Fair Energy Transition for All

Final recommendations

National Report Belgium

Results of energy transition dialogues with vulnerable people and experts

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www.fair-energy-transition.eu

Disclaimer

This national report is part of the project "Fair Energy Transition for All (FETA)". FETA is based on focus group research conducted in nine countries in Europe - Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland. FETA is supported by a consortium of Foundations composed of the Fondazione Cariplo, the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, the IKEA Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation, Stiftung Mercator, the Network of European Foundations and the Open Society Foundations. The project is spearheaded by the King Baudouin Foundation and operationalized by ifok, Climate Outreach, the European Policy Centre, and facilitators and policy experts in participating countries. National partners in FETA are Atanor and Levuur, ENEFFECT, Danish Board of Technology (DBT), ifok, Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci, Berenschot and the University of Groningen, Missions Publiques, Polish Foundation for Energy Efficiency (FEWE) and Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud (ISTAS).

If you are interested in a synthesis publication covering all countries and further information on the project and the methodology please check FETA's website: https://fair-energy-transition.eu/what-vulnerable-people-have-to-say/

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Part I: Introduction

1. Project description

Moving away from fossil fuels is one of the major challenges facing Europe during the years to come. This challenge is giving rise to a transition phase, the energy transition. But what will be its impact on households, and particularly the most vulnerable among them?

The implementation of a fair energy transition involves reducing our greenhouse gas emissions while taking into account the imperatives of reducing inequalities and social cohesion. The Fair Energy Transition for all (FETA) project therefore gives a voice to citizens in vulnerable situations so that they can share their views on the issue and express their needs related to the energy transition.

The FETA project is a European project involving nine countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and Portugal.

The project in figures:

- 900 European citizens involved ;

- 150 experts consulted at national and European level;

- 90 focus groups organized in nine European countries.

2. Methodology

An initial citizen consultation phase took place in Belgium between November 2020 and October 2021. A total of 11 focus groups were organized, of which two took place remotely due to the health context, and nine in person. Of these nine, five took place in Wallonia and four in Flanders.

Following these focus groups, a report containing the opinions of the participants and their proposals was transmitted to a group of experts. They met three times from January to March 2022 and distilleda series of recommendations that can be classified into four categories: general recommendations and recommendations in the specific areas of housing, transportation and communication.
In June 2022, a citizen forum was held with the people who participated in the focus groups in the first phase to present the recommendations of the experts. The purpose of this meeting was to see if they agreed with the experts' conclusions and to find out which recommendations were priorities for them.

After a presentation of the experts' suggestions, the citizens were invited to position themselves visually (on a scale of 1 to 4, from 'not very relevant/far from what we said' to 'very relevant/very close to what we said') to express their degree of agreement with these recommendations, before justifying their choice.

This report presents a synthesis of the second (expert recommendations) and third (citizen forum) phases.

Part II: Recommendations

1. Brief summary

Ten experts formulated eleven recommendations for a fair energy transition, based on the focus group material. Their three meetings took place between January 2022 and March 2022, with three successive objectives:

1. Ensure a common understanding of the voice of vulnerable people in Belgium
2. Formulate workable draft policy recommendations that address the needs of vulnerable people
3. Deepen, finalize and prioritize policies.

The experts who participated in these meetings are Jill Coene, Josefine Vanhille, Maria Lode, Sam Hamels, Siegfried Dewitte, Vincent Van Steenberghe, Dominique Gusbin, Emily Clissold and Sandrine Meyer. Many thanks to them for sharing their expertise and for their participation in creating this report. Their professional backgrounds are summarized below.

Dominique Gusbin has a Ph.D in high-energy physics and a degree in economics. Since 1985, she has been developing expertise in the fields of energy, transport and the environment. In the field of energy, her main interests and areas of study are long-term energy forecasts, the development of the electricity and gas sectors at Belgian and European levels, and the impact of economic and regulatory policies and measures on energy consumption and production patterns. In the field of transport, she investigates the relationships between transport, energy and pollutant emissions, and more recently she has been looking at the effects of transport policies (e.g. road pricing, changes in excise duties, electric cars etc.). On the environment, she mainly studies the impact on the energy system of policies aiming at reducing emissions of acid pollutants and greenhouse gases resulting from the consumption and production of energy. From 2001 to early 2022, she worked at the Federal Planning Bureau where shecoordinated the “Energy and Transport” team within the Sectoral Directorate.

Emily Clissold has a degree in sociology. She started as a field worker in a migrant aid organization in the housing sector. Her main task was to accompany refugees towards sustainable housing solutions, through innovative projects such as Collective and Solidarity Savings Groups and Community Land Trusts. After a few years at the Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia), Emily has been working atthe Combat Poverty Service since 2018, where she has been dealing with the issue of energy alongside other poverty-related subjects.

Jill Coene, sociologist, is a researcher at the University of Antwerp. She is affiliated with USAB (the University Foundation for poverty reduction) as editor of the “Yearbook on poverty and social exclusion”. She is involved in an annual research project for the King Baudouin Foundation about energy poverty (the energy poverty barometer) (together with Sandrine Meyer). See profile and publications: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/staff/jill-coene/.

Josefine Vanhille works as a social scientist at the Herman Deleeck Center for Social Policy at the University of Antwerp. She studies the relationships between the social and ecological goals of contemporary welfare states, and investigates the distributional implications of concrete policy measures for decarbonizing energy use in housing in Belgium.

Maria Luisa Lode has a background in Sustainability Science and Policy and is now working on several energy-related H2020 projects as a researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her Ph.D research takes an energy transition and energy justice perspective and considers the engagement and inclusion of different social groups in local and collective energy initiatives, such as Energy Communities. For the upcoming TANDEM H2020 project, she will be using a participative approach to analyse the negative impacts of the ban on cars with internal combustion engines from the Brussels capital region, focusing on vulnerable groups.

Sam Hamels is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Economics of Ghent University.
His research focuses on the European electricity system as well as techno-economic and financial aspects of the challenge of decarbonizing the building stock. In a 2021 paper published in the journal *Energy & Buildings*, Sam and co-author Prof. Johan Albrecht estimated that approximately half of home-owning households in Flanders do not have a sufficiently high financing capacity to renovate their home to a 2050-proof "A-label".

Sandrine Meyer holds a Master's degree in management (ULB-Solvay) and a Master's degree in Environmental Management (ULB-IGEAT). She has been a researcher at the Université Libre de Bruxelles for more than 20 years, mainly at the Centre d'Etudes Economiques et Sociales de L'Environnement (CEESE). She carries out, manages, supervises, or coordinates various projectsrelated to energy, housing, and behaviour (e.g. housing energy renovation and the tenant-landlord dilemma). She is co-author of the King BaudouinFoundation's Belgian Energy and Water Poverty barometers. Since 2020, she is also co-titular of a research workshop and a seminar in eco- architecture at UCLouvain-LOCI.

Siegfried Dewitte is professor of Marketing at KU Leuven and has a Ph.D in psychological scienceand more than 20 years of experience in consumer behaviour studies. Siegfried's expertise focuses on understanding and stimulating changing consumption patterns, particularly in the energy domain. He has carried out methodological, theoretical, and field studies of pro-environmental behaviour in general and (energy) consumption and cooperative behaviour specifically. He collaborates with multiple stakeholders in these areas and his work is funded by Regional and European funding. He teaches social marketing and behavioural economics in the faculty of Economics and Business.

Vincent van Steenberghe has a Ph.D in economics from UCLouvain. In addition to lecturing at various universities, for many years he has been coordinating an initiative within the climate service of the Belgian federal administration on Belgium's transition to a climate-neutral society by 2050. This work aims both to feed into decision-making processes at the Belgian and European levels and to promote the societal debate on the climate transition. It covers various fields, such as creation of transition scenarios, analysis of the socio-economic impacts of these scenarios and awareness raising.

At the end of these three meetings, 11 recommendations were set out. These have been grouped into four sub-groups: one with general recommendations, a second specific to housing, the third focusing on transportation, and the last one including recommendations regarding communication.

A- General recommendations

1) Break the silos
2) Quantify, simulate ex-ante and monitor ex-post the effects of the energy transition on vulnerable people
3) Improve eligibility criteria for the heterogeneous target group of vulnerable households and automate access to social measures
4) Regroup and redistribute subsidies

B- Housing recommendations

5) Improve professionals' awareness of vulnerability
6) Improve access to renewable energy sources

C- Transport recommendations

7) Improve public transport services and ensure that public transport is accessible to everyone
8) Reduce transportation demand

D- Communication recommendations

9) Create energy communities on a local level
10) Communicate in a positive and tailored way about the impacts of different measures
11) Bring the policymaking process more into line with reality and integrate feedback

2- Brief overview of the policy/ regulatory status quo in Belgium

It is important to note that, in Belgium, the competences of housing and transport are regional competences and policies therefore differ between Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region. Responsibilities for energy and the energy transition are managed at both federal and regional levels.

The table below shows some examples of the different policies put in place by each region. These policy measures come from the 'Beleidsnota energie 2019-2024' for Flanders, the 'Plan Air Climat Energie 2016-2022' for Wallonia' and the 'Déclaration gouvernementale au parlement bruxellois 2019-2024'for the Brussels-Capital Region.

A- Housing

Flanders	Encourage in-depth renovation of housing through the renovation pact
	Establish a long-term strategy for non-residential buildings
	Simplify the EPB policy framework and make it more user-friendly

Wallonia	Pursue and develop actions in energy, climate and air quality education while improving public information on the energy efficiency of domestic appliances
	Define, update and communicate a building renovation strategy
	Create a financing mechanism to promote the energy efficiency of buildings in the public sector and the non-profit sector (zero interest rate loan)
BCR*	Set up a strategy for the sustainable renovation of buildings in Brussels

*Brussels-Capital Region

B- Transport/mobility

Flanders	Pursue targeted expansion of "clean energy" charging and refuelling infrastructure.
	Convince companies to move towards zero emissions
Wallonia	Expand the current network of car-pooling car parks with the aim of maximizing Coverage of the territory of Wallonia.
	Optimize the supply of public transport services
BCR*	Draw up an investment plan specific to cycling infrastructure and proceed with the systematic development of separate cycling infrastructure on major regional axes
	Ensure the financing of STIB's multi-annual investment plan

*Brussels-Capital Region

C- Energy Transition

Flanders	Strengthen social energy policy with appropriate measures
	Monitor the affordability of energy for all target groups
Wallonia	Help households to move away from heating using kerosene, coal and fuel oil, giving priority to renewable alternatives
	Take action to reduce energy poverty, in order to avoid cuts and guarantee the supply of a sufficient quantity of energy at an acceptable price
BCR*	Develop a strategy aimed at phasing out of heating systems powered by fossil fuels for new construction or deep renovations
	Promote and develop collective energy production via renewable sources

*Brussels-Capital Region

3- Policy recommendations made by the experts

1. General recommendations:

Takeaway #1: Break the silos

Background: The energy transition is not only related to climate and environment but encompasses different fields (e.g. energy, housing and transport), so the approach to this issue should not be fragmented into multiple silos. There must be consistency between different policies and between different levels of decision-making: federal, regional and local. Inconsistencies and the resulting confusion undermine the credibility and consequently the impact of measures at every level.

Action: There must be close cooperation between the various policymakers that have an impact on a fair energy transition, including across the different decision levels (federal, regional, local). For example, this could take the form of a regular institutionalized gathering, such as a dedicated inter-ministerial conference on sustainability and poverty, bringing together the following policy domains: energy, climate, transport, housing and social inclusion. This would facilitate communication between the federal and the regional levels and between different areas of competence and would foster a general underlying principle. For the transmission of information from the local level to wider levels and vice versa,there should be (1) a directory (perhaps one for each province) in which the local measures in the relevant domains are collected and summarized (on a regular basis) so that they can be consulted at higher levels, and (2) a framework for measures at the regional and federal level (also to be updated regularly) that should be consulted at the local level when designing new measures. These flows of information should avoid measures at different levels and in different domains being inconsistent or, worse, hindering each other. Increasing the cooperation between these different policy areas will make it possible to anticipate the impact a measure may have on other policy areas and build a coherent policy and global approach for a fair energy transition.

Target: Policymakers at local, regional and federal levels in the relevant policy areas

Takeaway #2: Quantify, simulate ex-ante and monitor ex-post the effects of the energy transition on vulnerable people

Background: The focus groups showed that vulnerable people face a variety of situations for which public authorities often lack tangible indicators. Currently, it is difficult to access the necessary data sources that capture both income and climate-relevant consumption. There is also a lack of agreed indicators to measure social and distributional effects of energy and climate policy measures. Such indicators would, however, be useful in order to get a grasp of the situation, follow its evolution and highlight the need for compensatory measures targeted at vulnerable groups.

Action: Public authorities should define the different vulnerabilities related to the energy transition, develop indicators, and monitor their evolution. Moreover, an evaluation process (both ex ante during the elaboration of policies and ex-post after their implementation) should be integrated into the policymaking process in order to estimate the impact(s) that a measure has on different groups of the population, and specifically on people living in poverty. They should also estimate the impact of the different measures currently in place in order to analyse whether improvements or clarifications are necessary and assess the relevance of all the measures.

This policymaking process, integrating both ex ante and ex post analysis should involve the groups concerned (directly and indirectly via associations that bring together people in poverty or via reports based on a dialogue with this group and other stakeholders). This would enrich the theoretical results to include insights from the field and specificities of different profiles.

There should be a special focus on the transfer of information to policymakers. Reports and other publications provided to policymakers should be clear, concise and should include experiences from people living in poverty.

Target: Policymakers at different levels (federal, regional and local) in the domains of energy, housing, transport, climate and social inclusion.

Takeaway #3: Improve eligibility criteria for the heterogeneous target group of vulnerable households and automate access to social measures

Background: Many social measures and subsidies are allocated upon request from the eligible beneficiary. Asking for help can, however, be difficult and lead to feelings of humiliation. Moreover, to apply for subsidies or other benefits, people must first know that such measures exist, be sure that they are eligible for them, find the right administrative procedure and documents to submit their request, etc. Automating access to these measures, or simplifying them when automation is not possible, reduces administrative barriers and helps to improve uptake, to ensure that the people entitled to specific measures actually have access to them.

Action: Access to social measures should be automated as far as possible, so that, when people meet the criteria, they should have direct access to the specific aid available in their situation. In order to arrive at this point, a first step is to evaluate the redistributive effects of existing automated programs such as the 'social energy tariff' and gradually extend it to other domains such as public transport, social housing and social communication while continuing to monitor these effects. Consider having a system that is progressive based on differences in income, instead of an all or nothing eligibility system. Use criteria based on either income or status so as to define different groups of beneficiaries through various channels and widen the scope of the measure. BIM status (bénéficiaire d'intervention majorée - increased intervention recipient) is a tool based on both income and status that could be useful in this regard (e.g. social energy tariffs).

This recommendation is linked to the one on the definition of vulnerability and the need for data set out above. These criteria should remain simple to ensure that they can be understood by everyone and are easy to implement.

Target: Policymakers (national and regional) with help from the administration for implementation in collaboration with domain-specific regulators (energy, water, transport, housing, etc.).

Takeaway #4: Regroup and redistribute subsidies

Background: Today, there are many different subsidies for many different purposes, with different conditions applying to each one. However, these do not always target the right people. There is an observed lack of knowledge about where (in the socio-economic sense) subsidies end up and many subsidies do not fully meet their objective of supporting the transition. For example, due to a low additionality – where a subsidy is given for something that would still have been done without the subsidy. In general, subsidies are not sufficiently targeted and focused. Moreover, there are only a limited number

of use cases in which subsidies are the appropriate and optimal policy tool to facilitate the energy transition. For example, subsidies can appropriately be used to facilitate a new technology or business model (like car-sharing) to 'get off the ground', with targeted support that is by definition limited in time. In addition to supporting the early market deployment of innovative products and services, subsidies can also be appropriately used to correct for market failures or to specifically compensate the impact of a population-wide policy on vulnerable groups (to avoid exacerbation of inequalities caused by the general policy). However, policymakers tend to over-use subsidy mechanisms in all kinds of inappropriate and suboptimal ways (e.g. windfall effect), and this needs to stop.

Action: First of all, it is essential to catalogue, monitor and track subsidies across the various governmental levels, to have concrete data about the distribution of support across socio-economic groups. Many countries suffer from a chaotic landscape of many interacting subsidies where no-one has a proper overview of (a) all the different policy interventions that are currently in place or (b) where all the public money spent actually ends up. Once made available, these data should be used to rigorously evaluate the current use of subsidies, making sure they are appropriate (i.e. "is it better to replace this subsidy with a different policy tool?"), consistent (i.e. not counteracting each other, e.g. by subsidizing both heat pumps and gas condensing boilers) and fully in line with stated policy goals. This evaluation should give particular attention to the needs of vulnerable people and quantify the possible *misuse* of existing subsidies.

Another idea put forward during the expert meetings was not to use subsidies to encourage one technology or another but rather to increase the price of what we want to reduce and reduce the price of what we want to encourage. The reason for this is the fact that subsidies by definition always need to be financed and it might not always be fully transparent where the public money is coming from or what the implicit distributional impacts are. A concrete example of this would be not to subsidize heat pumpsor electric vehicles, but instead to apply the correct price (i.e. including negative externalities) the fossil fuel technologies which they are meant to replace. While doing so for the population at large (offering the right incentives), targeted subsidies can still be used to soften the impact of this general policy on vulnerable groups.

Target: Federal, regional and local authorities, all authorities that provide subsidies.

Response from citizens:

Relevance and closeness to what they said: average score of **2.64 out of 4**

Comments:

- "It's pretty abstract and not very realistic, it's not clear how it could be implemented. There's a big gap between these recommendations and their practical implementation."

- "In particular recommendation 1) sounds like wishful thinking. We have been asking for this for a long time, but because of our institutional structure, there are regional differences and Belgium cannot speak with one voice. A more concrete proposal would be to appoint a person at the federal level who has the power to represent Belgium and to engage it at the international level."

- "Agree on the general idea, but the recommendations are still too citizen-centric and take the approach of asking citizens to make efforts. They don't have a big enough impact on (big) companies and public authorities, which can also play an exemplary role"

- These recommendations are top-down, whereas change happens from the bottom up: what works are small local initiatives and mutual aid systems between citizens, and they need to be better

supported, promoted and made known (bottom-up approach). There is not enough participation and involvement of local authorities.

- "The recommendations are quite consensual and not radical enough. They leave too much room for political power, which can exploit this. There should be a bolder message and a clearer framework, with the possibility of penalties."

- "Automation of rights: in social housing, who will pay for this? There is a housing shortage, public housing corporations are overwhelmed, making rights automatic will not solve anything."

- "These recommendations make sense, but we feel they have come more from the experts. As (vulnerable) citizens we are more interested in concrete topics, like housing or mobility."

2. Housing recommendations:

Takeaway #5: Improve professionals' awareness of vulnerability

Background: Providing financial resources to vulnerable people is not always enough. Some of them need practical support in addition to financial aid. For instance, insulating a house is quite a specific task and can be seen as a real challenge for someone who does not have the required knowledge. In addition, professionalsfrom different sectors are seldom trained to interact with vulnerable people or made aware of their particular challenges.

Action: The idea is to train professionals who directly or indirectly come into contact with vulnerable people, i.e. construction workers, energy sector employees, service employees, etc. on the practical aspects and specific issues related to vulnerable people, so that they can provide complete and more accessible support. In practice, this training can take the form of free MOOC training on poverty in general, withspecific modules on energy poverty, water poverty, housing, etc. To complete this free training, some specific interactive paid training could be given by social organizations (one example of this, in a different area, is the training on HR-friendly policies from Network against poverty).

Training as many people as possible to understand the specific issues facing vulnerable people and the best ways to support them allows us to increase the number of potential contact points. Vulnerable people will then beable to get support from public authorities and institutions but also from the private sector, for example from construction or maintenance companies.

To ensure high levels of participation in these training courses, one possible action would be to require company staff to be trained in the area of vulnerability in the context of public procurement procedures.

Target: Public and private companies.

Takeaway #6: Increase access to renewable energy sources

Background: This recommendation is based on the observation that existing policy measures for installing renewable energy sources (RES) are almost all subsidies to reduce investment costs.These types of measures will not reach the vulnerable people who do not have the investment capacity in the first place. Additional policies are necessary that allow vulnerable households without pre-financing capacity to have genuine access to renewable energy.

Action: The expert group acknowledges that there is no silver bullet for this issue and recommends a series of actions to improve access to renewable energy for vulnerable people:

1. Tackle the specific barriers (legal, financial, practical, etc.) related to investment in RES in shared-occupancy buildings. Make energy-saving measures accessible to all, through a global approach that includes prefinancing, direct inclusion of financial incentives and a tenable payment plan, taking people's actual savings and available income into account. Local authorities can play a supportingrole in this through a municipal or intermunicipal access point, working with local actors.
2. Develop and implement policy measures that provide incentives to sharing the benefits between landlords and tenants.
3. Acknowledge the role of legal, technical, practical guidance for households by supporting this guidance directly and to a significant extent by reinforcing and upscaling successful existing initiatives.
4. Go further than renovation and also install RES to benefit social tenants in social housing.
5. Introduce a legally binding national/regional RES target for housing to motivate investors. while avoiding possible negative impacts on people living in poverty (such as the risk of rent increases) through ex ante analysis of the targeted measures.
6. Analyse how Energy Communities (cf. Takeaway #9) could help vulnerable people to access RES while ensuring that they can access all existing consumer protection measures. Extension of the Energy Communities scheme could also have an impact on the financing of social measures, and alternative sources should be found for these.
7. For vulnerable owners, put in place a system of leasing or third-party financing (controlled or organized by public authorities)

Target: Policymakers at all levels, social housing companies, and local organizations.

Response from citizens

Relevance and closeness to what they said: average score of **2.55 out of 4**

Comments:

- "The recommendations are a good reflection of what was said in our group, especially about owner involvement. Some points were not addressed in our group, but perhaps elsewhere and these are relevant."
- "The proposed measures seem to be targeted incorrectly and are very much about educating landlords: that will work with some but not all, they are not always the right partners (some will pocket the incentives and not renovate the housing). Instead, we need to support tenants and provide control mechanisms and penalties for landlords who act in bad faith, who let their housing rot and just find a different tenant if they are not happy."

- "There are also many small landlords who are simply badly informed. For them, information and incentives to renovate the housing must come before penalties."

- "Installing renewable energy sources in social housing also involves increasing the autonomy of social housing companies, which is not specified in the recommendations."

3. Transport recommendations:

Takeaway #7: improve public transport services and ensure that they are accessible to everyone

Background: Vulnerable people are frequent users of public transport. Although public transport is well developed in some cities such as Brussels, this is not the case everywhere. It can sometimes take a long time to get from one town or city to another. In addition, the focus groups highlighted a feeling that public transport is not always reliable. People who can afford it therefore prefer to use a car to preserve

their freedom of movement when they want to, without depending on fixed schedules, thereby eliminating uncertainty.

Action: three concrete actions were identified in this area.

The first is financial. Huge investments are needed to improve resources (buses, trains, staff). We must ensure that these investments fit well with a strong vision of mobility which is coherent and holistic across all transport modes and across the different regions. Secondly, public transport needs to offer adequate frequency, ensure connections between different modes of transport, modernize services, etc. These improvements will shape people's image of public transport,which in turn influences its use. This first action has a direct impact on the second which focuses on a qualitative approach.

A third action concerns the tariffs in force. Efforts have been made by the public transport system to offer specific reduced fares to young people, students and seniors. However, for people over 25, the price of public transportation is still too high to compete with the car. In order to reach vulnerable people, why not offer a social tariff for transport? To avoid identification problems, they could be offered a subscription by e-mail or post so that they can take the necessary steps and not have to identify themselveswhen buying a ticket.

Another idea concerns improving accessibility to new means of transportsuch as shared cars or electric scooters. These transport modes, which are developing more and more,require a smartphone, a credit card and are quite expensive for some potential users. The public and private sectors should work together and in particular the companies offering these mobility services to improve accessibility – both financial and with special attention to digital divide – to these new means of transport for vulnerable people. These systems should be kept as simple as possible by means of policies or policies frameworks to ensure that everyone has easy access to this service.

Target: Policymakers at all levels (local, regional, federal) as well as public and private transport players.

Takeaway #8: Reduce transportation demand

Background: These ideas relating to transport can be taken further. Instead of improving the existing transport system, can we not reduce the need for transportation? We could rethink and reorganize the way we live to reduce the need for transportation. This idea of reducing the need for transport can also be raisedfor vulnerable people and the location of social housing. Does it make sense to build social housing in remote areas with no/low public transport provision?

Action: The mobility variable must be taken into account when choosing the location of social housing in order to provide vulnerable people with travel options that meet the challenges of the energy transition. This housing should be located at strategic places or public transport or other services need to be provided in more remote areas.

Target: Policymakers at all levels (local, regional, federal) as well as social housing companies and the transport sector.

Response from citizens:

Relevance and closeness to with what they said: average score of **3.0 out of 4**

Comments:

- "These are very good ideas, but is this feasible? It requires a lot of investment."

- "There needs to be more differentiation between urban and rural: most of the solutions are for cities, this won't fit for rural participants. In rural areas, where we cannot organize public transport everywhere, we could for example develop community taxi systems"

- "It is better to develop flexible and creative solutions on a small scale, such as the City Bus in Charleroi, than large and expensive projects such as the future tram system in Liège"

- "When it comes to social fares for transport, there are already examples of good measures, such as senior citizen passes or reduced-price passes for under-12s. It would be better to say 'extend' than 'offer' social fares."

- "It's not just a question of frequency: we need to completely rethink the TEC services (lines, schedules, stop locations) to adapt them better to meet people's needs"

- "There should be strong incentives to discourage the use of private cars"

- "But let's not forget those who have to travel by car! For example, I have a bad back, which prevents me from taking public transport, where I often have to stand.

- "The recommendations don't mention electric cars. For me, it should be said that it is a way to reduce pollution at home but to move it elsewhere (polluting extraction of valuable metals)"

- "We could cite positive examples of cities with soft mobility, like Ghent or Maastricht, to show what is possible."

- What is missing from the recommendations: the need to develop soft mobility (bicycle paths) and carpooling (there are special car parks for car-pooling but these are full) and to adapt public transport and train stations for people with reduced mobility; the importance of intermodality, for example with trips combining bus and electric bicycle

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4. Communication recommendations:

Takeaway #9: Create energy communities on a local level

Background: The focus groups mentioned the fear of losing human contact through the energy transition. However, this human contact is hugely important, especially for vulnerable people. The energy transition should always have a local dimension, with local interactions, local measures, etc.

Action: In order to deal with the energy transition at the local level, energy communities should be created. These communities would have several objectives:

1. Organize community events on a regular basis to discuss new measures and raise awareness of specific topics. The purpose of these events would be to mitigate policy impacts, implement more engaging communication, bring more transparency and encourage local initiatives.
2. Offer training that is really accessible to everyone, avoiding e-training due to digital inequalities.
3. Develop and facilitate the funding of large new energy projects locally, such as PV installations, wind turbines, etc.
4. Stay in regular contact with participants to increase motivation and adherence.

Moreover, developing a platform of this kind would make it possible to organize regular feedback/monitoring sessionsin the field where vulnerable people can discuss policy measures and their impact.

Target: Local organizations, citizens, and front-line social actors.

Takeaway #10: Communicate in a positive and tailored way on the impacts of different measures

Background: Communication, and specifically positive, tailored communication, plays an important role in getting people involved in the energy transition. It is important for vulnerable people – as it is for everyone - to directly see the impacts of a measure in their daily life and to understand that costs and benefits for them are fairly compared with costs and benefits for other groups of people. It was commented in the focus groups that there is a huge need for information, both on the topic of energy transition in general, but also on the measures and support mechanisms that already exist. Communication basedon compelling ways of quantifying the contribution that a household can make, can also reduce the feeling of helplessness.

Action: In order to guide vulnerable people and motivate them to take part in the energy transition, it is important for them to understand the impact that they can have on their own scale. It is important to communicate on these analyses while highlighting the positive outcomes or compensation measuresfor vulnerable people and ways in which it is ensured that vulnerable groups share fairly in the costs and the benefits. These messages can only be communicated if they are true, and this should be analysed carefully before the communication takes place.

Target: Policymakers, general public and media

Takeaway #11: Bring the policymaking process more into line with reality and integrate feedback

Background: Another important feeling that emerged from the focus groups was a sense of resignation on the part of vulnerable people. Why should they make an effort when they have the impression that large polluters are doing nothing to help?

It is important to make it clear that every effort counts. However, this feeling affects people's motivation and adherence to new measures. Action is therefore important. Of course, communication can help with this aspect, as stated above. We can also go further than this. The experts warned that it is not about addressing feelings or working with theories, but the reality must be addressed in order to have a concrete impact. There is a big difference between theory and practice. Some policy measures target specific aspects of the climate equation, such as the efficiency of specific types of goods or equipment. However, the real climate impact is theresult of the total emissions, and that also depends on usage.

Vulnerable people sometimes compensate for the relative inefficiency of the items they own (home/car/appliances) with different consumption habits (e.g. altering heating patterns, driving shorter distances/modifying their speed, opting for a smaller fridge, etc.).

Actions: In order to make the measures more responsive to the reality on the front line and make sure that vulnerable people feel accountable in this transition, policymakers should integrate their voice in thepolicymaking process. To do this we need to develop people’s knowledge on the energy transition as it is important that they understand the reasons behind a measure. Moreover, by integrating feedback, we can avoid measures that are not consistent with the reality of people's lives, and in this way we can reduce the feeling of injustice felt by the respondents. For instance, it would be unfair to apply a carbon tax to basic needs such as heating and transport without being equally strict on aviation.

Target: Policymakers at all levels.

Response from citizens:

Relevance and closeness to what they said: average score of **2.73 out of 4**

Comments:

- Consensus on recommendations 10 and (especially) 11: "Agree with the recommendation to take into account the reality on the ground and people's opinions, that's what we said"

- "There needs to be an emphasis on repeated public communication, using modern (online) media"

- However, we should not forget more traditional media such as radio, which is listened to a lot by homeless people, for example"

- "There are examples of municipalities that are working out a master plan with the participation of the inhabitants, but without follow-up: we don't know what was done with our opinions. A monitoring body should be created to check that people's requests have been taken into account."

- "Communication should be mostly about 'how to do it'"

"I'm quite excited about energy communities, but also a little dubious: who is going to bringpeople together and support them? It's a nice idea, but a bit idealistic

4- Focus on Financing

During the second meeting, a round-table discussion was held to give the experts the opportunity to address the topic of financing. Several suggestions were then discussed:

- Increase the transparency around the funds available for redistribution
- Re-evaluate the distribution system in a fair(er) way
- Use subsidies to compensate people that will be impacted harder by climate policies
- Use the proceeds of taxes (e.g. CO2 taxes) for specific social measures
- Consider private financing in addition to public money

5- Other topics

Other ideas were also mentioned during the discussion. These topics are less focused on vulnerable people, but still deserve to be noted:

- Implement measures that act on consumption habits (e.g., fashion, food, retail, etc.)
- Analyse all the recommendations that have already been made in previous studies and reports (e.g. Biannual reports by the Combat poverty Service[1])

[1] https://www.combatpoverty.be/legal-missions/biennial-report-on-poverty/

Part III: Citizens' feedback on the experts' recommendations

The Citizen Forum was organized in person at the King Baudouin Foundation in June 2022.

1. Priority recommendations

The citizens then voted for the recommendations they considered to be priorities. This vote allowed them to put forward four recommendations.

> **1) Recommendation 3:** "Improve and clarify access to support measures and social and financial aid, making access automatic as much as possible; reduce the administrative burden" - 10 votes

Arguments: this makes it possible to better target people who really need help and are not using it (lack of information or skills, do not fully understand, not comfortable with administrative procedures). Giving them this right can be a trigger to go further and get more involved. Automating rights also saves time.

> **2) Recommendation 7-1:** "Improve public transportation services and ensure accessibility for all: more vehicles and staff" - 9 votes

Arguments: It is also a way to bring the city closer to the country and end the rural-urban divide. It reduces the number of vehicles and pollution and creates jobs (bus drivers).

> **3) Recommendation 11**: "Take into account the reality on the ground and public input in developing new policies and measures" - 8 votes

Arguments: We need to listen to the people on the ground who make choices, it makes sense to listen to the people who will benefit from the measures. This also avoids a waste of resources.

> **4) Recommendation 4:** "Regroup and redistribute existing subsidies (there are many different types of aid and criteria) in order to increase their impact and target the people who really need them" - 6 votes

Arguments: improved distribution of subsidies makes it possible to deal with all aspects and avoids windfall effects. We need to reverse the current system, in which people often have to put up funding beforehand, before receiving a subsidy. Fairness must come before equality: it is not a question of standardizing aid, but of adjusting it to each individual's needs.

2. Final Thoughts

How can we be sure that all these ideas will result in something concrete? These are good ideas for making the energy transition more equitable, but they need to be followed up by policymakers. Let's be realistic: it would be nice to have their agreement on at least one point.

The general idea of the group is that a more equitable climate policy will have the effect of reducing social inequalities and allowing everyone to have better living conditions. At the same time, it also revitalizes social ties and local and community life because many of the proposed solutions are collective in nature. It can also create jobs. In short, it is a win-win situation: climate protection,

social justice, social cohesion, economy etc.

This presupposes that everyone has access to information in this area and also that political decision-makers listen to the populations, and in particular to the most disadvantaged groups in society, before developing new measures.

Part IV: Acknowledgement

This report is the result of a joint project involving Atanor and Sia Partners, supervised by the King Baudouin Foundation.

We would like to thank all those who participated in producing this report!

Partners: