

FOURTH ENERGY COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY FORUM

Vienna, 25 June 2020

Forum Statement

The fourth Energy Community Sustainability Forum took place on 25 June 2020 virtually due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The Forum gathered Ministers and Deputy Ministers responsible for energy, environment and climate change of the Energy Community Contracting Parties, high-level officials of the European Commission, EU Member States and Contracting Parties as well as representatives of academia, civil society and non-governmental organisations to discuss how the Energy Community can reach a decarbonized energy future.

The Forum participants underlined that the European Green Deal provided a momentum for the Energy Community Contracting Parties to accelerate their decarbonisation efforts. The funds deployed to the Energy Community Contracting Parties in response to the COVID-19 pandemic should be channelled in a way as to support the energy transition.

The Forum looks forward to the establishment of a new 2030 Energy Community legislative framework to raise the share of energy from renewable sources, improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Participants welcomed the progress Contracting Parties made on establishing National Energy and Climate Plans and streamlining various climate and energy planning processes.

The Forum underlined that now is high time to translate political and legal commitments into concrete actions to drive the decarbonisation of the energy systems. Enabling a just energy transition requires phasing out coal in a just and socially acceptable way, starting with phasing out subsidies to electricity generation from coal. The Forum underlined that the imminent introduction of a carbon price under an emissions trading or similar mechanism coupled with the phase out of polluting coal-fired power plants under the Large Combustion Plants and Industrial Emissions Directives will be one of the key drivers in this process.

The Forum took note of the challenges the Contracting Parties were facing in the implementation of the Large Combustion Plants Directive. The Forum expressed concern regarding the slow pace of investments in emissions abatement and encouraged faster deployment of renewable energy alternatives, especially wind and solar, through auctions.

The Forum reaffirmed that civil society should be at the centre of the energy transition. The Forum underlined that the energy transition must be inclusive and empower and encourage the active participation of citizens in the transformation of the energy system, in line with the goals of the Clean Energy Package and the European Green Deal, towards a decarbonized and socially sound future. The Forum highlighted the importance of citizen energy communities and other citizen initiatives in contributing to the energy transition and the implementation of the 2030 targets, soon to be adopted in the Energy Community, taking into account the decrease of costs of small scale renewable energy and energy storage technologies.