

## More Europe for energy too

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Europe's energy needs could be better met through a European Energy Community providing for common negotiations with external providers, a common market and shared research, argues Staffan Nilsson, president of the European Economic and Social Committee.

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"We recently kicked off the debate on a [European Energy Community](#) based on the ambitious policy proposal made by the think-tank [Notre Europe](#). Last week European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, a committed ambassador of this proposal, came to present it to the EESC members in the TEN section concerned with energy.

After listening to Jerzy Buzek I can only agree with him and say that we need more Europe and strong political leadership on energy issues too, and not only on the euro crisis.

The current situation is not sustainable: energy prices are too volatile; potential crises could dangerously impact [upon] energy supplies; coordination and transparency within the EU are insufficient; and the investments needed are so considerable that no company or government alone can pay for them.

When Jacques Delors, founder of the think-tank [Notre Europe](#), and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek officially presented an ambitious policy proposal in the European Parliament in June 2010 encouraging the EU to establish a [European Energy Community \(EEC\)](#), it attracted a lot of attention, including within the EESC.

Given the vital importance of energy, we feel that civil society too should have a say in the process and can contribute to it. So we started working on an own-initiative opinion on the EEC, with Mr Coulon as rapporteur.

To kick-off the debate on the EEC, EP President Jerzy Buzek, who is also a member of the Notre Europe board of directors, came to talk to us at last Wednesday's meeting of the section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society. I have rarely heard such a powerful pro-European speech!

I can only agree with him and call for strong political leadership on energy issues at EU level. At a time of profound doubts about European integration, I found this very reassuring, and the EESC will do its best to contribute to a major new European project. The solution will not

come from nationally designed measures but from our capacity to collectively make political choices for the benefit of all EU citizens.

The European Energy Community (EEC) is a comprehensive plan geared to equipping the EU with relevant and effective governance of energy issues, in particular through a common negotiation capacity with external suppliers, the achievement of a common energy market (prices, grid interconnections, pool of energy sources, etc.) and a common research effort.

The EU and its member states have certainly not been idle and essential legislation has been passed. However, useful but fragmented measures may not be enough to effectively protect the interests of all EU citizens. Because I think only more Europe can help us meet our energy challenges, I believe we need to move towards strong political governance of energy issues. The European Energy Community can contribute to this.

From what I heard on 7 September from the secretary-general of Eurelectric, Hans ten Berge, from Anne Panneels of ETUC and from our member Benedicte Federspiel, speaking on behalf of the Danish Consumers' Council, there appears to be a consensus among civil society on a need for collective political action.

The EESC will articulate the contribution and recommendations of civil society on the European Energy Community at a high-level conference on 31 January 2012. Please check [our website](#) in November for more information."