide robust support for their operation.