euroconsumers GROUP

ALTROCONSUMO DECO PROteste ec | Polska ocu proteste testachats testaankoop

The power that sparks

Collective consumers shaping the EU energy market

euroconsumers GROUP

Empower people,
improve the market.

euroconsumers GROUP | ALTROCONSUMO | DECO PROteste | ec | Polska | ocu | proteste | testachats testaankoop

Index

Executive Summary

Europe has faced two major energy crises in five years. Each time, the same households have borne the cost in higher bills, food and fuel inflation, and choices postponed or abandoned. **They did not cause these crises, yet they carry them**.

This paper argues that the problem is not only affordability. It is also **a power deficit**. Consumers are treated as recipients of crisis management, rather than as participants in the markets that determine their bills. **Yet collectively, households represent a significant market force**.

Organised collectively, that power can help consumers **shape the energy market** and help deliver Europe's wider electrification, competitiveness and security goals - the success of which ultimately depends on households taking part. To ensure address this power imbalance, we call for four changes:

- **Build European-scale consumer demand**, creating a framework to enable collective household purchasing power at European scale, while allowing offers to reflect national and regional market conditions. If Europe is building European energy companies, cross-border infrastructure and an increasingly integrated energy grid, it also needs strong European consumers.

- **Put consumers in charge of collective participation**, ensuring households can benefit from demand response, flexibility and energy sharing through simple, accessible and trusted routes. Where coordinated consumer demand helps reduce system or network costs, households should share in the value they create.

- **Make retail price formation transparent**, giving consumers clear, comparable information they can use to make informed choices.

- **Organise consumer power to strengthen the energy market**, supporting consumer organisations to mobilise households at scale and bring together their purchasing power, flexibility, energy sharing and other forms of participation. A well-functioning European energy market needs not only European infrastructure and companies, but also a strong consumer side.

1. Introduction: A Consumer Power Deficit

Europe is no stranger to **energy crises**. In 2022, the invasion of Ukraine sent gas prices soaring and household bills with them. Emergency measures were rushed out, consumers were told to turn down their thermostats, and eventually the immediate shock passed.

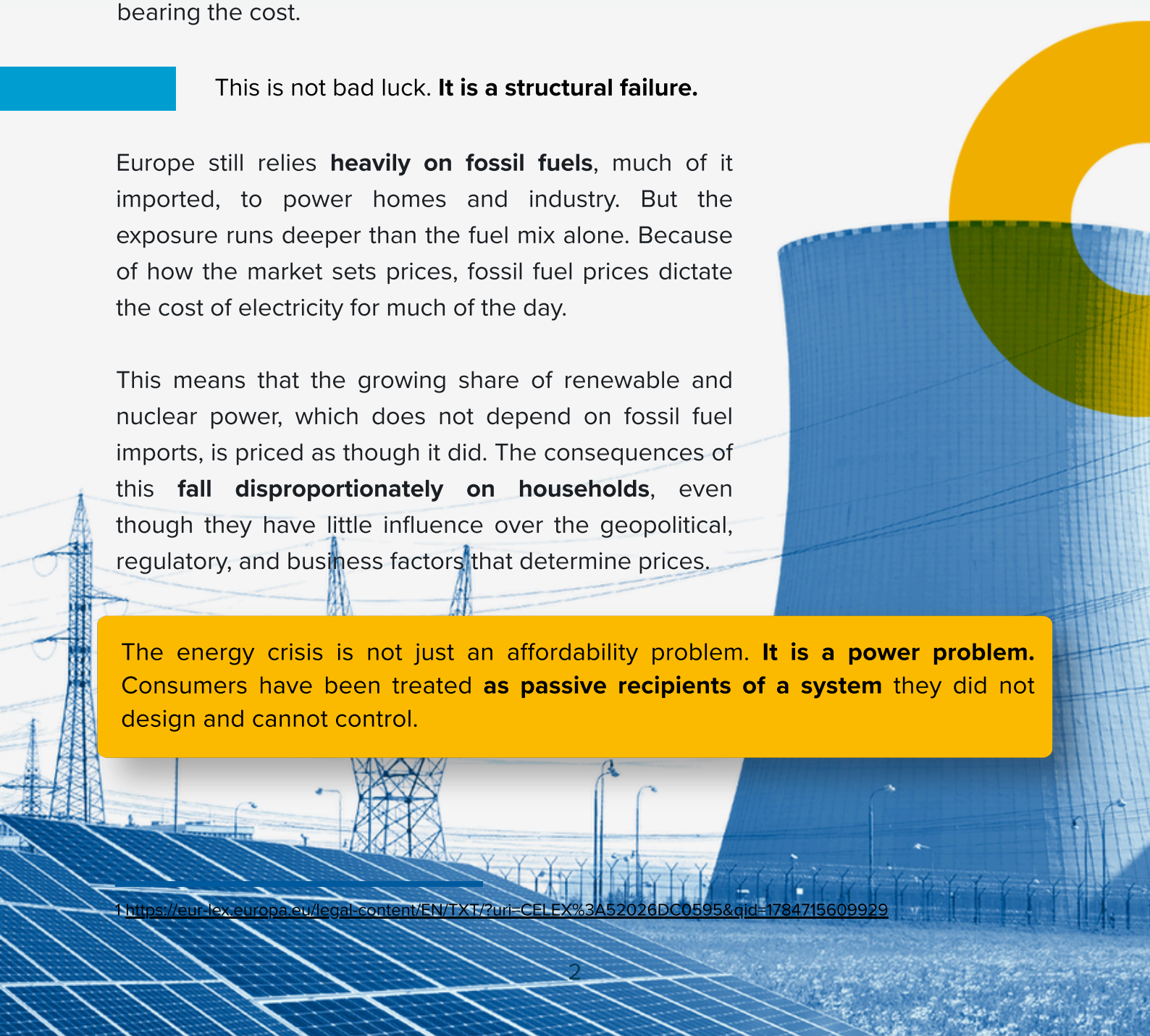
Three years later, the conflict in the Middle East has closed the Strait of Hormuz, disrupted global energy supply, and triggered another wave of price spikes across the continent. According to the European Commission, the additional cost of fossil fuel imports to the EU in the first months of the conflict ran to roughly €50 billion.[1] Different conflict, same exposure, same consequences, and the same households bearing the cost.

This is not bad luck. **It is a structural failure.**

Europe still relies **heavily on fossil fuels**, much of it imported, to power homes and industry. But the exposure runs deeper than the fuel mix alone. Because of how the market sets prices, fossil fuel prices dictate the cost of electricity for much of the day.

This means that the growing share of renewable and nuclear power, which does not depend on fossil fuel imports, is priced as though it did. The consequences of this **fall disproportionately on households**, even though they have little influence over the geopolitical, regulatory, and business factors that determine prices.

The energy crisis is not just an affordability problem. **It is a power problem.** Consumers have been treated **as passive recipients of a system** they did not design and cannot control.



1 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026DC0595&qid=1784715609929

So, what can be done differently?

Consumers are not without power. Organised collectively, with the right regulatory infrastructure, they can become **a genuine market force**: negotiating better deals, creating accountability for energy retailers, and actively contributing to grid stability in ways that generate financial returns for participating households.

And in the long run, the faster Europe transitions to domestic, renewable energy carried by modern grid infrastructure, the less exposed consumers will be to the next crisis. And because that transition depends on consumers choosing to adopt it, empowering them is not a concession to be weighed against Europe's competitiveness and security goals. **It is how those goals are reached.**

Attempts to soften the blow for consumers in the current and previous crises confirm that consumers are considered only as recipients of crisis management, never as participants in it. That needs to change, and this paper sets out how.

The Affordability Toll

For consumers, the specific causes of the current energy crisis are new, but the story is wearily familiar: **bills rising, purchasing power shrinking, choices narrowing.**

The direct **hit to energy bills** is the most visible pressure. Euroconsumers' 2025 affordability survey, collected before the full impact of the Iran conflict reached consumer bills, shows just how acute that pressure already was. In Spain and Portugal, **28% of households reported finding energy bills** difficult to afford. In Italy, this **rises to over 40%**. These numbers will be worse today.[2]

But energy costs do not stay inside the energy bill. When oil and gas prices spike, the cost of producing and transporting almost everything else rises too. This is particularly **acute for food**: modern agriculture depends on fossil fuels not just for machinery and transport, but for the nitrogen-based fertilisers derived from natural gas that underpin large-scale crop and protein production.

When energy prices spike, fertiliser costs follow, and food prices follow those.

Our survey already shows that around **2 in 5** households in Italy, Portugal and Spain are struggling to afford meat and other proteins, and **over 25%** finding everyday grocery staples difficult.[3] Fruit and vegetables were also difficult for **over one third** of Italian households, and all of this came before fertiliser prices rose **more than 26%** and the World Bank's energy price index surged **over 40%** in a single month.[4]

2 https://www.euroconsumers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Affordability-Barometer.pdf
3 https://www.euroconsumers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Affordability-Barometer.pdf
4 https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/energy-prices-surged-in-march--non-energy-edged-up-pink-sheet

The same dynamic also applies to transport.

Our affordability survey found **car-related costs were already the single most difficult expense for consumers in Italy and Portugal**, with **over 50%** of households struggling. In Spain, it was the third most difficult expense, and the fourth in Belgium.[5] For consumers who cannot access alternatives, such as electric vehicles or public transport, these are not abstract statistics. They are **cancelled plans, deferred healthcare, and impossible choices**.

Consumers did not cause these crises. They did not make the geopolitical decisions that left Europe exposed, and they did not design the markets that failed them. **Yet they are the ones who bear the burden**, and as the data shows, many were already **struggling before recent shocks**. The policy response at the national level has helped, but it is ultimately just a patch on a much larger issue.

Italy lowered excise duties starting from March.

In **Portugal**, the reimbursement for bottled gas for vulnerable households was increased, and the fuel duty adjusted, delivering a modest reduction of around six cents per litre.

Belgium approved an € 80 million package of temporary commuter allowances and targeted support, while postponing a planned increase in excise duties on gas and heating oil.

Spain went further, temporarily reducing VAT on electricity, gas, fuels and pellets from 21% to 10%, suspending a generation tax, and strengthening protections for households on social tariffs.

Poland took a more interventionist approach, cutting VAT and excise duties on road fuels and introducing a maximum retail fuel price.[6]

While these national interventions may seem substantial, they remain temporary, nationally bounded, and reactive. None of them change the underlying exposure. They are crisis management tactics, not structural reform.

5 https://www.euroconsumers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Affordability-Barometer.pdf
6 https://www.gov.pl/web/energia/obnizka-vat-obnizka-akcyzy-wprowadzenie-maksymalnej-ceny-paliw-rada-ministrow-przyjela-pakiet-przepisow-ceny-paliwa-nizej

3. Structural Solutions: Mobilising Collective Consumer Power to shape Energy Markets

Europe is beginning to recognise **the importance of the demand side**. Recent initiatives including, the Electrification Action Plan, the Citizens Energy Package and the recent electricity-market reforms, create new opportunities for consumers to participate through energy sharing and better market access. But these opportunities still remain fragmented, uneven and difficult for ordinary households to use.

The missing piece is **an organised consumer layer** capable of turning individual rights and market signals into collective power at scale.

3a. The Power of Collective Purchasing

Europe already recognises the power of pooled demand. In 2022, Aggregate EU brought together demand from European companies and matched it with offers from suppliers, creating scale that individual buyers could not achieve alone. The principle was simple: **collective scale creates negotiating power that no individual actor possesses alone**.[7]

The Commission has committed to exploring an EU-level mechanism to pool industrial electricity demand and improve access to low-carbon energy. The same ambition should also extend to households.[8] **If collective purchasing can be an asset for industry, it can also be an asset for consumers.**

7 https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-security/eu-energy-platform/aggregateeu_en
8 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026DC0595&qid=1784715609929

Collective energy purchasing for consumers is not new and EU law already gives household customers the right to participate in collective switching schemes. Euroconsumers' national members have shown that the model does work in practice:

In **Italy**, Altroconsumo's Abbassa la Bolletta brings consumers together and invites suppliers to compete for their combined business; previous editions have resulted in average savings of €250 per year.[9]

In **Spain**, OCU had similar success with Quieropagarmenosluz.[10]

Through **CLEAR-HP project**, Euroconsumers' organisations ran collective purchasing campaigns for heat pumps across seven countries, including Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain. This project demonstrated how consumer organisations, including Euroconsumers' national members, can mobilise consumers and organise complex purchasing decisions at scale.[11]

9 https://www.altroconsumo.it/gruppoacquisto/abbassalabolletta/
10 https://www.ocu.org/vivienda-y-energia/gas-luz/noticias/ahorros-ix-cde
11 https://www.test-aankoop.be/woning-energie/huis-water-verwarmen/nieuws/clear-hp

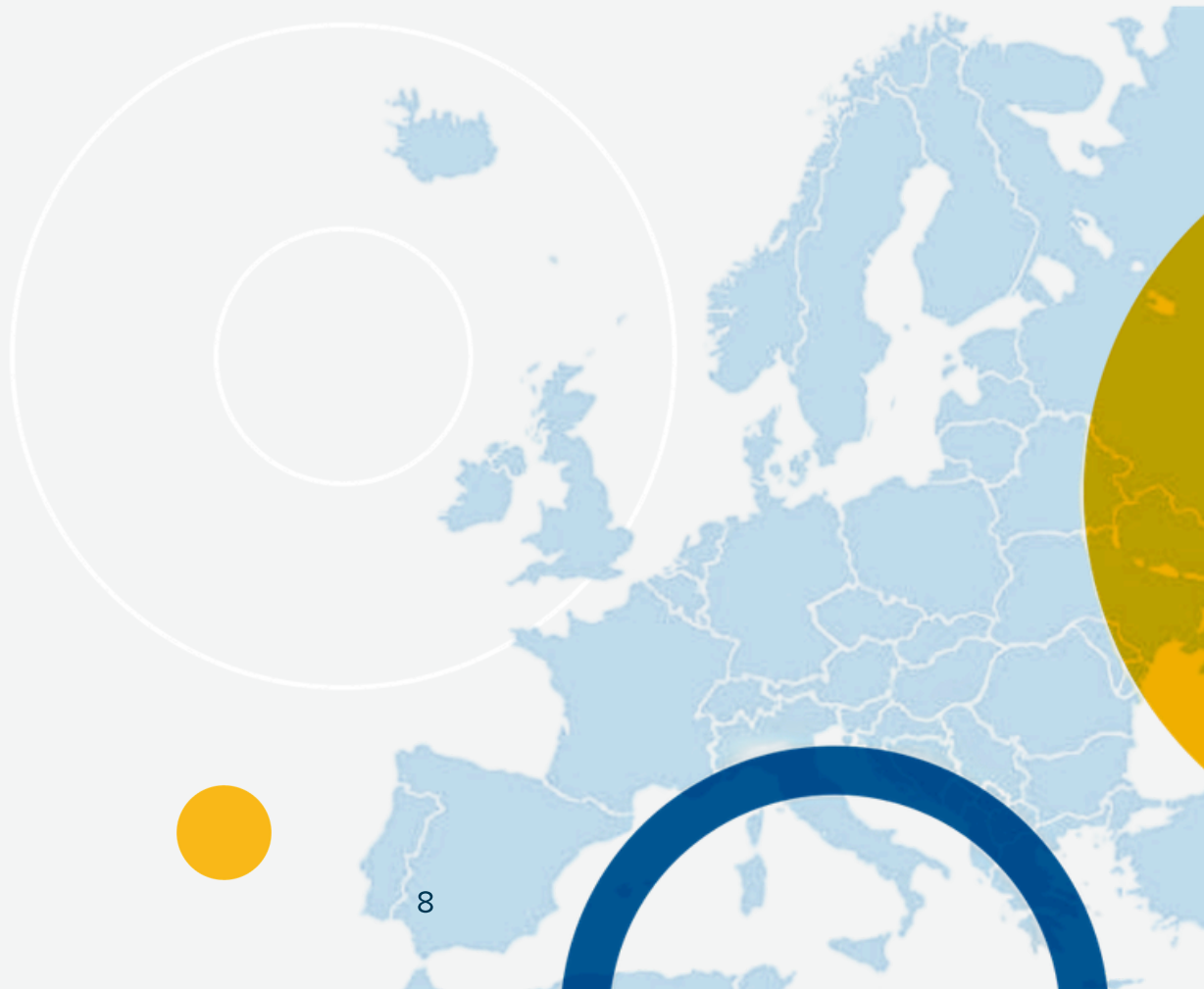
But these initiatives **remain largely national**. What Europe lacks is a mechanism capable of turning consumers across the single market into **a buyer with European scale**.

The EU should build on its experience of **pooled demand for industry**, to enable a European consumer buying pool: **allowing trusted consumer organisations to bring together household demand** across Member States and use that scale to secure more competitive energy offers.

This need not mean a single tariff across Europe; national market conditions can still be reflected while consumers benefit from purchasing power organised at European scale.

This would fundamentally change **the position of consumers** in the energy market.

Collectively, millions of households represent purchasing power that suppliers have to compete for. As Europe builds increasingly integrated energy markets, cross-border infrastructure and European-scale electricity supply, **it should also build the consumer side of that market**. Europe has begun to explore that principle for industry. Consumers should not be left out.



3b. Market Transparency: Shining a Light on Price Formation

When **wholesale energy prices fall, consumers should benefit**. But the speed and extent to which those reductions reach household bills varies by market and contract type. In 2025, ACER found that lower wholesale prices had not been fully passed through to consumers, mainly due to the prevalence of fixed contracts.[12]

The relationship between wholesale market developments, suppliers' procurement costs and the final retail price therefore needs to be more visible and accountable**. This would encourage consumers to reward suppliers that play fair, thereby using their power to improve the energy market.** Some of the groundwork already exists.

Belgium provides a useful example. Since 2012, the Commission for Electricity and Gas Regulation (CREG) has required **all active electricity and gas suppliers to provide monthly data on energy prices and the different components of their indexation formulas**, including fixed costs, coefficients, mark-ups and indexation parameters. CREG also notes that variable-price products automatically reflect developments on wholesale markets through these indexation formulas.[13]

In **Italy**, the Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA) established an Energy Vigilance Unit in March 2026 to monitor **wholesale and retail price developments in real time**, assess their impact on prices charged to final customers and strengthen scrutiny, including of contract renewals. Other markets operate differently again.

In **Poland**, the Energy Regulatory Office (URE) approves **electricity tariffs for household customers of designated suppliers**, meaning that wholesale price developments can be reflected through periodic regulatory tariff-setting rather than automatic indexation.[14]

12 https://www.acer.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/ACER-CEER-2025-Retail-monitoring.pdf
13 https://www.creg.be/fr/actualites/prix-de-lenergie-pour-les-menages-constatations-avril-2026
14 https://www.ure.gov.pl/pl/energia-elektryczna/ceny-wskazniki

Although the picture is not uniform across Europe, we can see that in some markets **detailed monitoring and transparent indexation mechanisms** already exist. But regulatory scrutiny does not necessarily mean that consumers can easily understand and compare how wholesale price movements are reflected in the prices they pay.

What is missing is usability. This information is technical, presented inconsistently between suppliers, and difficult to compare or track over time, even where it formally reaches the consumer.

Recent EU initiatives, including the 2026 Citizens Energy Package, have sought to **improve the clarity and comparability of retail energy contracts**.[15] The Commission's July 2026 proposal on future-proofing electricity bills also strengthens transparency around network charges and tariff methodologies. This is welcome, but consumers still lack comparable information on the relationship between suppliers' underlying energy costs and the retail prices they charge.

Euroconsumers calls for **binding, harmonised and consumer-friendly transparency** on the relationship between suppliers' underlying energy costs and retail prices.

Suppliers should **provide national regulators with the information needed to assess price pass-through** consistently across contract types and over time. The relevant results should then be made available to consumers in a simple and comparable form, enabling them to see how effectively changes in underlying energy costs are reflected in retail offers, including at contract renewal. Consumer organisations are well placed to translate this information into tools consumers can understand and use.

This would create **accountability through transparency.** In a crisis environment where consumers are already struggling and trust in energy markets is fragile, consumers should be able to see whether changes in underlying energy costs are being fairly reflected in the prices they pay.

15 https://energy.ec.europa.eu/news/citizens-energy-package-helping-households-energy-transition-2026-04-30_en

3c. Coordinated Demand Response: From Saving Tips to Market Power

Governments have long communicated with consumers about energy through the **language of personal responsibility**: turn down the thermostat, run appliances off-peak, reduce heating by one degree. These messages are not wrong, but they represent **a missed opportunity**. Individual behaviour change, however widespread, has a limited and unpredictable impact on market prices or grid stability. It asks consumers to act alone, with no coordination and no feedback.

The more powerful opportunity lies in **organised, collective demand response**.

Households are a major player in the energy market, accounting for 26% of the final energy consumption in the EU.[16] Consumers who shift electricity use away from peak periods create real value for the energy system, reducing pressure on the grid and the need for expensive peak generation. As heating and transport electrify, both the need for system flexibility and the potential for households to provide it will grow.

Households can already provide flexibility in different ways in some markets. Flexible retail contracts, such as dynamic and time-of-use tariffs, reward consumers for shifting consumption in response to changing prices, while aggregators can combine smaller loads so they can participate in flexibility and electricity markets. But access and uptake remain uneven across Europe.

16 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Energy_consumption_in_households

In **Belgium**, for example, **dynamic contracts** represented only 0.40% of electricity connections at the end of 2025.[17] CREG points to the complexity of these contracts and the time, resources and technology needed to benefit from them. Fragmented national rules and the absence of harmonised market access conditions compound the problem.

If coordinated consumer demand can help reduce energy-system costs, **consumers should also enjoy the savings this creates.**

What is missing is a **simple, trusted and rewarding route for households** to participate at scale. Consumer organisations are well placed to help provide that route: mobilising households, explaining the benefits and risks, protecting their interests and organising participation, whether directly where appropriate or in partnership with qualified aggregators and technology providers.

Automation will be critical. Heating, EV charging and other flexible appliances can respond to price or grid signals without requiring consumers to manage their consumption hour by hour, allowing households to capture the benefit with minimal effort.

Where coordinated consumer demand helps reduce system or network costs, households should share in the value they create. The aim should be to **turn millions of individual households into an organised source of flexibility** and **ensure that a fair share of the value they create is returned to them.**

17 https://www.creg.be/sites/default/files/assets/Publications/AnnualReports/CREG-AR2025-NL.pdf

For this to work, **the different price signals consumers receive also need to pull in the same direction**. Network tariffs can encourage consumption at different times from wholesale-linked retail prices, weakening the incentive and making flexibility harder for consumers to navigate. The Commission has recognised this problem, calling for network-tariff flexibility signals to be consistent with flexible retail contracts.[18]

Smart meters are another critical enabler, giving consumers access to granular consumption data and making flexible tariffs and automated demand response much easier to use at scale. Deployment, however, remains highly uneven: the latest Commission data put household smart-meter coverage at around 2% in Germany, compared with 94% in France and 99% in Spain.[19]

The Electrification Action Plan recognises this gap, accompanying the Plan with a legislative proposal to accelerate smart-meter deployment as part of wider measures to enable flexible and system-friendly use of the grid.[20] Rollout alone, however, is not enough: consumers need access to their data and tools that allow them to understand and act on it.

18 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52026DC0850&utm_

19 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026SC0600&qid=1784719393139

20 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0595

3d. Energy Communities: Owning the Solution Together

Collective purchasing and coordinated demand response reposition consumers within the existing market. **Energy communities** go a step further, letting consumers collectively own a piece of the generation itself.

By producing, storing and sharing renewable energy locally, households gain **a direct stake in the clean energy** that insulates them from price shocks, rather than simply buying it on better terms.

This matters most where **the other tools reach their limits**. Coordinated demand response offers little to a household with low electricity consumption, and much of Europe still spends more on gas than on power. For these consumers, joining an **energy community** is often the most tangible route into the transition, and a way to start shifting demand from fossil fuels to clean electricity. The appetite is real, and Euroconsumers' members are already meeting it.

In **Italy**, Altroconsumo guides households on how renewable energy communities work and how to join one.[21]

In **Spain**, OCU provides practical guidance on establishing collective self-consumption in apartment buildings.[22]

In **Portugal**, DECO-Proteste has pressed for collective self-consumption procedures to be simplified and the legislation clarified.[23]

21 https://www.impegnatiacambiare.org/altroabitare/news/comunita-energetiche-rinnovabili
22 https://www.ocu.org/vivienda-y-energia/paneles-fotovoltaicos/informe/autoconsumo-colectivo
23 https://www.deco.proteste.pt/sustentabilidade/artigo/autoconsumo-produza-a-sua-propria-energia

But overall, **this ambition is not matched by delivery**. By early 2025, the EU had reached just 27% of its goal of having at least one renewables-based energy community in every municipality with more than 10,000 inhabitants.[24]

The Commission has recognised many of the barriers through the 2026 Citizens Energy Package, but the challenge is now implementation: **simplifying administrative procedures, improving access to finance and grids**, and ensuring that **tenants, apartment residents, lower-income households and other consumers who cannot invest individually are able to participate.**

This is precisely where **consumer organisations can add value**: translating an EU right into a practical option, helping consumers navigate complex rules and offers, identifying barriers regulators miss and ensuring energy communities do not become the preserve of confident and well-resourced households. Recognising and supporting that role would help turn the EU's renewed ambition for citizen energy into participation at scale.

24 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a94f15ec-1cfa-11f1-8c3a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

4. The Long-Term Shield: Renewables, Grids and a Fair Transition

The structural solutions outlined in the previous section give consumers power in the market that exists today. But they do not resolve **the fundamental vulnerability** that makes energy crises so damaging.

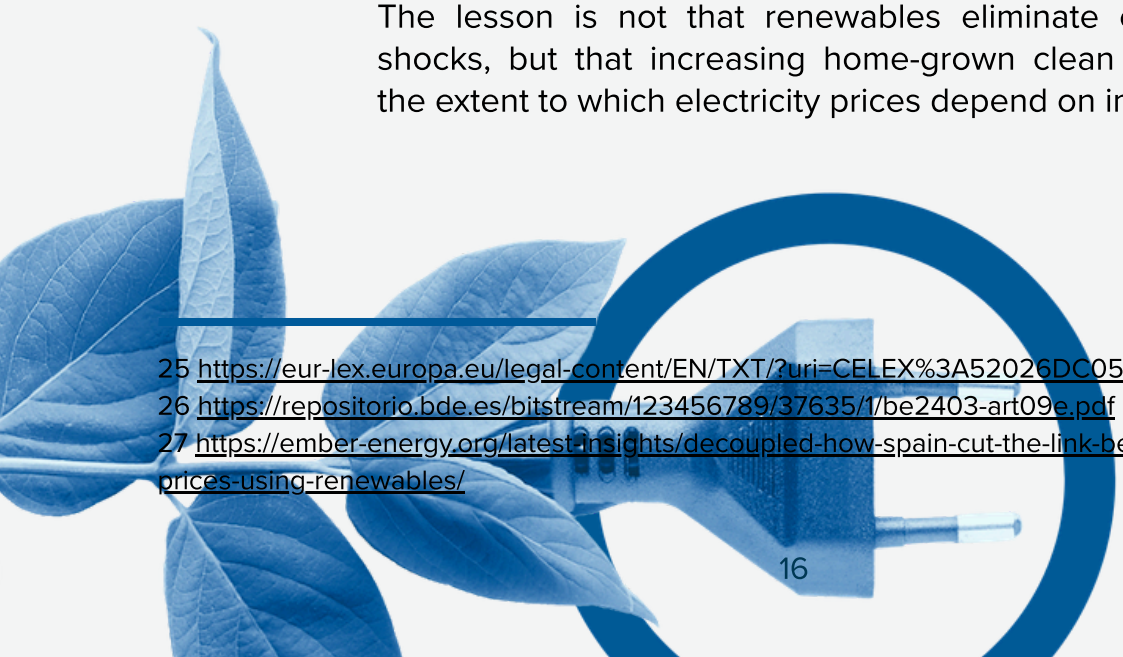
That requires something more permanent: **an energy system built on European renewable sources that cannot be held hostage by geopolitics, carried by grids capable of delivering their output, and accessible to every household regardless of income.**

Renewables are the structural hedge

The evidence is unambiguous. **Greater reliance on domestic clean electricity reduces Europe's exposure to volatile imported fossil fuels**. The Electrification Action Plan notes that the lowest electricity prices in the EU are generally found in markets with very high shares of clean electricity, where fossil fuels set the wholesale price less often.[25]

Spain provides a clear illustration. Wind and solar increased from 26% of electricity generation in 2019 to over 40% in the first half of 2024. The Bank of Spain estimates that wholesale electricity prices in that period were more than 40% lower than they would have been had wind and solar generation remained at 2019 levels.[26]

In 2024, **Spanish wholesale electricity** was almost one third cheaper than the EU average, supported by the expansion of renewables.[27] The lesson is not that renewables eliminate exposure to energy shocks, but that increasing home-grown clean generation reduces the extent to which electricity prices depend on imported fossil fuels.



25 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026DC0595&qid=1784715609929
26 https://repositorio.bde.es/bitstream/123456789/37635/1/be2403-art09e.pdf
27 https://ember-energy.org/latest-insights/decoupled-how-spain-cut-the-link-between-gas-and-power-prices-using-renewables/

Grids and storage complete the picture

More clean electricity and greater electrification also place new demands on the electricity system. Spain's experience also carries a warning. **The April 2025 Iberian blackout** demonstrated the importance of developing system resilience alongside the transition. As Euroconsumers noted in its policy paper following the Iberian Blackout, **grids are no longer just technical infrastructure; they are critical enablers of affordability and decarbonisation**.[28]

Grid connections already take years in parts of Europe, while growing electricity demand and renewable generation will require substantially more capacity and flexibility. **More than 1,700 GW of renewable projects across 16 European countries were stuck** in grid connection queues in 2024.[29]

Storage is part of the same equation: it allows cheap electricity produced when renewable generation is abundant to be used when demand is higher, reducing reliance on expensive fossil-fuel generation at peak periods. Investment in renewables without the grids, storage and flexibility needed to use them will leave part of their affordability benefit unrealised.

28 https://www.euroconsumers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Keeping-the-Lights-On-Why-the-Iberian-Blackout-Demands-Urgent-Grid-Modernisation.pdf

29 https://www.e3g.org/news/outdated-grid-planning-and-weak-governance-stalling-europe-s-transition-away-from-fossil-fuels/

Affordable electrification is how renewables reach consumers

Renewables are generating a growing share of Europe's electricity. But electricity represents less than a quarter of Europe's final energy consumption.[30] Most households still heat with gas and drive on petrol. To better protect consumers from future fossil fuel price shocks and meet the EU's climate targets, **Europe must speed up its electrification plans**.

A household switching from a gas boiler to a heat pump moves its heating costs out of a volatile, import-dependent market and towards an electricity system increasingly supplied by domestic clean generation. The Commission estimates that reaching the electrification target of 46% by 2040 could reduce the EU's fossil fuel import bill by €260 billion per year.[31] **That's money that currently leaves Europe entirely**.

Achieving that objective ultimately depends on millions of individual investment decisions. Lower running costs will not drive uptake if households cannot afford the upfront investment. But **affordability is not only about the cost of the technology.** It is also about **who has access to the alternatives**. If electrification reaches only those who can afford to invest, it risks deepening existing inequalities rather than reducing them.

This makes **targeted support and practical alternatives a condition of a successful transition**. The Electrification Action Plan proposes measures including social leasing, subsidies, low- or zero-interest loans and other financing models to make clean technologies more accessible, particularly to low- and middle-income households.

30 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/energy-2026#types-energy-consumed
31 https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/eus-energy-system/electrification_en#electrification-action-plan

Policy design matters too.

Germany provides a reminder of the need for measures that consumers can understand and realistically implement. In July 2026, the **uniform requirement for heating systems to use at least 65% renewable energy was removed** from Germany's building-heating framework, while financial support for cleaner heating was retained and retargeted.[32] Stable progress depends on combining clear direction with affordable alternatives, practical implementation and sustained consumer confidence.

This is where Europe's competitiveness agenda and its consumers meet. But efforts to strengthen European clean-tech manufacturing and strategic autonomy must go hand in hand with affordability: if heat pumps, electric vehicles and other clean technologies remain beyond consumers' reach, the uptake on which those wider objectives depend will stall. Consumer acceptance is therefore not a soft footnote to the electrification drive but the rate at which the drive can move.

A transition that outpaces what households can afford or understand will not accelerate Europe's competitiveness; it will stall it. **Empowering consumers is not in tension with Europe's economic and security goals**. It is the precondition for reaching them.

32 https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/fragen-und-anworten/neues-gebaeudemodernisierungsgesetz-2430284

5. The Ask: Organising Consumer Power to Shape the Energy Market

Europe's energy policy has rightly focused on protecting consumers when markets fall. But the next step is to **give consumers greater power to shape how those markets work** in the first place. Millions of households are not only recipients of energy policy: collectively, they are a major economic force.

The EU is building **an increasingly integrated energy market**, with European energy companies, cross-border infrastructure and a European electricity grid. It should also organise the power of European consumers.

That requires **four concrete changes.**

1. Build European-scale consumer demand

EU law already gives households the right to participate in collective switching schemes and requires Member States to remove regulatory and administrative barriers to them. Yet collective purchasing remains largely organised at national or regional level. The next step should be to **enable consumer purchasing power to operate across borders**.

The EU should create **a framework through which trusted consumer organisations can organise household purchasing power at European scale**, while allowing offers to reflect different national and regional market conditions. This need not mean one tariff for every European household.

But if Europe is building an integrated energy market, with European energy companies and a trans-European grid, it also needs **strong European consumers**. Their collective demand is an economic asset that can help shape and strengthen the market.

2. Consumers in charge: making collective consumer participation work

Consumers should also be able to **benefit collectively from how electricity is used, produced and shared**. The forthcoming Demand Response Network Code should ensure that household flexibility can participate effectively across the EU, with proportionate market-access requirements, interoperable technologies and a route for trusted consumer intermediaries to organise participation and protect consumers' interests.

Consumers should **not need to become energy-market experts** to benefit from the flexibility their homes, vehicles and appliances can provide.

The same principle applies to **energy communities and energy sharing**. EU law now establishes a right to energy sharing, while the 2026 Citizens Energy Package sets out further measures to support energy communities and self-consumption.

The priority is to **make those opportunities work in practice**: removing unnecessary administrative, financing and grid barriers and ensuring that tenants, apartment residents, vulnerable households and other consumers who cannot invest individually are able to participate. Where coordinated consumer demand helps reduce system or network costs, households should share in the value they create.

3. Make retail price formation transparent

Consumers can only use their market power effectively if they can see whether **changes in the underlying cost of energy are being reflected fairly in the retail prices they pay**. Existing EU measures have strengthened the transparency and comparability of energy contracts, but they do not provide consumers with visibility over the relationship between suppliers' underlying energy costs and the retail energy prices they charge.

That should **change.**

Suppliers **should provide national regulators with the information needed to assess price pass-through** consistently across contract types and over time, according to a harmonised European approach. The relevant results **should then be made available to consumers** in a simple and comparable form, including at contract renewal, so households can understand how effectively changes in underlying energy costs are reflected in retail offers.

This information would allow regulators to **better monitor market behaviour** and **consumers to reward suppliers offering fairer prices**.

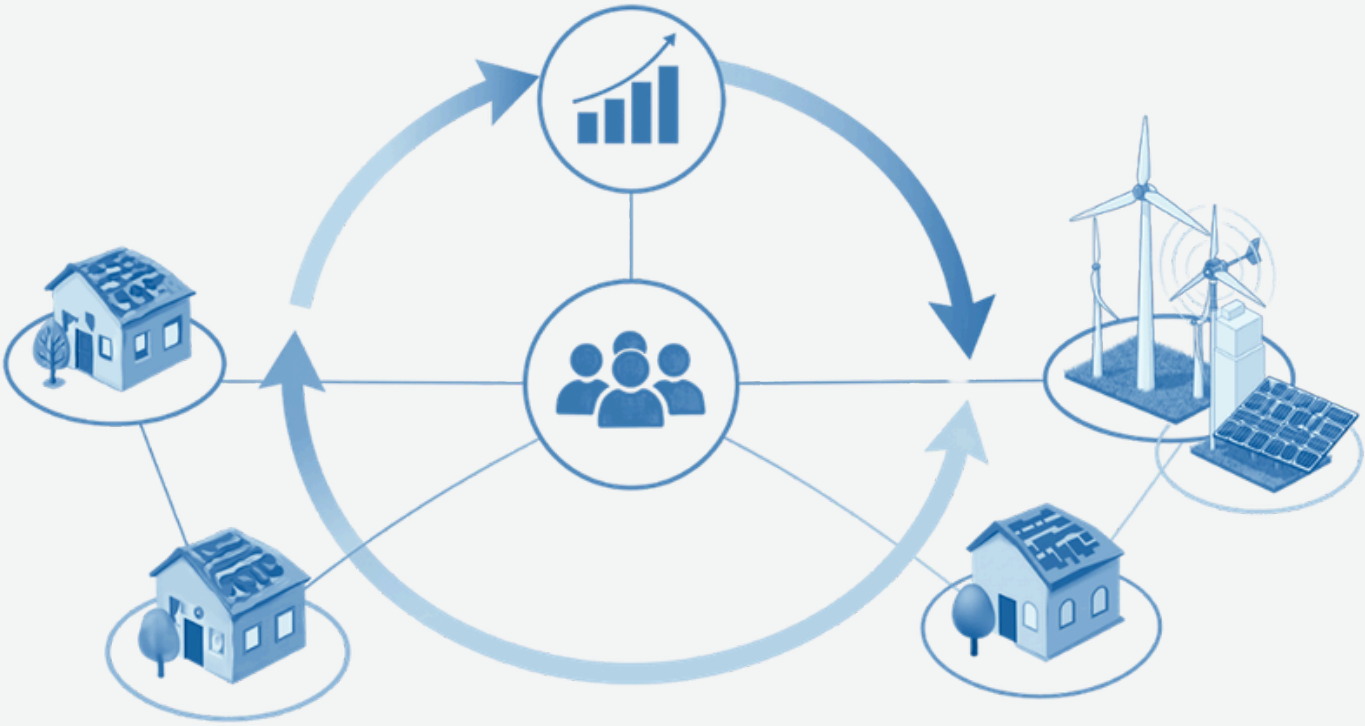
4. Organise Consumer Power to Strengthen the Energy Market

Millions of European households already represent significant economic power, but that power remains largely fragmented. The EU should **support consumer organisations in organising and mobilising this collective power at scale**, so that consumers can participate more effectively in and help shape the energy market.

This is not about creating a new market institution or replacing existing actors. It is about **building the consumer side of the European energy market**.

As Europe develops European energy companies, cross-border infrastructure and an increasingly integrated electricity grid, it also needs consumers with the collective power to participate in and strengthen that market. Organised consumer demand is not only something to protect; it is **an economic asset that can help make the European energy market work, compete and thrive**.

These reforms should form part of a wider shift in how Europe approaches the energy transition. The Electrification Action Plan and the forthcoming Post-2030 Energy Union Package will shape the next phase of Europe's energy system. Consumer organisations should be involved in their **implementation and development** alongside industry, system operators and other market actors. A transition that ultimately depends on millions of consumer decisions cannot be designed around consumers rather than with them.



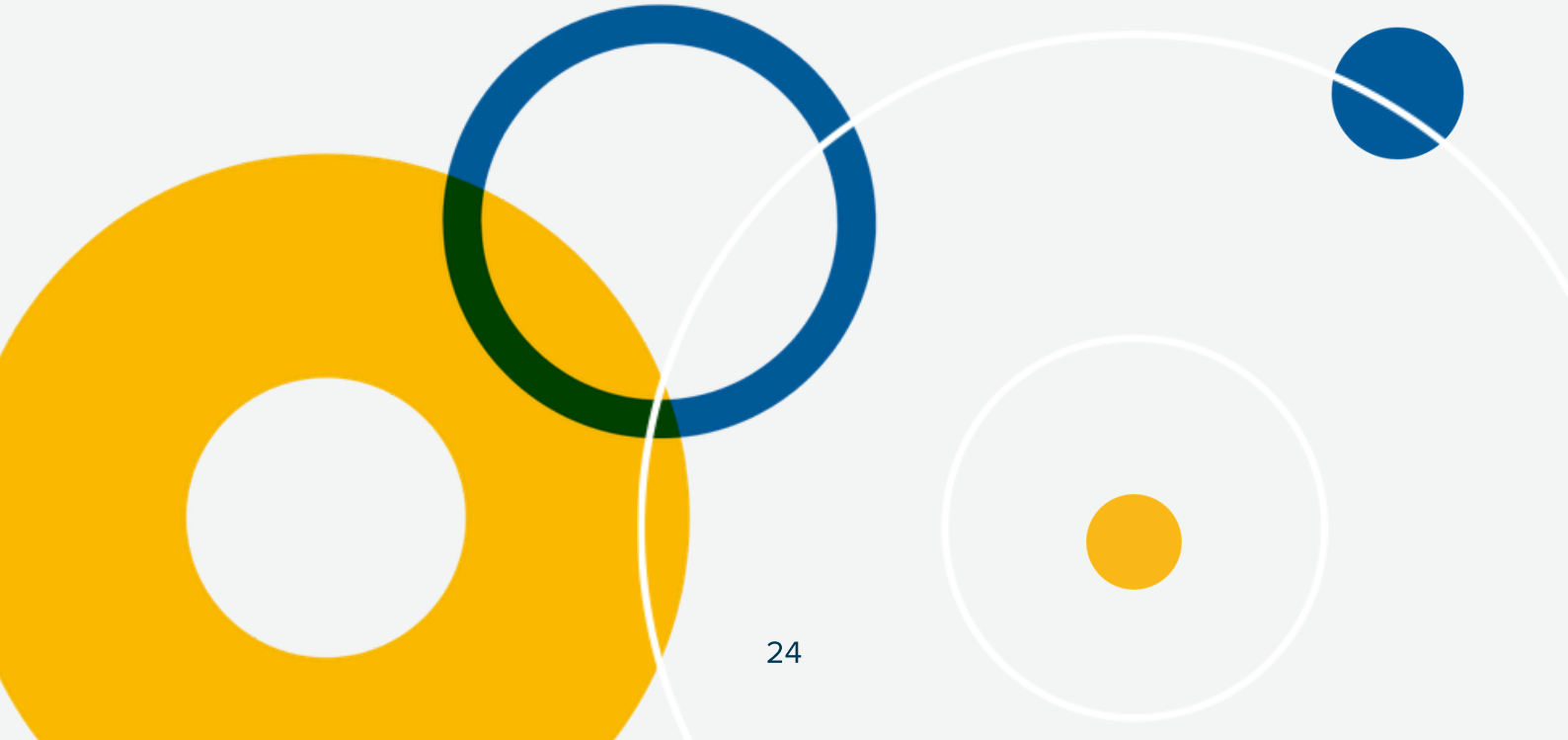
Conclusion: From Passive to Powerful

The question facing European policymakers and industry is not whether there will be another energy crisis. If we do not change our approach, there will be. The question is **whether consumers will face it in the same position they face this one**, exposed, reactive, and absorbing costs they had no power to prevent, or whether the interval between crises will be used to fundamentally change their position in the market.

> The case for change is not ideological. It is practical. **Consumers represent one of the largest sources of untapped collective power in the European energy system**.

Organised collectively, they can negotiate rates that individual households cannot, create accountability that individual complaints cannot, and shift demand at a scale that individual behaviour change cannot. The tools to do this exist. What is still missing is the **framework and organised consumer layer** that allow households to use them effectively and at scale.

Europe has spent decades building the supply side of the energy market. Its next set of ambitions, faster electrification, greater competitiveness, lasting energy security, cannot be delivered from the supply side alone. They depend on consumers choosing to take part. **Building the demand side**, and putting consumers at the centre of it, is not a concession to make once those goals are met. It is how they are reached.



euroconsumers GROUP

Empower people,
improve the market.

euroconsumers GROUP | ALTROCONSUMO | DECO PROteste | ec | Polska | ocu | proteste | testachats testaankoop