

CEDEC press release

Annual Congress 2023

Never waste an unprecedented energy crisis: **BOOST LOCAL ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES**

Brussels, 15 November 2023

While EU political mills are still grinding at accelerated pace to bring negotiations on energy legislation to an end in the light of the European elections next year, this year's edition of the CEDEC Annual Congress presented an ideal momentum to take stock of the decisive pieces of EU energy legislation that will redefine the future energy landscape in the Union's member states. When the Green Deal was presented in 2019, Von der Leyen called it a "Europe's man on the moon moment". But when zooming in on Member State realities, will this giant step for European mankind be up to the task to combine societal realities with the high EU level ambitions ?

In his welcome **CEDEC Chairman Florian Bieberbach** highlighted : *"The still ongoing energy crisis made the value of security of energy supply and energy affordability more than clear. CEDEC has pointed out again and again that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. To achieve climate neutrality in all European cities, we have to find local solutions, use local resources, and have to take into account local realities – when it comes to the local potential of renewables, the local circumstances or the quality of housing. The results will be very different across Europe, as will be the perfect solution. A good step forward is that both at EU level and national level we are now working on local and regional energy planning, to make the most of our local energy resources."*

The opening session on **"EU ambitions and Member State realities"** invited around 150 participants from all over Europe and top-tier panellists to investigate the challenges that Member States and local actors are confronted with when fulfilling the new EU political requirements. The enlightening debate with Tadhg O'Briain (Deputy Head of Unit, Consumers, Local Initiatives and Just Transition – DG ENER), Andreas Feicht (CEO of RheinEnergie), Jean-Michel Glachant (Professor at the Florence School of Regulation), and CEDEC Secretary General Gert De Block provided insights on challenges and opportunities for citizens, industries, and local energy companies when transposing the new European energy and climate framework into the realities of Member States..

The second session titled **"The big electrification shift"** immersed the audience in the ambitious shift from molecules to electrons required under the new legal framework. Speakers highlighted that societal acceptance will be indispensable for transitioning towards a sustainable society and economy. To achieve this, one does not have to look far to find the answers : make the most of existing energy infrastructure for electricity, gas and heat as a basis for decarbonized and better integrated systems; consider all technology options, especially for the heating sector facing the greatest challenges; and prioritize local solutions. A bottom-up approach is key to ensuring that local energy resources' potential will best be harnessed, for heating, industry and transport.



In the spirit of the European Year of Skills, the final session **“Energy workforce transition required”** was dedicated to the people that will actually build the energy transition. All speakers concurred: the success of the energy transition will depend on the ability of energy companies to attract and secure a growing and differently skilled workforce. To achieve this, energy companies need to demonstrate more creative approaches. Revealing contributions illustrated how increased cooperation and thinking out of the box can bear fruits for local energy companies.

CEDEC hopes that the inspiring and energizing debates shed light on the central role for decentralised and local energy actors, and the importance of boosting local opportunities to meet the customers’ true needs, also providing a final message to EU decision-makers for the ongoing negotiations.

CEDEC Background information

CEDEC is the European association of local and regional energy companies, active in Brussels since 1992. Recently its range of activities has been extended with local broadband.

CEDEC represents the interests of 2.000 local and regional companies, serving 100 million electricity, gas and district heating customers and broadband connections.

The predominantly small and medium-sized local and regional energy companies have developed activities as electricity and heat generators, as operators of distribution grids and metering systems for electricity, gas and heating & cooling, and as energy (services) suppliers.

The wide range of services provided by these local utility companies is reliable, sustainable and close to the customer. Through their investments and local jobs, they make a significant contribution to local and regional economic development.