



Northern Periphery and  
Arctic Programme  
2014–2020



EUROPEAN UNION

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# RECENT Position Paper On the EU Commission's “Clean Energy for All Europeans package”

## Introduction

The RECENT project aims to increase energy knowledge in rural communities, and help them to have more resilient and energy efficient public infrastructure capable of handling climate change related risks. It gathers energy, community development and water experts from five regions in the North of Europe (Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Northern Sweden and Northern Finland) and is funded by the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme.

The partner of the RECENT project take note of the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package released by the European Commission. RECENT welcomes the ambition of the EU Commission to lead the clean energy transition, not only adapt to it. RECENT also agrees with the proposal's three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers.

However, based on the strong collaboration with communities in the project region, RECENT project partner consider that important improvements are necessary to reach these goals.

## RECENT position on the proposal

### **THE NEW ENERGY UNION GOVERNANCE: ENERGY AND WATER NEXUS**

The European North is one of the areas that will undergo significant changes in the coming decades due to climate change. Climate change is likely to challenge the provisioning of water services and local water and energy infrastructure. The impacts of climate change (e.g. higher perception) may also open new possibilities for the remote Northern Periphery and Arctic regions that could make the region become a major energy producer. But this needs to be accompanied by a co-management of resources to ensure that sustainability criteria are met. While some efforts have been made to regulate the nexus between energy/land-use/water/climate change mitigation and adaptation throughout the last years, too little is in the current proposal. The Northern and Arctic Periphery is water-plentiful, but an integrated resource governance across environmental structures is needed and a well-developed communication across administrative boundaries.

**The integration of the water energy nexus needs to be a clearly stated and becoming an integral part of the New Energy Union Governance Model.**



## UNTAP THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

More focus needed to explore the enormous potential for community-based sustainable energy projects in the European North. This is in line with the European Parliament's implementation report on the EED, published in June 2016, which says that “the potential of local energy savings should be exploited much more, as local and regional authorities are central in driving forward energy efficiency and, overall, the energy transition”

RECENT welcomes therefore the Commission's proposal which entitles “consumers or communities of consumers [...] to produce, store or sell their electricity, allowing them to take advantage of the falling costs of rooftop solar panels and other small-scale generation units to help reduce energy bills.” However, so far the legal framework on both European, national and regional level as well as support schemes are mostly designed for large-scale operations or individual households. The potential for efficient and renewable community projects is enormous but has been overlooked so far.

RECENT project experience shows that the specific features of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Region such as low population density, low accessibility, low economic diversity, abundant natural resources, and high impact of climate change result in joint challenges and joint opportunities that can best be overcome and realised by more cooperation. **RECENT asks therefore for further developing funding opportunities for regional cooperation to allow for supporting communities from first planning to concrete implementation of projects.** To realise that one option could be to follow the example of the Interreg Europe with a two-step project design with a project duration of 3 -5 years with a first phase which is about feasibility study and implementation plan and, if results are promising, a second phase which is about implementation and evaluation.

Beyond, RECENT asks for regulation

- to explore possibilities to ensure that part of revenue from renewable projects are channelled towards local development projects. An example for an implementation is the Scottish Government's legislation of the feed-in tariffs relating to community projects in Scotland.
- to give people a stake in the energy transition and encourage member states to offer stable economic incentives for community energy generation. The revised RED should therefore include regulation to encourage sustainable community energy project with high participation rate of local citizens. There are many examples for this type of community projects, among others the “Samsø model” aiming at developing the island into a fully sustainable model driven by renewable energy where the islanders have a stake in their local development plan?



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## **AMBITION LEVEL ON RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY: DELIVERING ON THE PARIS AGREEMENT**

RECENT supports a setting a higher target for the share of renewable energy and for energy efficiency in line with the European Parliaments implementation report on the EED, published in June 2016, which

- [calls for] a 40 % energy efficiency target for 2030 and considers that a binding overall target with individual national targets for 2030 will increase the EU's independence from energy imports, encourage innovation, and help secure its technological leadership in the field of energy efficiency; also considers that binding requirements are vital in order to achieve a maximum degree of ambition and effort on the part of Member States, and to allow sufficient flexibility for the mix of tools and instruments to be tailored at national level;
- [...] asks the Commission to set a binding energy efficiency target of 40 % for 2030 which will reflect the level of cost-effective energy efficiency potential;