

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

Position paper

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1. Preface

The European Youth Energy Network (EYEN) is the Federation uniting energy-focused youth organisations in Europe. EYEN's mission is to place youth¹ at the heart of the European energy transition by reshaping youth engagement, streamlining the voice of young people and creating the space for them to act. EYEN is a youth-led international non-profit association representing 11 youth organisations active in more than 15 countries at European, national and local levels. In this context, EYEN has organised the very first European Youth Energy Forum (EYEF), together with the European Network of Energy Agencies (EnR) and the Portuguese Energy Agency (ADENE). The main aim is to connect youth and give them the opportunity to voice their opinions on the lack of youth engagement at a decision-making level within the European energy sector.

45 young European professionals and students were carefully selected to participate in the event and develop the position paper following an application process which received significant interest across Europe. The participants were selected based on their skills, knowledge and experience, ensuring diversity and broad representation which has ultimately served to underpin the final recommendations of the paper. Additionally, these recommendations have been tailored to the current energy situation in Europe.

Over the course of 3 months, a series of online meetings were organised with the participants, to discuss the barriers to youth engagement within the energy sector in addition to developing proposals as a call to action directed towards key stakeholders. The participants' journey was split into three stages which consisted of 'Brainstorming', 'Research' and 'Proposal Development and Writing'. In the first stage, the barriers to youth involvement were discussed followed by the importance, rating and quantification of youth engagement. In the second stage, participants were tasked with researching their own country's investment in the involvement of youth in the clean energy transition. The final stage was fully dedicated to drafting the paper by grouping all the ideas and coming up with the best achievable proposals for European countries. This journey culminated in a three-day event in Lisbon, where roundtables and workshops were held to refine the proposals and finalise the paper. Each day of the event was focused on a selected topic namely; public policy, private sector, and education and knowledge sharing. This position paper was developed to document these discussions, consequently amplifying their importance and acting upon their conclusions.

¹ Youth refers to citizens between 18 and 35 years old

2. Introduction

Challenges facing Europe in the field of energy include issues such as increasing import dependency, limited diversification, high and volatile energy prices, growing global energy demand, security risks affecting producing and transit countries, the growing threats of climate change, decarbonisation, slow progress in energy efficiency, challenges posed by the increasing share of renewables, as well as the need for increased transparency, further integration and interconnection in energy markets. A variety of measures aiming to achieve an integrated energy market, security of energy supply and a sustainable energy sector are at the core of the EU's energy policy.²

The ongoing shift in our energy paradigm, where conventional procedures and solutions are no longer enough to face the current challenges, dictates the need for a transgenerational consensus on the future of the energy sector. More specifically, the inclusion of youth in the decision-making processes is crucial to ensure ownership of the implemented solutions. The production, distribution and management of energy is changing radically, and society must be resilient to face this new era of change.

As such, the European Union has declared 2022 as the European Year of Youth, acknowledging the key role that young people will play in Europe's future. This initiative aims to boost the opportunities for young people, targeting high-quality jobs, education and training opportunities, in order to support professional development and pave the way to enhance active citizenship to positively change Europe.

In this position paper we focus on evaluating youth engagement in different European countries, providing a starting point for possible improvements and ensuring that young people are involved in all parts of the energy transition; from agenda setting and decision-making to implementation and evaluation. The broad range of European countries afforded us the opportunity to analyse and compare the benefits offered in different European Member States and which countries could be deemed as role models according to our defined evaluation criteria.

We examined how individual countries are coping with the identified problems and implementing solutions to address them. Additionally, we assess what improvement

² [Factsheet on the European Union - Energy Policy: general principles](#)

opportunities they can use from other countries in an effort to achieve meaningful youth engagement in a sustainable and just energy transition.

While the authors of this position paper have diverse and potentially conflicting beliefs on the energy sector's future, one matter of clear consensus emerges: it is vital to define a framework which will enable a broader and more diverse group of young people to impact the energy sector, by bringing youth closer to key public and private stakeholders to co-design the future of our energy system. The purpose of this position paper is to define this framework and take a first step towards its implementation.



3. Evaluation of Youth Engagement

The engagement of young people in energy issues has proven to be a challenge. Among the countless challenges young people face in participating in the energy transition, five main obstacles were identified as follows:

- Ageism & 'youth washing': the inclusion of young people just for the sake of it without actually act upon their worries and proposed solutions;
- Lack of information: youth participation is currently not encouraged and welcomed, resulting in young people not engaging in available opportunities;
- Barriers to inclusive participation: the inherent difficulties regarding socio-economic inequalities;
- Lack of opportunities: regarding employment opportunities and youth-led initiatives which needs to be addressed by increased collaboration between industry, academia and public entities;
- Distrust and miscommunication: the current lack of trust in the impact of politics on energy topics and how much youth engagement can contribute to positive change in this area.

Nonetheless, when reflecting on the advantages of youth engagement in the energy sector, this collaborative exercise has illustrated the importance of including young people in the energy sector, enabling them to bring their ideas and skills to shape the energy transition, ensuring a democratic and inclusive process towards a sustainable and equitable future.

Since young people will bear the consequences of climate change the most, they are more motivated to carry out the transition. Young people can bring innovation, open-mindedness and novel skills to the energy sector. The openness to new ideas enables young people to be easily adaptable to change, devising fast ways to react and pivot course. With an immense motivation to display and utilise their potential, and the readiness to be involved and engaged, young people are not afraid to speak out about the urgency of the energy crisis.

Moreover, passing through developmental stages that entail self-discovery and identity creation, young people have not yet internalised certain social concepts and constructs that would direct their action or inaction. This allows them to think outside the box, spotlighting their creativity in the search for solutions and introducing valuable skills into the energy field such as technical savviness, agility and critical perspectives that so far have guided them in developing a lot of business ideas and start-ups.

Being aware of and ready to engage in intersectional discussions, attempting to devise comprehensive action procedures so that everybody is included and the drive to contribute to the transition one way or another, are added values to the solution-oriented perspectives all of us need to engage in.

In conclusion, young people recognize their active role within the environmental and social discourse - handily searching for channels through which they can engage and exercise their full right to participate in discussions and, ultimately, decision-making.

In any process where continuous improvement is sought, there is always a need to assess the progress. For the sake of measuring youth engagement at a national and European level, the following criteria were identified as the most prevalent when evaluating it:

- Outcome-based indicator: extent to which inputs provided by youth are effectively incorporated in policy and decisions;
- Representation: the share of representativeness of youth in the different areas of the energy sector and the share of policy makers under 35;
- Accessibility and dissemination: the amount of opportunities and events which are accessible and inclusive;
- Resources: the amount of investments from governments and private sector in youth-led organisations;
- Equity: equitable representation in the local and national public entities.

Therefore, there is a need for the creation of an evaluation process that can gather specialised questions, with quantified metrics for the evaluation of the previous criteria, which will certainly serve to assess the reality of our society. Once all this information is gathered, specific actions can be drawn to improve the youth engagement and capitalise from its advantages for the sake of the future of energy transition.

The multitude of responses in the European Union is evident in the way different European countries have addressed the topic of increasing youth engagement for the sake of a sustainable future of energy transition. For example, the Government of Germany conducts a periodic survey among youth to record their opinions about environment and climate change, with a further discussion in a youth forum along with ministry representatives. This survey serves as a good input for developing evidence-based youth strategies.

The Government of Poland has also prioritised this topic by forming the Youth Climate Council which is a platform for discussion, exchange of experiences, demands and ideas between the youth community and decision-makers. The members of the Youth Climate Council are keen to represent the voice of the younger generation fairly, so they are in

constant contact with youth organisations and individual activists working in its thematic area, in order to convey their ideas to representatives of the Ministry of Climate.

Portugal and Sweden have also stepped up their efforts in providing a platform to the youth to raise their concerns and work together with the policy makers to have firm actions. Portugal's Future Energy Leaders is a programme that invites its members to contribute to the energy dialogue, to support the development of balanced national policy frameworks, and to help shape energy solutions for tomorrow, tailored to the national and regional context and needs. Sweden, in 2022 formed a Youth Task Force, prior to Stockholm+50 (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment) to ensure that young people could provide valuable inputs to the world leaders for specific action plans. The Youth Task Force is composed jointly by the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations (LSU) and the Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP (CYMG).

To bolster the training of its youth, the French government has contributed greatly to the development of initiatives of work-study programs, such as *Alternance*, allowing a gradual integration of responsibility in the energy sector, open to any student in higher education. These work-study programs are organised by the universities and companies but are supported by the French government through financial aid, providing crucial backing for the development of youth action towards energy transition.

Despite some successful initiatives, there has been evidence of youth tokenism at various levels in different nations across Europe. Many countries have this dominant practice of engaging youth of different demographic characteristics for the sake of appearance in the public discourse. There are no relevant monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would provide data on the level of youth engagement within relevant sectors. Along with the youth tokenism, youth washing/discreditation is another ill-practice that needs to be addressed.

Steering away from youth washing, some states and private institutions in several countries do not even motivate young people to work in the renewable energy sector. Most of the agendas for energy transition and strategy plans are not fully focused on engaging young people to the energy transition. This lack of development opportunity stimulates economic migration - the outflow of young staff abroad or to other sectors, which yields the exact opposite effect of youth engagement. In addition to the lack of development opportunities, there is also a trend where major fossil fuel companies create and finance academic programs relating to energy and environment catering to a type of greenwashing, and therefore not a good practice. The objective of such academic programs is tailored to the needs of the oil and gas sector (rather than the environment), which creates additional roadblocks to the renewable energy transition.

4. Proposals - A call to action

Acknowledging the urgency of capitalising from the willingness of our youth to create impact and change towards a better future for all Europeans, the barriers structurally maintained that prevent youth action from succeeding need to be addressed. For that purpose, and serving as a call to action, a set of measures are proposed here to improve youth engagement in public policy making, knowledge transfer and education, and the private sector.

Although a roadmap is proposed for each proposal, all of them should be implemented as soon as possible, in light of the benefits that engaging the youth brings to the energy transition.

a. Policy Making

In this section, we present three proposals related to youth engagement in policy making:

- Youth Energy Council(s);
- Energy Youth Standard;
- Youth National Energy Survey.

Youth Energy Council(s)

Objective:

The *Youth Energy Council* (YECs) aims to bring together youth from diverse geographical, socio-economic and educational backgrounds to effectively contribute to: decision making processes; prevent youth washing; and institutionalise youth representation in energy and climate-related policy making.

Description:

Creation of an advisory body at national level whose tasks consist of assisting decision makers on the design, implementation and evaluation of policies regarding youth and energy. The council should work with representatives of public bodies (e.g. parliament, ministries) and have direct influence on decisions within the framework of their mandate, being also able to propose measures themselves. YEC should be the advocacy platform for youth mainstreaming at all levels of policy making – both public (local, regional) and private (corporate boards, executive roles, etc.).

Methodology:

National YECs are bodies of young people gathered within a legal framework established by the national government of European countries in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Council members could be chosen according to specific criteria bearing in mind geographical and disadvantaged groups representation. Pertinent actors (such as policy experts, academia, governmental representatives) should be invited to provide an onboarding of the newly elected council members on the current energy and climate-related challenges and policies. This measure should be monitored by a comprehensive and transparent annual report of activities - monitoring the extent to which the Council's work is reflected in policy and decisions taken, through quantitative (e.g. number of Council mentions) and qualitative indicators (e.g. effective contribution to outputs of decision-making processes).

Roadmap:

By 2024 - A series of consultations with governmental bodies and civil society are initiated, either bottom-up or top-down to design and adopt the rulebook of the national council.

By 2026 - Youth Energy Councils are established in different countries

By 2028 (or earlier) - National YECs initiate the creation of the European Youth Energy Council in a process facilitated by European Institutions, as a representative platform for knowledge sharing and representation of YECs on the European level.

By 2030 - European Youth Energy Council is assembled to define priorities and evaluate progress.

This council could be built on or adopt the same structure as existing bodies, such as Youth Climate Councils.

Energy Youth Standard

Objective:

Set a standard on how to measure and assess the extent & quality of youth engagement in energy policy creation and decision making, which will fundamentally aid in the transformation from overt and covert *youth washing* and tokenism into meaningful inclusion and engagement.

Description:

The Energy Youth Standard (EYS) is a framework that consists of qualitative and quantitative metrics with respect to youth engagement in the energy sector. This sets a simple and practical indicator that signifies whether young people are meaningfully and purposefully included within energy policy and decision making. The Standard safeguards transparent assessment of youth engagement on an EU and national level. This framework will be used to critically assess the status quo of youth engagement in

Member States and define minimum requirements to meet the Standard. The youth engagement data is collected by national statistical offices and tabulated by Eurostat. The results of this analysis will be shared through a bi-annual report that presents the status quo and lays down recommendations for Member States to meet the Energy Youth Standard. This standard could also be applied as a minimum youth engagement requirement for private companies or other organisations requesting EU funding.

Methodology:

Stage 1 - Professional Consultation: a consultation of a diverse and representative group of young people who are active in energy debates sets the framework and its metrics in cooperation with independent institutions, research organisations, and think tanks. The outputs of these dialogues will effectively inform the second quantifiable stage.



Stage 2 - European Definition: the tabulated dialogue of opinions will be put out to tenure with established youth energy organisations throughout Europe, explicitly requesting their organisational feedback relative to:

- (i) Which existing European-wide economic indicators/metrics would they assign to these dialogues;
- (ii) What would their ranking preferences/priorities be on these existing metrics;
- (iii) What levels of inclusivity, from their identified metrics, should be reflected in each metric, and;
- (iv) Which metrics would they like to see within the Energy Youth Standard which currently are not tabulated within Eurostat

The draft of this Energy Youth Standard will be shared among youth groups and other youth representatives to gather their inputs and feedback to assess and improve its metrics and definitions. This stage will establish the metrics to evaluate youth engagement and the minimum requirements to meet the Standard.

However, beyond these metrics, the Energy Youth Standard has the unique ability to ensure longevity given the inputs from the fourth aspect; as it is expected during these two years, the quality and availability of data will significantly evolve, in accordance with the tabulated recommendations from this final aspect. Once the basic baseline standard is agreed upon, the final stage will ensure the implementation.

Stage 3 - Implementation: National energy policy making entities and processes are evaluated using the Energy Youth Standard to measure the quality of youth engagement. If the Standard in the previous stages is not met, this indicates that the entity and process at stake have not met the minimal requirements for a 'Youth Energy Standard' as detailed in this proposition. At the end of the identified two years, Stage 2 will commence again while also engaging new stakeholders.

Roadmap:

2023 - Professional Consultation. Representatives apply to be part of the process and

selection will be done by an independent, European youth organisation. This stage takes six months.

2024 - European Definition. The feedback will be collated by unbiased and independently selected youth representatives and partner organisations (with recognised and renowned youth engagement tracks), with the explicit objective of ensuring a truly representative, overarching, European Definition regarding the Energy Youth Standard.

2025 - The national statistical offices are tasked to collect the required data for the Energy Youth Standard. From this year on, a group of independent youth organisations and youth representatives creates a report bi-annually to monitor the implementation of the Energy Youth Standard.

Youth National Energy Survey

Objective:

Obtain youth opinions on current energy issues at national and European levels regularly and contribute to overcome the lack of youth participation in energy policy making.

Description:

The lack of comprehensive data on youth hinders youth representation in policy making. For example, today, the absence of European standardised regular surveys towards energy issues demonstrates the gap between the youth and existing energy policy. Collected European and national youth data will benefit realising just energy transition by embracing youth's opinion.

The Youth National Survey is an initiative to collect data from youth about national and European energy-related issues to improve youth representation and create a foundation for the development of youth-specific energy policy. Therefore, the survey should contain energy-related issues such as existing energy policy, energy literacy, and energy attitude.

Methodology:

- This national survey would be conducted every 2 years, online, to obtain opinions from a representative sample of youth on current measures concerning energy policy and the energy transition strategy, from all parts of the country.
- This survey should be accounted for in the Eurostat budget to ensure youth representation.
- Eurostat should lead the design of the survey under the consultation of the relevant national statistics institute and youth-led committee of 27 Member States. The Youth Committee representatives should agree to confirm the design of the survey.
- Eurostat, the Youth Committee, and relevant national statistics institutions should discuss the process of the survey every two months during the design phase. If needed, the Youth Committee should be able to set up additional meetings.

- Delegation of Youth Committee representatives should be further elaborated.
- The national statistics institution should operate and translate the survey in official national languages to ensure the accessibility to the public. The completion of the agreed survey in each Member State shall be followed by the guideline which is agreed by the Youth Committee representatives.
- The guideline of survey conduction shall be consulted and agreed by the Youth Committee and national statistics institutions.
- The result of the surveys should be analysed by the Youth Committee and put into a final report.
- The final report and survey shall be translated in all official European languages and remain accessible to the public on the website of each national ministry and DG Energy.
- DG Energy should monitor the process of the Youth National Survey.

Roadmap:

2023 - The Youth Committee representatives shall be established.

2025 - The first survey design shall be finalised. During the elaboration of the survey, the meetings of the stakeholders should take place every two months.

2026 - The survey conducted by the national statistics institutions should be finalised.

2027 - The results of the survey shall be published in a report by the end of the following year. From this point on this survey should be conducted every two years.

These proposals could potentially be interconnected, as the Youth Energy Council(s) can act as the responsible stakeholder for defining and managing the Energy Youth Standard and conducting the Youth National Energy Survey(s), with the help of local energy agencies and local youth organisations, which can reach the local population. Importantly, the proposals are not interdependent so they can be implemented separately.

b. Knowledge Transfer and Education

In this section, we present five proposals related to youth engagement in knowledge transfer and education:

- Energy transition workshops for high school students;
- Green Skills for educators;
- Compel universities to provide SDGs and ET courses;
- Youth NEETs just energy transition training;
- One-stop-shop for youth energy engagement.

Energy transition workshops for high school students

Objective:

Provide education on energy transition and climate crisis

Description:

This proposal aims to address the lack of climate and energy education in formal education by expanding existing science programs at the national level to include more holistic, multidisciplinary energy and climate topics, through practical, compulsory workshops for high school students. Workshops will be delivered on a voluntary basis by university students, as a part of their curriculum. Higher education institutions shall participate in the development of energy and climate curricula. In parallel, local authorities shall support the delivery of the workshops at the local level.

Methodology:

Leveraging existing synergies and creating new pathways in energy knowledge between universities and high schools to provide practical education on energy transition and the climate crisis. Funding should be allocated in order to support project development and implementation.

University students will be taught about energy and climate in their university course. As a component of the course, they will host workshops for high school students.

Monitoring will be done using the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for undergraduate students who will be evaluated in order to provide education to future high school students.

Participation will be monitored through the number of university students enrolling in, and completing the university course.

The number of high school classes involved in the pilot project would also be monitored using geographical representation. Additionally, the cumulative hours of workshops completed can be used to evaluate the scale of impact.

Roadmap:

2023 - 2024 - Curriculum design and adaptation in pilot universities

2025 - Pilot phase in universities where curricula are developed and adopted in line with the academic calendar

2025-2030 - State-level implementation of the program

Green Skills for educators

Objective:

Train educators on green skill development in pre-university schools. The aim is to

improve youth education in the energy transition due to current lack of knowledge in energy and sustainability related topics.

Description:

A framework to transfer green skills to educators is developed. Information material and implementation methods are provided on the EU level. However, training is conducted on a regional and national level. The framework is incentive-driven through the inclusion of EU funding.

Methodology:

For the execution, a framework for the implementation of green skills in the education system on EU level needs to be created, in two steps. First we need to find partners from academia and then they need to create the content and educational material for further usage.

As a second phase of implementation, local academic partner institutions need to create the training program for current and future teachers who will gain knowledge on general education on energy and sustainability, get training on pedagogical methodologies for green skills and develop class materials.

Educators are enabled to transfer green skills to schoolchildren by the creation of informational materials on European level and training on regional and national level. The informational material is created by relevant academic institutions with funding from the EU. The EU logistically and financially supports regional and national education stakeholders of all Member States in the development and conduction of compact green skills training for school educators. The training will complement existing educational practices and is formally accredited by education authorities, in accordance with national and european qualification frameworks. In this way, the green skills are integrated in the curricula within existing school subjects as well as through additional activities.

Roadmap:

2023 - 2024 - Development of educational material and platform for educators on the EU level, and integration of all the relevant stakeholders

From 2024 - Conduct trainings of the educators

From 2025 - Monitoring and optimisation

Compel universities to provide SDGs and ET courses

Objective:

Compel universities to provide courses on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Energy Transition (ET) in all academic disciplines as part of the basic curriculum. This ensures that students are empowered to tackle these challenges in their fields of study.

Description:

Courses about SDGs including energy transition should be included in all academic programs. These courses will be tailored to every specific program so that students understand the impact of energy transition in their field of expertise. The aim is to have both a theoretical and a project oriented approach. In the latter, students are given challenges related to the energy transition that they have to address. Thanks to innovative methodologies, the students should find concrete solutions that can be implemented to solve these challenges.

Methodology:

Government should develop the core content of the courses, then establish that such courses must be included in all programs in order to comply with accreditation requirements. National accreditation boards will then check university programs against these requirements. A body elected by each university should ensure the creation of the courses. This also includes the decision on whether the courses should be mandatory for all students. Furthermore, university partnerships on a national and later European level should be set up to address the knowledge gap and harmonise parts of the courses.

Roadmap:

2025 - Pilot phase in some universities in the country

2028 - The implementation becomes mandatory and the core content is established

2030 - All the universities offer these courses

Youth NEETs Just Energy Transition Training

Objective:

To bridge the gap between the vocational skills needed in the energy sector and lack of education through a free accessible program for youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs), prioritising marginalised groups.

Description:

This proposal aims to create a free, short, hybrid training program for youth NEETs relating to the energy transition. The main goal of the course is to develop skilling and reskilling opportunities to enter the labour market and contribute to the energy transition. The program provides education and remunerated internships in the energy field for young people. The consortium of partners will include companies, public administration, research and educational organisations, NGOs, start-ups and youth organisations. The role of these stakeholders will include outreach, training, funding, mentorship, and support. Ministry bodies, such as Ministries of Youth and Employment, should lead the development of the national consortia.

Our vision is that the funding for the program will come via a combination of European funds (e.g. Social Cohesion Funds, NextGenerationEU, Just Transition Fund), national funds and/or private funds from partners of the consortium.

Methodology:

The program shall consist of a short online training period developed by a consortium of private and public partners, followed by a remunerated internship opportunity within one of the partner entities. Monitoring and evaluation will be conducted through participant surveys. Additionally, consortium partners will provide their perspectives through a stakeholder survey on the program and the successful reskilling of participants.

Roadmap:

2023-2024 - Ministries to develop the program in pilot European countries

2025 - Launch pilot training program for selected Youth NEETs

2026 - Post-pilot reporting of best and worst practices, and subsequent revisions

2026-2030 - Scaling and adjustment of programs across European countries

One-stop-shop for youth energy engagement

Objective:

Create a comprehensive one-stop-shop platform for youth to access information about education and engagement opportunities in the European energy sector.

Description:

Currently the information on opportunities is fragmented across different bodies and not easily accessible to the European youth. This is a barrier that prevents young people from actively engaging in the energy transition. By creating a one-stop-shop platform that collects educational and vocational training as well as civic engagement opportunities, the active participation of youth in the energy transition shall be further enhanced.

Methodology:

During the first phase of implementation, the European Energy Network (EnR) would set up a European wide web database that lists opportunities in the energy sector (categorised by Member State) such as: graduate and post-graduate courses, PhDs opportunities, events and conferences, summer schools, vocational trainings, internships, NGOs and civic organisations. The database is built using the crowdsourced data collection method where energy stakeholders provide entries which are then validated by the respective energy agency.

The second phase of implementation foresees national energy agencies allocating budget and manpower to open an information desk to provide tailored advice for youth on

how to access these opportunities. The information point will include a personnel and a hotline.

Roadmap:

2023 - Resource planning and project initiation by EnR

2024 - Inauguration of web database, resource planning and project initiation by the national energy agencies

2025 - Inauguration of national information desks

Although the education proposals can all be implemented separately, given the synergies between some of them, it would be envisaged that progress can be made more efficiently due to their complementary nature. One example of this interconnection is on the one-stop-shop proposed for youth energy engagement. Our view is this can aid the dissemination of the youth NEETs just transition training, as well as the youth national energy survey in the policy area and the work-study programs identified for the private sector.

c. Market - Private Sector

In this section, we present four proposals related to youth engagement in the private sector:

- National Talent Pool for Blue Collar Workers within the Energy Sector;
- Label for Youth Friendly Companies, Associations and Public Organisations;
- Youth Non-Executive Board Programs and Positions;
- Work Study Programs in the Energy Sector.

National Talent Pool for Blue Collar Workers within the Energy Sector

Objective:

To address the shortage of blue collar workers supporting the clean energy sector and to provide decent jobs for youth, by bridging young job-seekers and employers while equipping the job-seekers with future 'green' skills.

Description:

The creation of an online website with the aim of connecting job seekers to work opportunities in the clean energy sector. The platform would target youth between the ages of 18 and 35 with no particular requirements for an educational, professional background and employment status.

In the early implementation stages of the website, the first users should be fresh graduates from vocational school/college. Following the initial launch and after some months, the website should start to target the wider audience. Platforms in each country

would be tailor-made according to the country's needs and circumstances, giving the possibility to local companies to use local talents. It is also possible for this program to be integrated with any existing national local platforms which already provide similar services to other job seekers.

Methodology:

Employers would be tasked with publishing entry-level blue-collar job vacancies in the clean energy sector. Some roles would include:

- Electricians to install and maintain solar panels, wind turbines, substations and the power system equipment in general;
- HVAC technicians to install heat pumps and be responsible for the maintenance;
- Renewable energy (biomass, geothermal) plant and machine operators;
- Construction workers for green buildings and renewable energy plants.

All youths will have the option to sign up to the platform, however, it would be at the discretion of the company to recruit the participants to participate in the training and the required certifications to develop the technical skills required to perform the job. The benefits for companies to sign up on this platform would be the ease of choosing the best candidates from a broad talent pool as well as higher recruitment efficiency with lower recruiting cost (no need to post jobs across different platforms) since the website attracts people who would be interested in specialising in the energy sector.

The stakeholders responsible for establishing, supporting, and maintaining the platform would be business associations representing employees in the private energy sector. In order to expand their reach and have access to more resources, the associations could partner with the national Employment Ministry. This proposal should be presented by the youth stakeholders to a national energy association to kickstart the process of onboarding companies.

Roadmap:

2023 (1st semester) - Mainly focus on the design of the platform that is tailored to each country's needs and getting buy-in & support from the business association and the Ministry of Labor

2023 (2nd semester) - Onboarding the private sectors and the vocational school graduates

2024 - Creation of the online website (roll-out in each country)

2025 and beyond - Monitoring and evaluation of the outcome; continuous improvement and scale-up of the platform; promotion of the platform to a wider target audience

Label for Youth Friendly Companies, Associations and Public organisations

Objective:

To raise awareness, promote and award companies, associations and public organisations in the energy sector which have worked hard towards increasing youth participation and involvement within their structure.

Description:

This proposal entails the creation of an awards-based labelling system to promote companies, associations and public organisations that have adopted measures to increase youth participation and involvement.

This awards event would be organised by an independent Youth Association on an annual basis. Following the identification of various companies, associations and public organisations in the energy sector, an invitation to apply for this label award will be sent out. Each applicant will pay a fee, used to fund this initiative.

An application will be designed to gather information about youth participation and involvement in the respective companies, Associations and Public organisations. This process will be based on a predefined set of criteria, to ensure consistency in benchmarking companies.

All participating companies, associations and Public organisations that meet the minimum set of criteria, will be awarded the label. In addition, one employer showcasing excellence (highest ranking) in engaging youth, will be awarded the title of 'Youth Friendly Company of the Year'.

Methodology:

The award label will be granted to participating companies, associations and public organisations by independent youth associations working at the national level. Each Youth Association will define a set of criteria, based on the national socio-economic context, which reflect youth participation and involvement within companies in each country. A market study will be carried out at the national level to identify companies working in the energy sector. The award system is twofold:

- All applicants must fulfil the minimum requirements to receive the Youth Friendly Employer label;
- In addition, the highest scoring company will receive the Youth Friendly Company of the Year.

To ensure that the criteria reflect the goal of the award, a first revision will take place right after the first award edition. To ensure fairness in the comparability of the companies, associations and public organisations, the review of criteria will take place every five years.

Roadmap:

2023: Selection of Independent Youth Association at national level

2024: Criteria definition, market research and marketing

2025: First award edition and initial review

2026: Criteria iteration, market research update and second edition

2027: From this year onwards, yearly awards are organised

2030: Review of criteria

Youth Non-Executive Board Programs and Positions

Objective:

The aim of this proposal would be to shift corporate culture within energy companies in two major ways:

- Younger employees will gain representation within the executive board and fast track career advancement.
- Executive board members will gain access to new strategic unbiased perspectives to lead company growth and have direct contact with next generation leaders.

Description:

- Shadow Boards – private energy companies shall implement a 12-month program designed for non-executive young employees to work with the executive board on strategic initiatives and projects.
- Head of Staff to executive board members – private energy companies shall create a position for non-executive young employees that shall support executives in their roles, namely by assisting in the operations of the assigned executive and lead strategic planning processes across its area of execution.

Methodology:

Candidates, who fit a certain criteria, may be directly nominated by their line managers or may apply through a company-wide open-application process. The monitoring system shall comprise the ratio of participants who have progressed into decision-making positions within 5 years, the companies’ economic progress and CSR and ESG KPIs progression.

Roadmap:

We suggest that the national energy associations (such as, APE and APREN) shall bring awareness of the benefits of the proposal herein and foster the participation of its private members on an annual basis. Studies have demonstrated that implementing shadow

boards can lead to economic, strategic and sustainable benefits for the companies and, therefore, a wider implementation of this proposal is recommended.³

This proposal, being aimed at private sector energy companies, falls within the freedom to conduct business and, as such, may be implemented immediately or whenever they see fit - preferably within a year from the recommendation done by the associations.

Work-Study programs in the energy sector

Objective:

The objective is to overcome the difficulties for youth in finding quality opportunities to learn from work experiences in the energy sector during their studies. The proposal is aimed at creating balanced work-study opportunities accessible to youth regardless of their financial means, by becoming work-study students.

Description:

Work-study programmes give youth the opportunity to obtain a University degree whilst working in a company engaged in a field of activity aligned with the student's studies. This proposal should comprise an agreement which splits the student's weeks amongst university studies and work at the company, through an organised partnership between the three stakeholders (work-study student, company, and university).

These work-studies would be one of the best ways for the interested youth to get experience in the energy sector, through the development of specific skills and a concrete overview of the current market at the company, whilst staying up-to-date with their studies. The advantage for companies is that it allows them to engage students in the long term, at an early stage in their career. These companies can be sure that the students will have the right skills required for the future of their activities. Firms will get a return on their investment from the student's work during the work-study, in addition to potentially hiring them afterwards.

Work-study programmes similar to our proposal exist in some European countries and it would be very advantageous should all other EU countries seize this opportunity for their youth, adapting the program to their own reality.

³ Please refer to the Harvard Business Review article from June 4, 2019: <https://hbr.org/2019/06/why-you-should-create-a-shadow-board-of-younger-employees>, which highlights the economic and strategic incentives of implementing shadow boards.

Methodology:

Work-studies target young people who want to study in the energy sector, whether they are beginning their studies or starting a new degree. It is envisaged to work as follows:

- The agreement between the stakeholders involved provides the young participant with both employee and student statuses, as part of a specific degree.
- All types of post high school education could be eligible, such as Bachelor, Master, Technical degrees or PhDs.
- From the beginning of the work-study, the participants split their time between education and work according to a predefined schedule.
- The company pays for the work-study student's tuition and salary.
- It is up to interested member states to decide whether or not to provide incentives (financial or other) to participating companies.
- Work-study students will be fully integrated in the company's activities, letting them develop the same skills as other employees, and create value for the company.

Monitoring systems should be adapted to the situation, and should always measure retention rate, satisfaction of the work-study student, and manageability of the work-load for the participant.

Roadmap:

2024 - Discussion phase: Communication about work-study programs begins, starting discussions between stakeholders about how to adapt this program to their situation. All three stakeholders must be involved equally in the discussion.

2025 - Implementation phase: From previous discussions, the guidelines for work-study agreements are published. Applications are open to participants and the frameworks are signed. Work-study programs effectively begin.

From 2026 - Yearly assessment phase: Data is collected about each participant's journey. Every year, a report is created and published, evaluating the impact of the program on participants and companies. If possibility for improvement is identified, modifications can be applied to future work-studies. Exploring the possibility to include it in other programs, such as erasmus+.

5. Conclusions

The ongoing shift in the European energy sector involves a paradigm shift and conventional procedures and solutions are no longer enough to face the challenges. The Youth, besides acknowledging the urgency of the energy transition, are the ones whose future is at risk. Being aware and energised to create change, the future of the European energy transition has to capitalise from our young peoples engagement, knowledge, legitimacy and diversity. To improve youth engagement in policy making processes, in the energy market and in the education and professional training sectors, a set of proposals can act as a platform for the future.

We strongly believe that this process of inclusion and transgenerational consensus puts humanity on the right path to an affordable, safe and sustainable European energy sector.



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