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DESIGNING FUTURE ENERGY POLICIES

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES TO ACCELERATE THE ENERGY TRANSITION

SHAPE ENERGY Final Conference, BRUSSELS

Conference Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Energy policies cannot fulfil their maximum potential if the knowledge stemming from social sciences and humanities research is not factored into the decision-making process. Citizens should be at the core of all policies – including those to do with energy.

The SHAPE ENERGY end of project conference underlined how crucial social and humanities research is to accelerating the decarbonisation of our economy and making a real dent in climate change. It also presented concrete recommendations on how to advance and better design future European energy policies in the context of the upcoming research and innovation framework: Horizon Europe.

The event was organised as part of the SHAPE ENERGY H2020 EU-funded project. It aimed at generating new knowledge, support evidence-based policymaking, produce interdisciplinary solutions and develop Europe's expertise in using and applying available research into the energy transition decision-making process.

The conference was also a call for action to all stakeholders to support further the integration of social sciences and humanities research within the design, evaluation and implementation of future energy policies. It was an opportunity to present the Research and Innovation Agenda (RIA) the consortium developed over the last two years and ask for people to support it.

The Social Sciences and Humanities for Advancing Policy in European Energy (SHAPE ENERGY) conference aimed at unveiling and debating the final results of the project; sharing with participants some of the platform's evidence-based results; providing concrete advice to various stakeholders, including EU policymakers, diplomats, private sector companies, NGOs, civil society organisations and academics.

It aimed at ensuring future policies embed social sciences and humanities (SSH) in EU energy processes and initiatives. The conference also aimed at highlighting a concise vision for the future which builds on the finding of the project, making sure that the allocated resources for further SSH research is maintained.

EVENT SUMMARY

MAINSTREAMING SSH RESEARCH IS ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND JUST TRANSITION

Social sciences and humanities (SSH) must be a more prominent recipient of the European Union's Horizon Europe energy research and innovation funding opportunities – some €100bn for the 2021-2027 period. This was the call to action at Brussels' first ever conference dedicated to SSH research in the field of energy.

The 22 January event was organised as part of the SHAPE ENERGY H2020 EU-funded project, a €2m European platform for energy-related SSH research. Hosted by Friends of Europe, a SHAPE ENERGY partner, it highlighted that this research has the potential to help address pressing societal challenges but is currently significantly overlooked and underfunded.

In 2016, only 4% of Horizon 2020's energy research budget went to SSH research, while 96% went to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies. "The social is neglected in energy research, which is dominated by a technology focus," explained **Rosie Robison**, Principal Research Fellow at the Global Sustainability Institute from Cambridge's Anglia Ruskin University, a co-lead of the SHAPE ENERGY Platform.

The conference highlighted how SSH research would make a "just transition" to a more sustainable future easier by providing a better understanding of how cities and citizens operate. It also emphasised the importance of bridging the gap between social and scientific policies to achieve an inclusive transition that leaves no one behind.

Getting enough money for this is important, noted **Aziza Akhmouch**, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division, at the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities.

However, she added, "We also need to look at the social costs and policy trade-offs required." The recent 'Gilets Jaunes' protests in France not only show the impact of the fuel tax, but also a demand for more research to understand what motivated so many people to join the protests.

At this key time, ahead of the next EU election and the accompanying college of Commissioners, the European Commission Deputy Director-General for Research & Innovation **Patrick Child** agreed, "We must work much harder on integrating the social and human dimension into all our policies." However, setting a specific figure or percentage target for research funding was not the answer, he told the meeting: "It's unhelpful to have headline figures that would push us in the direction of segregation and division."

The aim should be to radically transform the way we live, Belgian Socialist MEP **Kathleen Van Brempt** summed up, while understanding the difficulties of doing so at the same time.

Phasing out coal and giving up the combustion engine may be a good thing, but their immediate abandonment would take away jobs in some parts of the EU and generate unnecessary inequalities by prioritising a hasty energy system transformation. Van Brempt, also Vice-President for sustainable development at the Socialist and Democrats Group Bureau, admitted: "**That's why we need to take a just transition approach and social sciences can help us implement that in a proper way.**"

SETTING THE SCENE

The EU's SHAPE ENERGY (social sciences and humanities for advancing policy in European energy) project was launched on 1 February 2017 with the aim of better integrating energy-SSH into the policy process. Due to end January 31, 2019, the platform is also aimed at developing Europe's expertise in using and applying energy-SSH research.

Co-ordinated by the Global Sustainability Institute at the Anglia Ruskin University, and with 12 other partners, its results will feed into the European Commission's work into energy research and innovation.

"We want to better integrate the social and human dimension [into energy policy] to make a better energy future," explained Institute's Principal Research Fellow Rosie Robison. "It is important to recognise that our society has come from somewhere and you can't paint everyone with the same brush," and we need to recognise this in energy research.

Fellow Principal Research Fellow Dr **Chris Foulds** agreed that looking at people's motives for action – be it because of cost or self-image - was essential when carrying out impact assessments of energy research: "If I turn the light off, will I save the planet?" he said, adding with a smile: "**Social scientists are not super heroes, but we believe in truth and are big fans of justice.**"

Robison told the meeting SHAPE ENERGY's goal – embedded in the first of seven principles for energy-SSH in Horizon Europe – is to double the tiny share of the EU's Horizon 2020 energy research budget from 4 to 8%. "And if we zoom into that 4%, certain SSH disciplines like economics, business and political studies receive the lion's share of that money, while psychology and history receive only 1% of that 4%," which does not impact on larger programmes, she added.

Interdisciplinary projects (across SSH and STEM) as well as SSH specific projects are needed she argued, including technical energy projects. Indeed, the second SHAPE ENERGY principle is that: "Core SSH issues need to be more deeply integrated into technical energy projects which seek to address societal challenges."

Robison continued to highlight two other principles showing how energy-SSH research is neglected – that Horizon Europe energy calls should explicitly consider which SSH disciplines they focus attention on and report on how this is being addressed; and that "the European Commission should more actively recruit energy-SSH expertise for Horizon Europe's proposal evaluator databases and panels".

The final three recommendations are that SSH should set the project direction and not just be used as a tool to generate impact (as an add-on at the end); energy-SSH tasks should be carried out by those with relevant background and training; and, that qualitative measures are needed for the European Commission to "meaningfully monitor the successful integration of SSH in energy projects".

In short, Foulds concluded: "**We need to embed SSH in the way Horizon Europe is managed and operationalized, not only on the side of the Commission and those in Brussels, but also on those planning and doing the projects so we can really drive our energy transition forward.**"

CITIES AS CATALYSTS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Crucial to the energy transition are cities – that account for 75% of global greenhouse emissions. Predicted to make up more than 66% of the population in 2050, they provide the largest share – well over 60% – of GDP and jobs. **“Cities will be the core of making the transition and the just transition,”** Friends of Europe Director of Insights Dharmendra Kanani, the conference moderator, said.

“Urbanisation is one of the major trends affecting contemporary society,” Renata Mele, Head of Strategy E-City at Enel X, the Global Business Line of the Enel Group, dedicated to creating innovative energy solutions, agreed. And this impacts on aims to achieve cleaner energy – with the transport and buildings sector accounting for some 73% of the EU’s final energy consumption.

Mainstreaming research into policy thinking and development regarding cities will result in a more effective collaboration between researchers, policy workers and citizens. It will also help to change consumption patterns and achieve a more sustainable energy transition, the conference heard.

For **Simone Abram**, Anthropology Professor at Durham University; and Co-Director in the Durham Energy Institute, energy research has focused too much on individual consumer decisions. “We need to look at institutions, systems and energy practices rather than individual consumer behaviour and at the context of how we produce and use energy.”

Abram also regretted the bias to concentrate on megacities or megapolises instead of smaller or medium-sized cities, which are after all more common. She said the key issue was knowing how to work together and achieve a more people-centred approach.

“We need to push energy confidence in cities to use skills, knowledge and networks. **Universities, local authorities and hospitals are the major employers in cities, so if they don’t work together we will not achieve any solutions.”**

Attitudes are changing to energy consumption, she argued, particularly in the western world where consumers have the luxury to choose. “More people are realising that the meaning of life and happiness is not about consuming as much as possible, but about living well. Some people are actively choosing to leave the grid, although, in other parts of the world, this is not a choice.”

Lowering energy use and stopping what one delegate called “ostentatious consumption” means “going outside the system as currently offered.” And some cities are embracing this: “Nearly every city has a junk food [where waste food is recycled into new food] café,” Abram welcomed, adding, “but regulatory barriers also need to move.”



Florent Marcellesi, Member of the European Parliament, Committee for Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), agreed regulatory action was needed to put cities at the core of energy reforms. “Cities, citizens, local authorities will be the key drivers,” he said, noting this year member states need to present a long-term decarbonisation plan to the European Commission.

Supporting the call to integrate SSH-research into policy making, he also said social and gender issues were essential: “I put many amendments on gender in the EU energy package and they were all voted down,” regretted Marcellesi, also Vice-President of the European Forum for Renewable Energy Sources (EUFORES), a cross-party network connecting MEPs and parliamentarians to promote better implementation of renewable energy and energy efficiency policies.

Like Abram, he said seeing the bigger picture and energy systems rather than focusing on individual actions was key. In the energy efficiency in buildings directive there are proposals to have near zero energy buildings, he explained. “But there is no point in having a very good passive building if you go from this building to the centre by car every day.”

The aim should be to achieve a positive spillover in behaviour – in other words when people behave sustainably in more than one area – like recycling their waste and buying organic food. Meanwhile, there should be more research into links between these social practices instead of focusing on single technologies like smart meters.

Stephen Cook, Associate Director of Energy, Cities and Climate Change at leading design firm Arup, said cities were working to improve energy practices. Technologies are largely available, he said, but whether they are affordable is another matter.

“We see cities making commitments all over the place, but the reality is, while they have extensive powers in housing and urban development, that they are constrained in what they can achieve in the energy system,” he noted. “We need the structures for this decision making to happen.”

More work and research are needed for cities to enable the transition to better energy choices – for example at “transaction moments” when consumers need to buy a new boiler or car and may be considering a more energy efficient option, Cook said. “But I don’t see this happening with supply chains and building communities.”

And with ownership split between district or national level, for example with district heating and electricity, he cautioned: “Municipal ownership can only work if cities have the capacity and resources to do something with the system or invest in the transition.” It would not be successful if the network has decades of neglect. This prompted Abram to recommend a new research project to compare different ownership situations and their consequences worldwide.

Mele said the energy sector had to change, with more focus on renewables and energy efficiency. “We believe in fostering the development of renewables in all areas that we operate,” she said. **“The electricity revolution is starting in some countries, and electric public transport can be an important driver to stop pollution,”** she added, particularly in mega cities.

She also noted the move towards more efficient LED lighting and traffic lights in cities has speeded up and improved mobility. But despite some “very good examples of the energy transition,” more needed doing to persuade people to make more energy-friendly choices, she said.

There are also cultural factors. Garret Patrick Kelly, Founder and Principal of the south East Change Network (SEE Change Net), pointed out: “If you come from Eastern Europe, many may still believe you are not a real man until you drive a German car.” Even if the tax on diesel is more expensive than that for electric cars, consumers need stronger price points as well as cultural tipping points to encourage people to buy these cars, Kelly said.



"Of course money is part of the solution," the OECD's Aziza Akhmouch said, but social costs and policy is also essential in the energy transition. The 'Gilets Jaunes' protests were a symptom of a syndrome she said, but "sparked by carbon pricing and the distributional effects on vulnerable groups". People were angry that they were bearing the costs of the sustainable energy transition.

So to achieve a truly just transition, "people should ensure that money from the carbon tax or congestion charges are reinvested into vulnerable areas, to enable energy affordability," she said. "The larger the city, the larger the inequality, and we need to address ex-ante the social costs of that transition."

And for Akhmouch, while there is strong advocacy for the role of cities in the energy transition, it was essential to have shared responsibility with so many energy decisions taken at a national level – e.g. relating to subsidies or the national grid.

"In our review of 150 countries and their energy policies, only 11% mainstreamed the energy transition and climate change into their national urban policy. You can have a lot of money, but if you continue to take 'silo' policies [in a vacuum, with no consultation or sharing of opinions], you are not making the mark."

She also advocated pushing the use of the "sharing economy" to drive infrastructure for a more energy efficient way of life. This could be car-share schemes or city bike services like Brussels' Villo. "We did work saying 90% of the time a car is being used it is parked. But 50% of urban planning and landscape is related to cars, roads and street signing, so there is a bit of a disconnect there."

Such a move cannot just be changed by economic measures and taxes, political commitment is also required. "Look at Paris and Mayor Anne Hidalgo's push for more room for the pedestrian," she said, Hidalgo wants to make all Paris's public transport electric by 2030, and its public buildings energy efficient by 2050.

While warning that pushing for clean forms of mobility can come at a political cost, Akhmouch said again:

"We need a policy mix – and to mainstream climate into all policy areas."

It was also essential to look at values, not just numbers [for example of people switching to electric cars], Marcellesi added, if people in coal-mining regions were to be persuaded to make the transition to clean energy. And the MEP wanted more: group solidarity, energy and climate mainstreaming and, come September, even a Transition Commissioner: **"We want climate and energy to be the basis of the next policies of the EU and of the Commission."**



FINANCING RESEARCH FOR INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

Research spending in Europe, despite a future cut in the EU budget following Brexit, is expected to go up by about one fifth for Horizon Europe. Currently set at €1 billion, Parliament's rapporteur, German centre-right MEP Christian Ehler, wants to increase funding for the programme to €120 billion.

The programme will continue to structure funding calls around global challenges such as energy. Proposals are based on three pillars – Open Science; Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness; and Open Innovation – and notably include a Climate-Energy-Transport cluster.

The challenge, agreed experts at the meeting, is to use what funding there is wisely to understand how social sciences and humanities research can accelerate action on climate change. For ultimately, Kanandri challenged, **“One Commission official told me: ‘There is enough money, it’s about how we spend it in the right direction’.”**

Derk Loorbach, Socio-economic Transitions Professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam and Director of the Deutsch Research Institute for Transition (DRIFT), said “There is a lot of innovation happening,” but the key was to see “what emerging solutions do we want and how can we take them forward.

“We must identify what we don’t want any more, and come up with destruction or phase out policies,” he said, as well as focusing more on existing projects such as renewable energy currencies, cooperatives, or local democracy initiatives. “It’s all out there, but how can we develop this to become the norm?” he said, calling to incorporate methodologies, a science mindset and an engaged mentality into social research projects.

Loorbach also had a very practical ask: that **“The Commission should invest €1 billion into a social research infrastructure project, linking niches of applied social science research on solutions for the energy transition.”** He also said that behavioural change needed a much more concerted effort than individual projects and an energy policy department.

“If the Commission is serious, it needs to challenge dominant norms in science. We need to look for a way to make a low-carbon lifestyle affordable, feasible and democratic and it’s a very clear challenge.”

The Commission’s Deputy Director-General for Research and Innovation Patrick Child agreed mainstreaming SSH research was essential. “We must build SSH funding into areas like the energy transition, climate change and mobility, where the impact in economic and social terms is important.” But Child, who also co-ordinates the H2020 budget, said giving a set figure was not the answer.

“We need to create the space for good ideas to come from the SSH community, but if empowering SSH just means giving more money to SSH ‘as they deserve it’, then we’re in a different conversation. **We need to get beyond the power tug of war – you’re not spending enough on SSH, oh yes we are, oh no we’re not...**

“I don’t want a headline goal of a billion euros, I want to focus on the outputs, the design programmes from the beginning and development rather than the outcomes.” With Horizon 2020 the Commission has deliberately tried to “cross silos, overcome barriers between disciplines and bring together disciplines,” he said, notably via the single cluster covering energy climate and mobility.



"The other good news is that we have a rather clear policy framework in which to work," Child added. As well as the Commission's 'A Clean Planet for All' long-term strategy for full decarbonisation by 2050, there are recommendations from the final report of the High-Level Panel of the European Decarbonisation Pathways Initiative (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/rec-18-002-decarbonisation_booklet_27112018_0.pdf), with both documents released 28 November 2018.

Thanking SHAPE ENERGY for the "helpful pointers to design the future programme," he said the consortium's seven principles were also relevant for the wider community. The Commission may have money, "but we are a relatively small player in this global landscape, the messages are also useful for member states and the private sector who will play the biggest part in making a successful energy transition."

Recognising the role of business, Michaël Gillis, Director of Strategy, Legal, Regulatory and Public Affairs at global energy company ENGIE, said: "We need a competitive energy transition, or at the very least an energy transition where the benefits are crystal clear to businesses and households." Without this assurance, there would be a very high risk of the transition failing, for example economically, immediately.

"The energy transition shall be competitive, or it shall not be," he said, as businesses must be competitive or they will go bust. "Therefore energy SSH must figure prominently in Horizon Europe's priorities with this in mind."

Meanwhile, he said if more emphasis was put on understanding behaviour, "when people can be pushed into the behaviour that we want, that would be a great step forward".

For Gillis, SSH-research is essential to comprehend such motivations: "to understand what drives our customers, be they individuals, businesses or cities. And researchers, policymakers and energy companies must develop a deep understanding of incentives that can enable households and businesses to actually

consume less energy or opt for climate friendly energy sources or solutions."

The urgency to make changes is clear, experts agreed: "Climate change is rapidly becoming an emergency, it is no longer a discussion topic," Gillis said. "Most people understand this. But in the meantime we feel as a company there is no room for increases in the energy bill. The reaction of the Gilets Jaunes in France is evidence of this reality," even though there were also deeper reasons for the protests, he made clear.

Belgian Socialist MEP Kathleen Van Brempt highlighted the major shift in opinion regarding climate change in the last ten years: "In Parliament, only one, two or ten MEPs still believe climate change is not happening. That's the good news, but the bad news is that we don't agree on radical change," she regretted.



Socialist and Green MEPs failed for example to get higher climate targets or to completely phase out subsidies to fossil fuels, she said. In negotiations over electricity market design concluded in December, existing power plants emitting more than 550 g CO₂ kWh can still receive financial aid until 2025.

Meanwhile energy ambitions must also be realistic for everyone, she said: **“The whole climate policy is too much based on making sure we have the right technological solutions for everything.** We set targets for renewables and energy efficiency without saying how to implement this,” or ensuring we have support from the business world or consumers.

It is the same for transport, Van Brempt added. “I headed the ‘Dieselgate’ inquiry [that looked into Germany’s car emissions fraud scandal] that said we needed to phase out the combustion engine. But just saying that is not good enough,” she argued, as in the peripheries of Europe electric cars are just too expensive: “The ordinary punter cannot afford them.”

It was a difficult question to answer, she told the meeting. It was not right that the US had after all put billions of euros into electric cars, while: “The belief in the European car industry is still that you can make a lot of money with diesel.”

The Commission has also agreed in its decarbonisation scenario to focus on new technologies that make the most difference. “We should not be funding research into making existing technologies like the internal combustion engine better,” Child said.

Brempt too says that any investment into clean and sustainable technologies should be kept off the balance sheet. But she recognises the “strong push” to say, as the internal combustion engine will be there for the foreseeable future, that, “we should see how to make it better”.

The debate is there – and it is not clear-cut, the meeting was told. Sometimes diesel bans result in more emissions or electric cars can even be worse polluters than their diesel counterparts, some delegates claimed.

Brempt argues that research should be carried out to set the right incentives to ensure companies are not just driven by profit, but by other goals like social responsibility and sustainable development. And these should be translated into concrete benefits like tax

breaks. In addition, new specific funds should be given to achieve this just transition, and no investments should contradict the “just transition” principles.

Most of all, a completely different governance system is needed, she says. “The current system is based, after the financial crisis, on purely and only budgetary rules, and this is not helping. We also need sustainable development goals.”

Loorbach agreed, saying there was an individual responsibility to consume less. **“The way we use cars is completely stupid in cities.** As the OECD said, for 90% of the time they are not used at all. But industry is hesitant to move to different types of models – electric, hydrogen or just lighter weight.”

He noted electric cars have been around for 120 years, “but it is only because of social pressure and policy intervention that the diesel regime is pushed to start changing.”

The Rotterdam transition management expert said all urban cities need affordable access to an ‘emission-zero’ mobility system. “This implies phasing out all individual car ownership in city boundaries, which can be done, and be inclusive and affordable. SSH research has shown we can live with 50 to 60% less cars, but will industry like it? Probably not.

“If we designed a transport system today, no-one would design an individual car,” Van Brempt added. “But it’s happened, and we have to change that.”

More positively, Gillis said systemic change was possible – for example the phase-out of coal-fired power plants – with “the right boundaries”. Of course industry wants to make a profit or they will cease to exist, he said, but they will act rapidly with changing goals.



CONCLUSION OF MORNING POLICY CONFERENCE

At this key time, ahead of the next EU election and votes for a new college of Commissioners and European Parliament, mainstreaming SSH-research into future energy policies is essential, the conference heard.

The Commission's Childs pointed out research and innovation policy does not exist in a vacuum and "we must see things in a much more joined up and integrated way".

"We must get away from the mentality that SSH should be instrumentalised to deliver technological solutions, we need to be creative and clever in building SSH content in mainstream policy," he said.

And instead of setting an artificial percentage target, specific missions or budget goals for SSH-research, "**we need to achieve cross-cutting, headline measurable, understandable goals that mean something to individual citizens, not just sophisticated experts in the research community,"** he said.

Affordability is also important. ENGIE's Gillis urged policymakers and the public to be practical – and to aim for a competitive as well as just transition. "It's the whole debate between the end of the world and the end of the month," he said. People might want to make decisions to save the planet, but they will not want or be able to, if their monthly pay check is not enough.

And ultimately, complete lifestyle changes are key, as Van Brempt argued: "I never said that if you transform the combustion engine to electric cars everything will change, absolutely not, it's about transforming the way we live, including a completely different transport system than the one we have today."

While phasing out coal and giving up the combustion engine may be a good thing, abandoning them immediately would take away jobs in some parts of the EU. People and social values must be central to the sustainable agenda, Van Brempt, also Vice-President for sustainable development at the Socialist and Democrats Group Bureau, concluded. "That's why we need to take a 'just transition' approach and social sciences can help us implement that in a proper way."



SCENE SETTING: LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Learning from others: bridging the gap between research, policy and practice

The energy transition requires a collaborative effort from scientists, policymakers and citizens. However, policymakers are struggling to engage with citizens and interaction with scientists is often non-existent. This session highlighted the true potential of the energy transition when stories are heard, decisions shared and momentum for collective action taken to the next level.

Xavier Troussard, Director of Competences at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, said: “A successful transition is co-designed and co-owned. Transition does not happen through individual behavior change, but through building together as a community”. He also stated that “policymakers should certainly be more open to a variety of insights – they should not just look at the modelling efforts or at predictions. Instead, policymakers should co-create policies with citizens.”

SSH projects can play a valuable role in bringing citizens and policymakers closer together. The European Commission’s Horizon 2020 Programme is the first funding initiative that gives SSH projects in the field of energy the chance to shine. One of those projects is Prosumers for the Energy Union (PROSEU), which aims to integrate the active participation of citizens in the energy transition. **Giorgia Rambelli**, Coordinator of Sustainable Resources, Climate and Resilience at ICLEI Europe, pointed out that EU policies feel very distant to citizens. “The prosumer phenomenon is a way to advance the European agenda and the idea of energy democracy”, she said.

Dharmendra Kanani, Director of Insights at Friends of Europe, noted that “PROSEU is an interesting example of bridging the democratic deficit and building the Energy Union from the ground.” ENERGISE – another project that receives Horizon 2020 funding – also takes citizens’ experiences as its focus. The project aims to study how conventions around energy consumption evolve in households and communities. **Frances Fahy**,

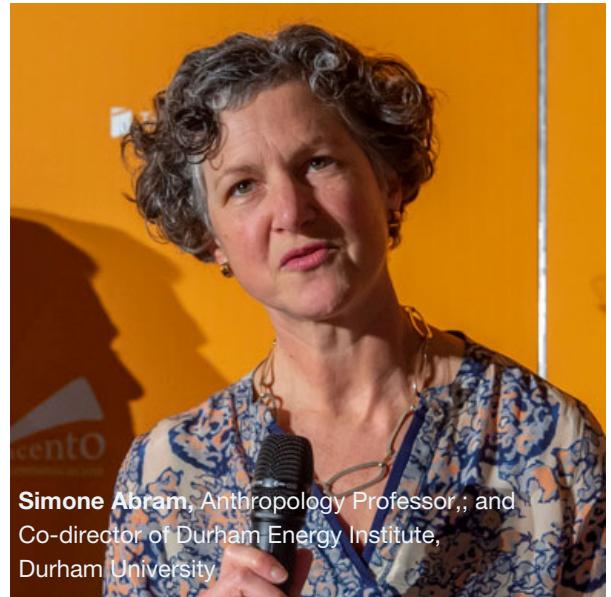
Senior Lecturer in Geography at the National University of Ireland and coordinator of ENERGISE, said that the project has shown that “the range of factors that impact household practices is very wide.”

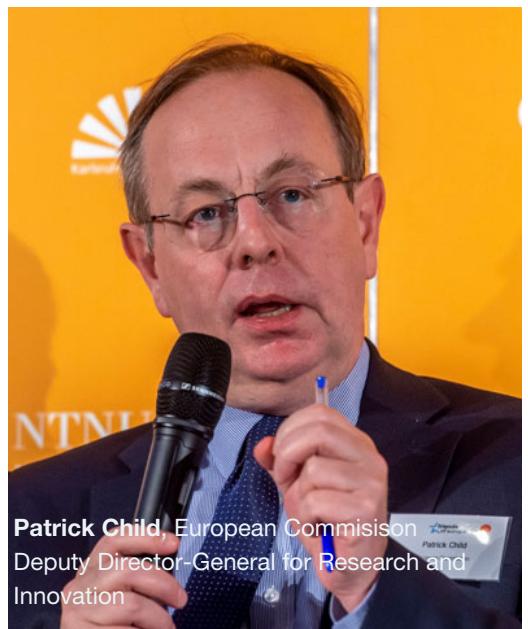
INNOPATHS, too, receives Horizon 2020 funding. “The project works with economic and societal actors to generate low-carbon pathways for the EU”, said **Andrew Hook**, Research Fellow in Energy Justice and Transitions at Sussex University.

The EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) is an initiative by the European Commission to help Member States in their efforts to combat energy poverty. **Stefan Bouzarovski**, Professor of Geography at the University of Manchester and Chair of the project, said that “Energy poverty is not just a social policy issue – it is also about energy efficiency and the quality of housing.” EPOV’s data repository provides new ways to manage questions on inequality and societal change.

While these projects aim to link citizens and policymakers more closely, Troussard pointed out that scientists also need to make more of an effort to engage with policymakers: “At times, it is too easy for scientists to stay in their splendid isolation and have their success measured by peer-reviewed publications. Scientists should challenge themselves to engage with policymakers and society.”

Troussard also spoke about the challenge of communicating policies: “We see that it is very difficult to communicate evidence – people dispute facts and value beliefs that are shared on social media. We need new ways to communicate questions and positions.” Troussard sees a role for SSH in communicating policies: “We are trying out new ways to stimulate engagement – even with games – and we see more and more policymakers that recognize that they learn from these engagement exercises. This is certainly an area where SSH can contribute a lot”, he said.







Friends of Europe

Connect. Debate. Change.



Square de Meeus 5-6, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

+32 2 893 98 10

+32 2 893 98 29

info@friendsofeurope.org

friendsofeurope.org

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