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consultation ◆◆◆

## Tenant's solar self-generation: how to set up a European consumer-friendly framework

In a workshop at the European Parliament taking place July 11, **Thomas Engelke** of the German consumer organisation (VZBV), **Martina Werner** MEP (S&D), **Kai Tullius** (European Commission) and **Barbara Steenbergen** (IUT) debated the consumer aspects of the EU "Clean Energy Package" with the expert audience.

The Commission's proposals foresee a new active role of the consumers on the energy markets, based on more flexibility and the opening for new players. Furthermore, the transition towards renewable energy shall be accelerated. So-called "aggregators" shall ensure better prices for consumers by purchasing and generating energy as a group, using the new market dynamics. When it comes to investments in decentralised renewable energy, a largely untapped potential can be found. In her speech, Steenbergen principally welcomed the proposed EC regulation on tenant's renewable self-generation. 150 million people in Europe, 30% of the EU population, are tenants. This huge group can play a central role in achieving the energy transition and EU climate goals.



The speakers of VZBV (**Thomas Engelke**), EC (**Kai Tullius**), EP (**Martina Werner**) and IUT (**Barbara Steenbergen**)

The proposal of the EC to activate the potential of tenants as producers of renewable energy is therefore a step in the right direction. Article 21 of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) entitles consumers to self-generation, self-consumption as well as to sell and feed-in the excess production to the grid. However, the success of tenant models is depending on the price for electricity. To make tenant's models a success story, barriers have to be removed.

Steenbergen explained corner stones for a fair regulation based on the critical example of the recent German legislation proposals on renewable energies and "Mieterstrom":

- Self-consumed electricity shall not be exposed to the payment of any charges, fees or taxes- whether the consumer is owner or renting the building. It is necessary to eliminate the bias towards homeowners.
- Consumers shall maintain their freedom of choice for or against solar self-consumption. The contractual freedom must be guaranteed, package deals shall be prevented. A situation where the rental contract is connected with a mandatory supply agreement – and the signing of the energy contract is condition for the continuation or the conclusion of the contract- must be legally avoided.
- For the large scale kick-off of tenant models a remuneration for excess production fed into the grid should be higher than the respective market value. Otherwise the amortization period is too long. EC should reconsider the existing funding systems in order to pave the way for tenant models.
- Solutions shall be possible for entire quarters, not only in single multi-apartment blocks. The bigger the energy system, the better the pay-off for the consumers will be. Landlords with big stocks (for instance big social and public housing providers) prefer uniform solutions for entire quarters as it is most cost effective. We will need those big landlords to reshape the renewable energy markets for cities.
- The advantages of tenant's solar self-consumption must not be undermined by high metering costs.

**A study published by the European Consumer organization BEUC, together with IUT shows practicable models for tenant's solar self-generation.**<sup>1</sup>

In the debate with the audience **Martina Werner** MEP supported the new models for self-consumption and self-generation. To achieve a fair deal for tenants, the EC should focus on financing models for low-income households. Tenant's access to decentralised, self-generated renewable energy can be a way out of energy poverty.

### **Estonian EU-Presidency will enforce consumer protection on electricity markets**

In the second half of 2017 Estonia will take over the EU presidency. Together with Bulgaria and Austria, who will follow in 2018, a programme for 18 months was agreed on (trio-presidency).<sup>2</sup>




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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.iut.nu/EU/Energy/BEUC\\_%20IUT\\_solar\\_self\\_consumption\\_March2017.pdf](http://www.iut.nu/EU/Energy/BEUC_%20IUT_solar_self_consumption_March2017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eu2017.ee/sites/default/files/2017-06/Trio%20programme.pdf>

One of the priorities is an open and innovative European economy, developing a business environment which supports knowledge-based growth and competitiveness.

To this end, Estonia will focus on establishing a stable and well-functioning electricity market and empowering consumers- a reference to new market models like self-generation to be achieved. The decision on the EU energy package is expected this autumn.

### EU-Commission registers European Citizens' Initiative „Stop TTIP“



The European Commission decided on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July to register a European Citizens' Initiative inviting the Commission "to recommend to the Council to repeal the negotiating mandate for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and not to conclude the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)" ('Stop TTIP' Initiative).<sup>3</sup> The formal registration of this Initiative on 10 July 2017 will start a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers.

This registration follows an initial Commission decision to refuse to register the 'Stop TTIP' initiative on 10 September 2014, which was annulled by the General Court of the European Union on 10 May 2017.

<sup>3</sup> [https://stop-ttip.org/?noredirect=en\\_GB](https://stop-ttip.org/?noredirect=en_GB)

The Commission has decided not to appeal the judgment.<sup>4</sup>

### EU housing partnership presents first results in a public consultation



The Housing Partnership published July 25 its first deliveries on better regulation and better knowledge as concrete steps towards the draft action plan.

On this occasion, **Elena Szolgayova**, coordinator of the Housing Partnership and Director General for Housing Policy and Urban Development in the Slovak Ministry of Transport and Construction, invited interested third parties to actively contribute. *"We are aware that nearly 82 million European citizens cannot afford decent housing at a reasonable price anymore. And we know that many cities have problems to meet the growing demand or to sustain the existing stock which have come to the end of their life-cycle, as investment potential is blocked due to many factors. Cities, regions and countries throughout the EU and beyond are in search of solutions for more affordable and sustainable housing for their citizens. We wish to make a contribution to these efforts through very practical recommendations and guidelines that will be able to de-block investment potential for affordable housing."*

<sup>4</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-1872\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1872_en.htm)

The EU Housing Partnership is composed of 6 cities/city networks, 5 Member States, 2 observer Member States, EU Commission, European Investment Bank and important stakeholders from the housing market supply and demand side, with IUT as one of them.



**Elena Szolgayova**, coordinator of the EU Housing-Partnership

A guidance paper has been elaborated by the partnership on the basis of an in-depth analysis and thorough screening of the situation both in old and new Member States.

The paper led to three deliveries in the process of the elaboration of its draft action plan:

- The "**general guidance**" is a contribution to better understanding of the problems cities and other authorities face in their investment ability with regard to the current EU state aid/competition rules. It depicts solutions on practical and legal level.<sup>5</sup>

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<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/housing/guidance-paper-eu-regulation-and-public-support-housing>

- The second is a "**capacity building workshop**" for practitioners, policy makers and legislators from cities, regions, MS and EU institutions in order to collect and exchange experiences in that field in a structured way.
- The third is a recommendation to undertake the general **revision of the SGEI decision** (technically foreseen in the document for 2017) in order to enable the acceptance of sustainable goals like social mix and social cohesion as valid public policy objectives, when defining social housing. The prevailing definition of the too narrow target group for social housing should be assessed in a broader context, as its recent interpretation often leads to legal uncertainty.

The deliveries of the partnership are evaluated by a public feedback of the EU. This consultation is open until August 25.<sup>6</sup>



Logo of the EU partnership for housing

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<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/housing/background-paper-public-feedback>

As another result, the partnership published a **toolkit for affordable housing**, consisting of a database to be further developed.<sup>7</sup> An interesting aspect for feedback in the online survey will be to identify and prioritize possible elements of governance (e.g. diversity of supply systems, tenants' protection etc.).

Last but not least, a **guidance for policy making** to enable cities (and possibly other authorities) to develop not only good housing projects, but also good housing policies, was introduced. The European Responsible Housing Initiative (ERHIN)<sup>8</sup> as well as the Geneva UN-Charter on sustainable housing could serve as already agreed upon sets of guidelines. An idea to be shared with others is whether the categories identified as crucial for decent housing in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and fair as well as ethical housing production could also serve as guidelines to EU funding and other financial instruments on EU-level.

**Elena Szolgayova:** *"The Housing Partnership is interested to hear from cities, policy makers, legislators, funding experts, social/affordable housing providers, tenants' organizations and EU institutions if they think that such guidance would be useful in their own project and policy development and whether it could be linked to EU funding and loans for housing."* The debate on the Urban Agenda will continue during the EU trio-presidency until 2018 - at institutional as well as on policy level.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/housing/toolkit-affordable-housing-policy-0>

<sup>8</sup> [www.responsiblehousing.eu](http://www.responsiblehousing.eu)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://medium.com/asoulforeurope/experiment-with-renewal-potential-490ab5404e30>