

Press release
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Energy *Union* or top-down implementation? City Councillor speaks out at Riga Conference

The initial orientations given by the European Commission to flesh out its flagship proposal for an ‘Energy *Union*’ appear to misunderstand the wide meaning of the word ‘union’. Indeed, although citizens and local stakeholders are mentioned in the margins, the Commission does not give any indication related to the actual involvement of EU cities and citizens. Today in Riga, the Deputy Mayor of Delft Stephan Brandligt, who spoke at the [Energy Union ministerial Conference](#), stressed the important role of cities and local stakeholders in the Energy Union process.

Taking the floor shortly after representatives of the fossil fuel and nuclear lobbies, he talked in his capacity of Board Member of [Energy Cities](#) and signatory of the [Covenant of Mayors](#) initiative, thus representing some 6,000 other local authorities across Europe, to demonstrate how city-led decentralised energy policies can support the project of an Energy Union. More specifically, he emphasized how such a locally-driven approach would lead to a more *democratic, prosperous and future-oriented* Union.

Democratic

Mr Brandligt echoed the views [recently shared](#) by MEP Claude Turmes, who argues that the Energy and Climate Union should trigger a bottom-up energy transition all over Europe, reaching out to the 500 million citizens composing the EU, instead of being “limited to a group of few people locked in Brussels offices”. Brandligt underlined that rather than being imposed top-down, the Energy Union should draw on the multi-level governance model of the [EU Covenant of Mayors](#). It should be underpinned by hopeful and inclusive policies that improve quality of life and reduce energy poverty, he said. Taking the floor a few hours before him, Claude Turmes also emphasised the usefulness of the Covenant of Mayors to support a bottom-up energy transition on a global scale.

Prosperous

Mr Brandligt went on to show that decentralised sustainable energy policies were best able to feed the European economy, considering they “foster job-intensive sectors of activity”, redirecting money from foreign purses to the European territory. This local dimension he added is what would yield a prosperous Energy Union from which all citizens could benefit. Beyond legislative support, the EU financial mechanisms should also boost local investments and initiatives, especially the projects to be financed by the Juncker Plan.

Future-proof

The EU Energy Union should not put outdated energy systems on life support. On the contrary, it should provide an opportunity to step more resolutely into the future. “*New organisational models have emerged everywhere across Europe, where local authorities are involving citizens, cooperatives, local businesses and stakeholders to contribute to a low-carbon, decentralised energy system*”. Such new models should form the backbone of the Energy Union.

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