

Bratislava / Bucharest / Budapest / Prague / Sofia / Warsaw, 25 May 2022

Power to our roofs: Call for a massive increase of solar energy with citizens and communities at the heart

Open letter on the REPowerEU and EU Solar Energy Strategy to:

His Excellency Kiril Petkov
Prime Minister of Bulgaria

His Excellency Petr Fiala
Prime Minister of Czechia

His Excellency Viktor Orbán
Prime Minister of Hungary

His Excellency Mateusz Morawiecki
Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

His Excellency Nicolae Ciucă
Prime Minister of Romania

His Excellency Eduard Heger
Prime Minister of Slovakia

Dear Prime Ministers,

As the European Commission unveiled the EU Solar Energy Strategy as part of European Commission's Communication on REPowerEU plan - outlining a set of actions to reduce EU's dependency on Russian fossil fuels and to accelerate the energy transition - we as civil society organisations are calling on you to be a champion of solar energy. You should **fully utilise the potential of rooftop solar photovoltaics (PV) while empowering citizens and communities in our countries to actively participate in the much urgent energy transition towards a secure, just, efficient and fully renewable energy system.**

We are at a historic moment as the humanitarian, social and climate emergencies unravel. We are experiencing a paradigm shift on the scale of needed energy transition after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ambitious energy savings (based on efficiency first principle and through sufficiency measures) and an accelerated roll-out of sustainable local renewable energy with people, communities, and biodiversity at the heart would not only move us away from war fueling fossil fuels, but also bring us back on track to the Paris Agreement, **increase energy security and independence, while cutting consumers' bills** and helping to alleviate energy poverty¹.

¹ CAN Europe Briefing "Repower for the People", May 2022, <https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2022/05/Repower-for-the-People-Briefing-2.pdf>

A decentralised energy system in which people are empowered as self-consumers (individually or as a part of a group, or community) is an essential part of building a resilient, just, and independent energy system. In a decentralised energy system, rooftop solar PVs have enormous potential. They can be installed quickly, enabling households' to shift from being mere consumers of energy to "self-generators" putting the control of electricity production back in their hands and making them active participants in the just renewable energy transition. The cost-competitiveness and accessibility of rooftop solar PV makes it an invaluable solution to the current fossil fuel crisis. However, **barriers related to administrative processes, political and economic frameworks** are still blocking the uptake of rooftop solar PVs as a new report shows.²

We are thus calling on you to swiftly implement the necessary measures (See Annex), to enable an unprecedented uptake of rooftop solar PV, which will be the first major steps in the solar rooftop revolution. This will enable citizens and communities to fully engage in the just energy transition, as solar PV is installed on rooftops across our region and gas valves are turned off.

Yours Sincerely,

Denitza Petrova, Greenpeace - Bulgaria
Radostina Slavkova, Za Zemiata - Friends of the Earth Bulgaria
Svetoslav Stoykov, Institute for Circular Economy, Bulgaria & CEE Bankwatch Network
Barbora Urbanová, Centre for Transport and Energy, Czechia
Anna Kárníková, Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic
Miriam Macurova, Greenpeace Czech Republic
Akos Eger, MTVSZ / NSC-FoE Hungary
András Lukács, Clean Air Action Group, Hungary
Csaba Lajtmann, Hungarian Climate Alliance
Ernő Kiss MNNSZ Hungarian Solar Energy Association
Martina Méhes, Energiaklub Climate Policy Institute
Miroslaw Proppé, WWF Polska / WWF Poland
Wojciech Szymalski, Institute for Sustainable Development, Poland
Jolanta Zientek-Varga, Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny / Social Ecological Institute, Poland
Tomasz Waśniewski, Fundacja "Rozwój Tak - Odkrywki Nie" / Foundation "Development YES – Open-Pit Mines NO", Poland
Stan Zdzisław Nitak, Fundacja GAP Polska / GAP Poland
Dariusz Szwed, Zielony Instytut / Green Institute, Poland
Patryk Białas, Stowarzyszenie BOMIASTO, Poland
Maciej Wereszczyński, The Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network, Poland
Piotr Antoniewicz, Akcja Demokracja, Poland
Raul Cazan, 2Celsius, Romania
Marian Mândru, Greenpeace Romania
Kateřina Chajdiaková, Slovak Climate Initiative
Katarína Juríková, Greenpeace - Slovakia
Dana Mareková, Climate Coalition Slovakia

² Engaging citizens and local communities in the solar revolution: Rooftop Solar PV Country Comparison Report, CAN Europe, May 2022, <https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2022/05/Rooftop-Solar-PV-Country-Comparision-Report-2.pdf>

ANNEX

KEY MEASURES TO ENABLE A HIGHER UPTAKE OF ROOFTOP SOLAR PV

Governance:

- Formulate strategies with ambitious goals and clear targets based on an **assessment of barriers and the potential** for the uptake of rooftop solar PV.
- Create **permanent institutional mechanisms** with the participation of a wide range of relevant stakeholders and governmental levels that contribute to the follow up of rooftop solar PV policy.
- Establish and provide sufficient funding to local and regional renewable agencies and entities which support citizens, SMEs and local authorities.

Incentives, subsidies and support schemes:

- Fully transpose the RED II **entitling renewable self-consumers to receive a stable remuneration, including through support schemes, where applicable**, for the self-generated renewable electricity that they feed into the grid. This should reflect the market value of that electricity and take into account its long term value to the grid, the environment and society.
- **Reduce taxes** to a minimum and subsidise **solar panels**, particularly for energy communities and low income, energy poor and vulnerable households.
- Stimulate self-consumption including promoting **the integration of solar systems with batteries for flexibility**.
- Oblige mandatory solar PV on all new buildings as from 2025, when technically feasible; and for existing buildings mandatory solar PV as part of deep renovation strategies, outlined in a Renovation Passport as from 2025, when technically feasible.
- Use current available **European and national funds** wisely to subsidise the installation of rooftop solar PV. **Low income households and energy communities**, who lack access to the financial market and cannot receive bank loans, should be **specifically targeted**.

Permitting and administrative procedures

- Remove construction permits and substitute them with notices or reports on the start of activities for installation of rooftop solar PV.
- Enhance **one stop shop or single permitting procedures** for administrative and grid connection procedures and digitise administrative procedures
- Grid tariffs and network charges should be reduced as far as possible, applicable only to the extent to respect the cost reflective principle

- Introduce a registry of small installations to keep track of the evolution of rooftop PV.

Energy sharing and collective self-consumption

- **Allow for energy sharing** (through the distribution grid) and **collective self-consumption by** transposing and implementing the RED II.
- Reduce to a minimum the proximity and size requirements that pose barriers to energy sharing and collective self-consumption.
- Establish flexible options for stakeholder participation in collective schemes in order to mobilise investment, new business models and the needed social acceptance among citizens.
- Energy sharing and collective self-consumption in apartment buildings or similar structures should be feasible without the need to create an energy community.

Make Energy communities a key lever

- **Transpose Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) and the Electricity Market Directive**, including developing the definitions of renewable energy communities and citizen energy communities and providing comprehensive and coherent enabling frameworks.
- The criteria of the EU definitions should be reflected and developed clearly in detail in national legislation (openness and voluntary participation, autonomy, effective control, geographical proximity)
- Designate an authority to follow up and monitor the implementation of the objectives and provisions for energy communities
- Put policies and measures in place to support the incorporation of energy poor, low income and vulnerable households into the design of both renewable energy communities (RECs) and citizen energy communities (CECs).

In addition to above-mentioned measures:

- Launch **awareness campaigns on benefits of rooftop solar PV** to the wider public and ensure easy access to information
- Develop renewable energy **training programmes** for administrative staff, national, regional and local policy makers; as well as support programs to ensure sufficient and well **qualified installers**, energy planners and architects
- Roll out **digital meters** with access to data for energy users to facilitate efficient (collective) self-consumption schemes and grid integration, while ensuring data privacy protection.
- Prepare the distribution grid for a massive roll-out of solar PV and self-consumption, in the context of mobilising all flexibility options.