

The 2020 Vision for Europe's energy customers launched in 2012 by CEER and BEUC (the European Consumer Organization) was led by five principles: reliability, affordability, simplicity, protection and empowerment. The CEER 2020 conference on October, 20th 2020 updated the five principles regarding the EU's 2050 climate neutrality objectives and unveil a new one: inclusiveness. A particular attention was brought on the impact of the sanitary crisis on these principles.

A. A SPECIAL CONTEXT: THE SANITARY CRISIS OF COVID-19

The sanitary crisis has shaken the project and the vision up regarding vulnerable consumers. Dragos Pislaru (MEP) insists on the deep change the European Union is currently living and the fact that the transformation must arise for the benefit of consumers.

Indeed, as the pandemic affect the most vulnerable consumers, the 2030 plan is a timely contribution, even if its implementation is challenged by the COVID-19 (Bruno Liebhaberger – Director General of CERRE Think Tank).

B. THE SIX PRINCIPLES (ASPIRE): EXPLANATION AND VISION TOWARDS EU'S 2050 CLIMATE NEUTRALITY OBJECTIVES

1. The five previous principles :

a. Affordability:

This principle conveys two ideas.

The energy must be efficient: the priority must be to help consumer to save energy.

Then, the allocation of energy systems costs must be assess in order to achieve a fair and equitable distribution between consumers and to know exactly who will pay for the change.

The word "affordable" became central due to the sanitary crisis, as Mrs. Sorcha Edwards (Secretary General of Housing Europe) said: people may spend more time in their houses in the future, so they would need more electricity in their daily life and to use digital tools to connect with others or to services.

b. Simplicity:

Simplicity brings several words together: transparency, clarity, accuracy, innovative services and advice.

The general idea is that the consumer must have access to a simple and understandable framework through devices, and to be able to navigate between all the information in order to compare them. M. Frauke Thies (Executive Director of SmartEn) gave a clarification: doing so, the consumer should not be track in one technology or solution.

The consumer must also be warned that the transition will be positive for our planet and for their finances (Adelaide Charlier - Youth climate activist and special adviser to EC Vice-President Frans Timmermans,).

Mrs. Maria Spiraki (MEP) saw through clear and reliable information a link with a change of the consumers' habits and the access to social justice and funding, especially for building renovation.

The information includes also stakeholders, as Mrs Maria Spiraki (MEP) pleads for a better exchange on best practices.

c. Protection:

The central theme here is the guarantee for the consumer that his rights are implemented. To protect the consumer's data and to fight against cyber-attacks is essential. Mrs. Petra Čakovská (the Slovak Consumer Protection Society SOS) focused on price manipulation as a problem that must be solved.

The President of NEON Janusz Gwiazdowski highlighted the fact that cooperation models between European countries and across sectors may guarantee a protection of the rights of the consumers and to solve conflict. During crisis like the one with COVID-19, consumer crisis managements may be useful too. In that sense, ADR bodies give consumers more awareness to protect their rights and they must be easily visible.

d. Reliability:

Consumer must see the energy supply as a reliable and an essential service of general economic interest. In that sense, the trust consumers may have in the energy sectors may depend on the information he receives.

Kirsten Glennen (e-DSO) and James Watson (Secretary General of Eurogas) commit themselves to reassure consumers in their field (e_DSO and gaz).

e. Empowerment:

The objective is that each consumer feel engage in the transition. As Linda Stek (Professor of Environmental Psychology, University of Groningen) recalled, there is no chance to decarbonize economy without consumers help. The success relies on the trust between consumers and all the others actors (policy makers, governments, associations, producers, sellers, distributors...).

Two speakers added though. To Martin Salamon (Chief Counsel, Danish Consumer Council), the data is the key, as consumers need to trust the system and care about the data whereas Dirk Vantsintjean (Eurocoop) underlined the fact that consumer may consume but also produce (be an actor).

2. *The new principle : inclusiveness*

The principle of inclusiveness was added to the five previous ones dated of 2012. As Mrs. Natalie McCoy (CEER Customers and Retail Markets Working Group Vice) stressed: no one should be left behind.

Inclusiveness is a principle detailed by a lot of speaker, due to its importance.

As Mrs. Monique Goyens (Director General BEUC) said, each consumer need energy to survive: energy is linked to social justice. Even if the Clean Energy Package provides more consumers' rights, it is not enough as millions of consumers are still struggling to heat their houses in Europe. We must show solidarity.

It gather around several words: access to technology, inclusive policies, practices and energy justice, as also digital divide and integration.

Regarding the funding, Dragos Pîslaru's (MEP) point of view is that major reforms are necessary to tackle energy poverty and to embark everybody: no one must be left behind. After the realization of reforms, investments would be welcome.

Stefan Bouzarovski (European observatory of poverty) and Paul Voss (Managing Director, Euroheat & Power) remind the participants that the local initiatives and communities must be included in the transition.

Regarding the people, young people but also the one who may have difficulties with digital tools must be included in the transition.

To sum up : everybody need to own the transition (Bruno Liebhaber – Director General of CERRE Think tank).

TO KNOW MORE, FIND THE PRESS RELEASE, VIDEO OF THE WEBINAR AND SLIDES HERE :
[https://www.ceer.eu/web/portal/ceer_customer_conference - let-s aspire ceer-beuc 2030 vision for energy consumers](https://www.ceer.eu/web/portal/ceer_customer_conference_-_let-s_aspire_ceer-beuc_2030_vision_for_energy_consumers)

SPEAKERS

Sandra Matzinger - Socioeconomist Federal Chamber of Labor (Austria); Ankita Singh Gaur - PhD student Energy Policy & Modelling group University College Cork (Ireland); Ewa Mazur - Head of Hydrogene Economy and Innovation Innovation Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment; Alexandra Blin - Former Head of Energy and Climate Society College of Europe (Natolin); Ahmed Abdirahman - Fellow Obama Fondation, policy expert at the Stockholm Chamber, founder of Jarva Politician Week; Annegret Groebel - CEER President; Natalie McCoy - CEER Customers and Retail Markets Working Group Vice Chair; Anne Vadasz Nilsson (moderator) - CEER Customers and Retail Markets Working Group Chair; Monique Goyens - BEUC Director-General; Janusz Gwiazdowski - President of NEON ; Maria Spyraiki - MEP; Dragoş Pîslaru - MEP; Adélaïde Charlier - Youth climate activist and special adviser to EC Vice-President Frans Timmermans ; Linda Steg - Professor of Environmental Psychology, University of Groningen; Sorcha Edwards - Secretary General of Housing Europe; Bruno Liebhaber - Director General of CERRE; Frauke Thies - Executive Director of SmartEn; Petra Čakovská - the Slovak Consumer Protection Society (SOS); Paul Voss - Managing Director, Euroheat & Power; James Watson - Secretary General of Eurogas; Martin Salamon - Chief Counsel, Danish Consumer Council.