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# THE RIGHT TO ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS COALITION A CASE OF GREEN-RED MOBILIZATION?

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**THE *RIGHT TO ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS*  
COALITION  
A CASE OF GREEN-RED MOBILIZATION**

Centro Einaudi • Laboratorio di Politica Comparata e Filosofia Pubblica  
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The underlying idea is that implementing forms of “civilized” politics is desirable as well as feasible. And, as far as the Italian political system is concerned, it is also urgently needed, since the system appears to be poorly prepared to deal with the challenges emerging in many policy areas: from welfare state reform to the governance of immigration, from the selection criteria in education and in public administration to the regulation of ethically sensitive issues.

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## KEYWORDS

Ngos, EU, policy, environment, welfare, just transition

## ABSTRACT

**THE *RIGHT TO ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS* COALITION  
A CASE OF GREEN-RED MOBILIZATION**

This paper explores the potential for “environmental” (green) and “social” (red) European NGOs and trade unions to jointly mobilize, pursuing synergies between ecological/environmental and social goals, as well as to drive bottom-up policy change at the European Union level. The main research question is thus the following: do European NGOs and trade unions conflict or cooperate on ‘eco-social’ challenges? To answer such question, the research focuses on the case of the *‘Right to Energy for All Europeans’* coalition. The coalition is an advocacy-oriented alliance of European social and green NGOs, as well as trade unions, aimed at eradicating energy poverty in Europe, mostly by exerting influence EU’ institutions concerning the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” legislative package. From a methodological point of view, we rely on literature review and qualitative research methods, notably document analysis complemented by several semi-structured interviews with the members of the Coalition. We draw two main conclusions. First, bottom-up coordination is undermined by structural constraints (such as limited resources and compartmentalized policymaking), as well as by interest groups’ commitment to specific and potentially divergent interests. Indeed, coalition-building is always a strategic move and it is more likely to take the form of ad-hoc cooperation, than formalized coordination. Nevertheless, European green and social NGOs and trade unions display a cooperative attitude towards each other. This is coherent with our second finding, according to which these organizations have an incentive to cooperate, since they frequently endorse a ‘just transition’ paradigm. Contrasting both powerful economic interests and the approach followed by European institutions, NGOs and trade unions are promoting a vision for Europe where social and environmental goals are harmoniously combined. Green-red alliances can thus be seen as bottom-up actions aimed to effectively mainstream ‘just transition’ into policy demands and political strategies, hence giving their members an incentive to join.

## **THE RIGHT TO ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS COALITION A CASE OF GREEN-RED MOBILIZATION?**

**JESSOULA MATTEO AND MANDELLI MATTEO**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

While social and environmental issues are increasingly salient on the political agenda, the concept of ‘sustainability’ has become key to address the intertwining of the *social*, the *environmental* and the *economic* spheres. The more or less effective integration between these three dimensions is substantially shaped by the *political* sphere - that is through the interactions of social, political and institutional actors, both on the demand-side (interest groups, voters, citizens, etc.) and the supply-side (political parties and institutions).

Since European political elites primarily conceived (and still conceive) the European project as a plan for economic – and, then, monetary – integration, the supranational political arena is crowded with a dense network of business-oriented pressure groups, mainly animated by growth-enhancing goals. In this context, the pursuit of a ‘sustainable’ combination of economic, social and environmental policies is thus a difficult task, requiring the partial de-structuring of well-entrenched political relations, power positions and related policymaking patterns. To this aim, the bottom-up mobilization of supranational civil society organizations and trade unions may play a key role in raising awareness, enhancing participation, supporting sector-specific interests, as well as improving policy monitoring and the overall delivery on environmental/ecological and social issues (‘eco-social’ issues).

While cross-sector mobilization may be beneficial for eco-social objectives, several factors lean towards the enduring compartmentalization of both policymaking and actor mobilization at the EU level. The aim of this working paper is to study interest group cross-sectoral mobilization in the European Union, by focusing on the *Right to Energy for All Europeans*. By investigating interactions and potential conflicts between green/environmental and red/social non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as trade unions, the study aims to assess the potential for these organizations to influence policy change and to generate harmonious combinations of social and environmental objectives. We label such mobilization ‘green-red’ or as ‘eco-social’ mobilization, that is ecological and social mobiliza-

tion.t

Non-governmental organizations and trade unions, acting as network-based advocacy groups, are thus the subject of the research. In particular, the study does not address the impact of their activities, rather focusing on aspects such as their values, positions, objectives, strategies and methods of action, as well as on their interactions – be either cooperative or conflictual – within the coalitions they form.

The research method is predominantly qualitative: in addition to secondary literature review and analysis of institutional and non-institutional documents, the research relies on seven semi-structured interviews<sup>1</sup> with the member of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition.

In order to contextualize the case study, the underpinning analytical framework is presented in Section 2, which presents the so-called ‘eco-social-growth trilemma’ and the role of politics in addressing such trilemma. The analytical framework is then applied to the EU context in Section 3. First, the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the EU are presented and then the analytical framework is used to interpret a recent legislative initiative, the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package, which was selected because it addresses, among others, the multidimensional issue of energy poverty in the EU. In section 4, the paper analyzes lobbying in the EU, also reviewing the literature investigating the potential to cooperate and/or conflict for European NGOs and trade unions. Finally, section 5 addresses the case study, that is the green-red mobilization occurred in the context of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition, while section 6 compares social and environmental European interest groups. Section 7 concludes.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH TRILEMMA AND THE ROLE OF POLITICS

Drawing from the so-called ‘triple bottom line’ literature<sup>2</sup> (O’Connor 2007; Ravi Nayak and Venkatraman 2015), it is possible to postulate the existence of three different systems (or spheres), that is economic, social and environmental, which inevitably and dynamically interact in a way that makes it meaningless to treat any sphere in isolation from the others (O’Connor 2007). This happens for two reasons. First, these spheres are not mere theoretical constructions, but rather proper systems, which are inherently interconnected. Indeed any economic activity functions within a social sphere, which is itself embedded in the biosphere. Moreover, safeguarding the integrity of each of these realms is necessary for the others to function properly (O’Connor 2007). For instance, environmental degradation<sup>3</sup> can

<sup>1</sup> See the full interview list at the bottom.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘triple bottom line’ literature is a normative approach to the theory of sustainability.

<sup>3</sup> Environmental degradation is defined as the deterioration of the environment through the depletion of natural resources, the disruption of natural habitats and pollution (Johnson et

be seen as negative externality of economic production and it may in turn generate needs and demands to increase social protection benefits<sup>4</sup> for the victims of ecological dysfunctions.

Each sphere is thus conceptualized as separate yet highly interconnected organizational form, characterized by elements of self-preservation and self-organization. Political claims arise from each sphere independently. An issue is “political” if there are actors - being them politicians, social partners, civil society organizations, political parties, academics, etc. - that put forward claims regarding the issue itself, with the aim to influence public policies, by promoting their interests or views (O’Connor 2007). Political claims regarding the economic, ecological and social spheres reflect the performance goals inherent in each sphere. The economic system promotes economic growth<sup>5</sup>, i.e. the maximization of output, exchange and consumption, with the aim to produce as much wealth as possible. In the social sphere, in turn, individuals self-organize into communities by means of collective identities (O’Connor 2007). The ultimate social imperative is to redistribute resources properly among members of these communities, in order to enhance their well-being and achieve social cohesion and social justice<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the environmental sphere places ecological considerations at the center of its self-organization (Meadowcroft 2005), with the goal to preserve the dynamic structures at the basis of natural activities<sup>7</sup> - either physical ones, thus regarding energy and matter, or biological ones - for the sake of human prosperity (O’Connor 2007). Political claims often concern the role that every sphere plays, or should play, in relation to another, meaning that these demands may rise as consequence of the interdependencies existing between separate domains (O’Connor 2007).

Given the many interrelations between spheres and the many salient cross-cutting issues at the center of the political agenda, both the supply and the demand of public policies are often determined evaluating trade-offs and synergies among

al. 1997). If brought to the extreme, in the long-run, environmental degradation could harm not only human activities and their operating space, but also people’s safety and ultimately, the survival of the human species. Therefore, environmental changes affect human beings in several potentially harmful ways.

<sup>4</sup> Taking care of individuals’ needs and risks is usually perceived as a public responsibility, since they represent the main obstacles to individuals’ life chances and well-being. Social policy is the branch of public policy that has to do with citizens’ welfare and hence with issues related to the living conditions, resources, chances and opportunities available to each in the various phases of life cycle (Ferrera 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Economic growth, commonly measured as the increase in total or per-capita output produced by an economic system over time (Turner, Pearce and Bateman 1996), is often – yet perhaps mistakenly - seen as a necessary condition for societies to achieve individuals’ prosperity (Koch and Fritz 2014 b).

<sup>6</sup> The welfare state is the institutional framework designed to achieve the performance goals inherent in the social sphere. In the period of its maximum expansion, the European welfare model was characterized by an almost-universal inclusion of beneficiaries, a wide catalogue of covered risks and needs and the promotion of fairness and efficiency (Ceraolo 2011).

<sup>7</sup> The reference here is to the so-called planetary boundaries, i.e. nine processes described by scientists as critical for the stability of the Earth system.



various political interests and objectives. The ‘eco-social-growth trilemma’ specifically refers to the condition of political actors - institutional and non-institutional ones - facing a decision about which performance goals related to the economic, the social or the environmental (or ecological) spheres should be respected and/or pursued (O’Connor 2007).

A key aspect of the trilemma is the role played by economic growth, which seemingly generates contradictions between social and environmental objectives. On the one hand, social policies were designed as distributional adjustment to free markets and economic growth and, as such, it do not question neo-liberal pattern per se, rather aiming at complementing them (Meadowcroft 2005; Midgley and Tang 2001). On the other hand, environmental agreements, taxes, subsidies, regulations and prohibitions aim at addressing the negative ecological externalities of economic activities (Meadowcroft 2005), thus challenging the traditional conception of an unbounded and unlimited economic growth (Meadows, Meadows, Rander and Behrens III 1972; Arrow et al. 2004). For the growth path to be environmentally sustainable, production and consumption must be kept within the limits that the planetary system can sustain (Brock and Taylor 2005; Meadowcroft 2005), whereas economic growth is necessary to enhance distributional justice, because it delivers the resources to grant the financial soundness of welfare systems (Midgley and Tang 2001).

However, solving the eco-social-growth trilemma does not necessarily mean choosing between divergent goals. Public policies may in fact be designed for the simultaneous achievement of potentially conflicting objectives<sup>8</sup>, which is the case of *equitable*, *viable* and *bearable* strategies. A strategy, a policy or even an industrial plan is equitable when it produces strong performances with respect to fighting poverty and unemployment, enhancing equality and social justice, while also increasing production, consumption, income and exchange levels (Barbier 1987; Slocum 2015). Viable policies and practices are instead designed to simultaneously promote environmental and economic goals, hence neglecting their possible social downturns. Enhancing resource efficiency and controlling carrying capacities in periods of economic growth are examples of viable initiatives (Barbier 1987; Slocum 2015). The area of intersection between environmental and social goals is *bearability* (Barbier 1987; Slocum 2015). Bearable policies pursue both eco-social justice and sustainability by taking into account the social implications of environmental initiatives and viceversa. A notable example of such measures is climate mitigation policies, which have always given rise to distributional dilemmas, hence requiring the adoption of countervailing social policies<sup>9</sup> (Gough 2013). In the

<sup>8</sup> Both the triple bottom line theory and O’Connor’s (2007) four spheres approach, which serve to build the analytical foundations of this study, are normative constructs that imply a judgement about what principles shall be respected and, as such, they aim to orient public decision-making by establishing what is desirable and what is not (O’Connor 2007). They both endorse the simultaneous maximization of economic, social and environmental goals.

<sup>9</sup> Members of different segments of the society have both different responsibilities for environmental degradation and they also suffer different environmental impacts (Gough 2013). Some authors talk about a “double injustice” (Koch and Fritz 2014 a), as the subset of popula-

bearable scenario, nature and societies are well established, but the economic activity could be scarce or underdeveloped (Barbier 1987; Slocum 2015). Deprioritizing economic growth means conceptualizing development as a synonym of prosperity: the combination of ecological sustainability<sup>10</sup>, social inclusion<sup>11</sup> and individual well-being<sup>12</sup> (Koch and Fritz 2014 b). Sustainability is the ideal intersection of the equitable, the viable and the bearable subsets, and it hence imply pursuing the contemporaneous maximization of economic, ecological and social performance goals.

O'Connor (2007) adds a fourth sphere to those identified by the triple bottom line approach, which is the realm of systemic regulation through political organization, i.e. the political sphere. The author in fact refers to a tetrahedral model, where the political sphere, just like the other three, is a proper system not to be considered relevant in isolation - despite having its own self-organization and relying on its own principles for performance and quality - but rather for its interdependency with the other realms. The political sphere has to do with power, interests and institutions. It functions through those institutional arrangements, principles and normative instruments, which regulate societal claims and policy outcomes. The political sphere is designed to execute a double function, in the pursuit of managing the interactions between the three realms of sustainability. First, different political actors, or stakeholders, representing specific interests or segments of the population, put forward specific claims with a view to achieve their own objectives<sup>13</sup>. Then, the duty of governmental activities is to channel all these political demands throughout institutions, procedures and conventions and to use these channels to arbitrage between different claims in relation to one another, hence making choices and supplying policy outcomes. The fact that political claims might

tion most likely to be more affected by environmental externalities is usually less responsible for pollution and resource depletion and it has less resources to cope with these negative downturns (Koch and Fritz 2014 a; Gough 2013). Therefore, these authors have called for the development of new investment-focused eco-social policies, capable to modify preferences and behaviors and to constraint consumption and production demands (Gough 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Ecological sustainability is operationalized by taking into account two indicators: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita and the ecological footprint of consumption of a country (Koch and Fritz 2014 b).

<sup>11</sup> Social inclusion is measured in terms of equity, cohesion and civic participation (Koch and Fritz 2014 b).

<sup>12</sup> Individual well-being is a measure of the quality of life and its value depends, among others, on the two variables affecting prosperity, i.e. social inclusion and ecological sustainability (Koch and Fritz 2014 b).

<sup>13</sup> Political claims often derive more from ideal principles, rather than sector-specific interests. It is undeniable, especially in relation to post-industrial political issues, such as environmental degradation, that ideas and principles are capable to mobilize support around them with the aim of shaping the public agenda and proposing strategies for social reform (Meadowcroft 2005).

be conflictual is embedded in the nature of politics and power<sup>14</sup>.

In short, if we were to draw a vector that sketches the relationships between the political sphere and the other ones, it would look like a bi-directional arrow, representing both policy demand and policy supply. For instance, economic actors propose demands, supported by appropriate arguments, concerning the economic domain, but also affecting the social and the environmental spheres, and the government holds the responsibility to respond with normative outcomes that may or may not embrace these claims (O'Connor 2007). The 'welfare' state represents the politico-administrative system that delivers social provisions (Meadowcroft 2005) and regulates the interactions between the social and the political spheres<sup>15</sup>. The same mechanism is valid when it comes to the environmental sphere, even though the 'ecological state' is arguably less developed than the welfare state<sup>16</sup>.

Once again, it is important to keep in mind that the political sphere is isolated only in theory. In reality, stakeholders work simultaneously with each other because many, if not all, political issues crosscut different domains and policymakers ultimately make their choices having in mind the perspectives that different stakeholders present them.

What is relevant for this research is how policy demands are shaped by various political actors representing interests from different sectors. Thus, it is focused on the demand side of the political sphere. In particular, it aims to assess the potential for social actors in the social and in the environmental sphere to go beyond their established structures and interests in order to prompt virtuous combination between their respective demands, and ultimately drive a bottom-up and sustainable political change.

<sup>14</sup> Cleavages form when the interests of different subsets of the same society diverge. Cleavages may reach a point of politicization when they become highly salient and when some actors start mobilizing around them, thus creating political parties, trade unions, civil society organizations, etc., to represent certain claims in the political arena (Westinen 2015).

<sup>15</sup> The welfare state sets off public interventions to supply social protection in the form of social assistance, security and insurance (Ferrera 2006). It describes the set of governmental programmes, bureaucratic apparatus and ideological justifications through which the State manages its responsibility to deliver social policies to its citizens (Meadowcroft 2005).

<sup>16</sup> The ecological - or eco - state denotes government programmes, practices, activities, responsible institutions and politico-ideological frameworks, all designed to achieve environmental sustainability. If compared to the welfare state, the eco state is arguably more underdeveloped. Environmental questions came to the public attention perhaps too recently to be fully translated into sound political cleavages and green claims do not relate to the immediate material interests of any subset of the population. However, green political actors keep working for their ideas and they are very much present in the public debate, sometimes achieving impressive results in terms of political influence. The supposed weakness of national eco states might explain why ecological issues are often handled at an international or supra-national level (Meadowcroft 2005).

### **3. APPLYING THE TRILEMMA TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **3.1. THE ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH TRILEMMA AND THE EU**

The European Union (EU), with its peculiar supranational configuration, is the delimiting space for this research. Within the EU, different actors have tried to promote social and environmental goals, facing difficulties related to EU's lack of full competence<sup>17</sup> in these fields and to the fact that such goals have largely been framed in the context of EU's economic policy.

In the history of European integration, the economy is the policy area that has registered the most significant progress. The idea of economic and monetary integration is based on EU-wide coordination and supervision over national macroeconomic policies, as well as on the creation and management of a large internal market - supposedly more efficient and competitive. This approach used to be considered - almost unanimously - beneficial for Member States, implying positive spillovers in terms of economic stability and growth (Prisecaru 2015). Monetary integration additionally created a political space, called 'Eurozone', in which some Member States share a single currency and are bounded by a common monetary policy (Prisecaru 2015). In the original conceptualization, by delegating (or uploading) to Brussels the responsibility for national macroeconomic and monetary governance, Member States would have more resources to redistribute in order to support their citizens' living standards and to finance national structural reforms<sup>18</sup> (Prisecaru 2015). Furthermore, EU-wide coordination in the economic sphere has been considered desirable and successful in light of the high interdependence between European economies.

The process of European integration - i.e. of transferring policy competences to the supra-national level - has been weaker in other policy areas, such as social and environmental policies. The core of social protection policies largely remains a competence of Member States, enforcing a principle of mutual non-interference between the two goals of making - supra-nationally - and correcting - nationally -

<sup>17</sup> Within the European Union, a multi-level governance model exists, such that European citizens are bounded by national, regional and supra-national policies. The way competences for different policy areas are distributed among various levels is defined by national constitutions and by those international treaties that govern the functioning of the European Union. The EU can only act within the limits of its competences, as conferred by the Treaties. There are three kinds of competences: exclusive ones, i.e. areas in which the EU has the power to adopt binding legislation on its own; shared competence, for which both the EU and EU countries are able to legislate, provided that they respect the principles of subsidiary and proportionality; and supporting competences, according to which the EU can only act in support, or to complement and coordinate Member State's actions (Daniele 2014).

<sup>18</sup> The responsibility for EU economic governance is nowadays shared between EU institutions and Member States, the latter of which are left with the task to set "their national budgets within agreed limits for deficit and debt, and determine their own structural policies involving labor, pensions and capital markets" (Prisecaru 2015, 22).

the market (Ferrera 2008). When it comes to hard law<sup>19</sup> provisions in the field of social policies, the Union largely adopts regulative measures<sup>20</sup>, designed to serve as counterparts to its economic strategy<sup>21</sup> (Ferrera 2008). The EU has thus intervened in the welfare sector mostly through soft law and coordinated strategies. On the contrary, EU environmental policy has bloomed over the years (Fu 2008). Through the adoption of several ‘Environmental Action Programmes’<sup>22</sup> and various treaty reforms<sup>23</sup>, as well as through broad secondary legislation<sup>24</sup>, EU institutions have progressively assumed a more prominent role in environmental protection (COR 2015). Unlike social issues, environmental themes and challenges are inherently international, since cross-border governance and coordination facilitate the achievement of such goals (Meadowcroft 2005). Perhaps for this reason, the European Union has been seen as a potentially effective platform for international environmental policies to expand over the years (Burns and Tobin 2016; Fu 2008). Therefore, despite being both matters of shared competence between EU institutions and Member States<sup>25</sup>, EU environmental legislation has developed more sig-

<sup>19</sup> The policy instruments that European institutions may put in place can be distinguished into two main categories: hard and soft laws (European Union website). Hard laws are norms that are considered compulsory for Member States to adopt or to translate into their own legislation and they include the principles in the treaties, directives, regulations, decisions and sentences by the Court of justice of the European Union. Soft laws, on the other hand, are non-binding actions directed to Member States mainly as suggestions and they include opinions, recommendations, coordination processes and other kind of acts.

<sup>20</sup> While distributive and re-distributive policies assign resources either for specific functions or to specific groups, regulative policies mainly establish a set of rules that apply to the behavior of certain social categories (Nugent 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Examples of binding communitarian social norms are those concerning the free movement of workers, equal treatment in national social security systems, health and safety at work, working conditions, gender equality and non-discrimination (Ferrera 2008 I).

<sup>22</sup> Environmental Action Programmes are multi-annual policy frameworks defying principles and actions to deliver on communitarian environmental policies. The first one, named “Communication on Action of the European Communities on the Environment” was adopted in 1973 by the European Commission. The first three Programmes lacked appropriate legal support and were hence treated more as the synthesis of EU’s general attitude towards the environment. The 7th Environment Action Programme will be guiding European environment policy until 2020 and will be sustained by the adoption of different pieces of legislation (European Commission website b).

<sup>23</sup> Through its articles, the “Lisbon Treaty” provides a solid legal basis for EU environmental policy: “articles 3(3), 21(2)(d) of the TEU and Articles 4(2)(d), 11, 114, and Title XX on the Environment, including Articles 191 – 193, of the TFEU are the primary sources of EU legislation” (COR 2015, 2).

<sup>24</sup> Since the 1970s, the EU has adopted a wide range of secondary legislation on a various range of topics including waste disposal, air and water quality, noise pollution, safety of chemicals, biodiversity and natural quality, wildlife and plants’ protection and CO2 emissions reduction (COR 2015; Wysokińska 2016). Several complementary policies, soft law instruments and projects, including the *LIFE+* or the *Natura 2000* Programmes, have been put in place in order to pursue EU’s environmental objectives.

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 19.

nificantly than social policy. According to the principle of subsidiarity<sup>26</sup>, in matters of shared competence the EU can only act if Member States are not able to achieve their policy objectives on their own, i.e. when such goals may be reached more efficiently at the EU level, which was the case for environmental policy (Daniele 2014; Modiga 2012). The proportionality principle, on the other hand, makes sectoral integration in areas of shared jurisdiction only possible at the discretion of all Member States (Daniele 2014), which explains why European social policy has not developed as much as environmental one, i.e. for lack of political willingness.

Despite asymmetrical progress, one could argue that EU's social and environmental policies were both conceived under the umbrella of its economic strategy, i.e. in the pursuit of economic efficiency. On the one hand, supranational social policy was developed to regulate the social effects generated by the construction of an internal market, and, thus, it ultimately drew its legitimacy from EU's duty to pursue economic efficiency (Daly 2006). On the other hand, the impressive development of community environmental legislation was a direct effect of Member States giving mandate to legislate to the EU, considering it the most appropriate politico-institutional arena to deal with the negative environmental externalities inevitably created in the pursuit of EU's competitive interests (Kelemen 2010). The welfare state and the ecological state therefore constitute a response to possible failures of voluntary action and free markets (Meadowcroft 2005). At the EU level, however, the separation of competences makes it difficult to intervene in the social and environmental spheres in order to effectively counterbalance fiscal and economic strategies.

In recent years, the Union has aimed to implement coordinated strategies in policy areas that do not necessarily fall into its exclusive competences. Coordinated strategies rely on soft-law governance tools containing communitarian objectives in various policy fields aimed at pushing Member States to adopt measures in accordance with such goals. Coordination rests on the idea of reform interdependencies, i.e. that a reform adopted at the national level would be more successful if undertaken simultaneously both in other EU Countries (between-countries effect) and in other connected policy areas (within-Country effect) (Rosenbaum 2010). This seemingly happens for several reasons: coordination is supposed to enhance policy learning<sup>27</sup>, to push Member States' legislation further and faster than normal and to enhance spillovers and complementarities<sup>28</sup> (Rosenbaum 2010). Coordinated strategies such as the "Lisbon Strategy"<sup>29</sup> or "Europe 2020"<sup>30</sup> are im-

<sup>26</sup> The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality serve as normative foundations for the exercise of EU competences (Daniele 2014; Modiga 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Policy learning refers to an exchange of information regarding best practices to learn from and mistakes to avoid (Rosenbaum 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Spillovers are the one-directional negative or positive effects of a certain reform, while complementarities are bi-directional effects between different reforms (Rosenbaum 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Launched in March 2000, the "Lisbon Strategy" was a ten-year plan to make the Union "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sus-

portant because they include the Union's environmental and social performance goals – though not constituting binding pieces of legislation - and, more importantly, they have established governance mechanisms to achieve such goals in an integrated way and under the umbrella of the EU's economic framework.

“Europe 2020” – same as the previous “Lisbon Strategy” - thus represents the most prominent instrument through which the EU has tried to integrate environmental and social policies, directly addressing the eco-social-growth trilemma.

Through coordinated strategies, the Union aims to push member states to comply with high social and environmental standards, despite always linking such a strategy to the pursuit of economic and financial goals (Natali 2010). EU-wide coordinated strategies therefore address the “trilemma” by promoting a model of economic growth that should be socially and environmentally just and sustainable. Therefore, since coordinated strategies contain the overall political agenda of the Union, at least on paper the EU appears to be committed to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

This research examines how the EU deals with the integration of - or conflicts between - social and environmental goals. Coordinated strategies are often criticized not only for lack of social and environmental ambitions, but also for not clearly defining how to achieve overarching objectives in a coherent and integrated way<sup>31</sup> (Pochet 2010). Therefore, examining binding pieces of legislation, instead of soft-

tainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Council of the European Union 2000). The strategy was primarily designed for reasons related to economic competitiveness (Natali 2010). However, when implemented, the “Lisbon Strategy” represented the most ambitious attempt to promote a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable model of growth (Ivan-Ungureanu and Marcu 2006). The strategy was supplemented by a wide set of policy tools, including funds, regulations and stakeholders' dialogue procedures (Natali 2010). The so-called Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was the main governance instrument designed to supplement the “Lisbon Strategy” (Ivan-Ungureanu and Marcu 2006; Natali 2010). The OMC approach was mainly based on benchmarking and targets, which States commit to meet with the means they consider the most appropriate, thus, without being constricted by any binding implementation method (Ivan-Ungureanu and Marcu 2006).

<sup>30</sup> In 2010, one year after the “Treaty of Lisbon” entered into force, the European Commission launched “Europe 2020”, with the view to renew the “Lisbon Strategy”. “Europe 2020” is a strategy to turn the European economy into a smart, sustainable and inclusive one (European Commission 2010) and the so-called *European Semester* is the governance process designed to deliver on the strategy's objectives. The document issued by the European Commission includes five headline targets, seven flagship initiatives, a set of policies concerning the internal market and the “Stability and Growth Pact” and, finally, a section defining the actual governance of the strategy (Pochet 2010). The five targets that “Europe 2020” identifies range from social goals, to environmental ones and they also address education, research and development. Flagship initiatives are key suggestions put forward by the European Commission for Member States to underpin the delivery of each target. The *European Semester* aims at monitoring the progresses and the active involvement of Member States with the strategy itself (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2016, Jessoula and Madama 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Some authors argue that the governance processes related to coordinated strategies, in fact, seemingly lack effective implementation and democracy (Pochet 2010).

law instruments, could be promising in order to assess how the EU concretely deals with the trilemma and, consequently, and whether the Union concretely pursue sustainability.

### 3.2. THE “CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS” LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

The piece of legislation selected to assess the linkages between social and environmental policies at the EU level is the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package, also referred to as the “Winter package”, or simply as ‘the package’. It was launched on 30 November 2016 by the European Commission as part of its work program for the same year (European Commission 2016 b). The package came as an initiative by the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, who launched the idea of an *Energy Union*<sup>32</sup> after his election in 2014 and made it one of the ten priorities for his mandate (Ringel and Knodt 2018).

The “Winter Package” aims at bringing “EU energy legislation in line with the 2030 climate and energy targets<sup>33</sup>, as well as to contribute to the 2015 energy union strategy goal of ensuring a secure, sustainable, competitive and affordable energy supply in the EU” (European Parliament 2017, 2). The proposal by the European Commission contains over 4500 pages, comprising legislative measures of various kind, as well as communications and documents of different nature (Ringel and Knodt 2018; European Commission 2016 b). The proposals aim to contribute to the transitioning of the EU economy towards clean forms of energy (European Commission 2016 b). The transition shall be consumer-centered (Rajal, Schiebel and Dizdarevic 2016), and it shall benefit the overall economic situation of the Union by boosting employment creation, growth and innovative business models in new economic sectors (European Commission 2016 b). The package sets goals for the coming decades that go in the direction of a de-carbonization of the economy and Europeanisation of energy policies. It establishes a governance framework aimed to achieve more ambitious policy outcomes and to improve coordination among Member States in the energy field (Ringel and Knodt 2018).

Even though the proposal of the Commission aims at harmonizing energy and climate policies throughout the Union, the package only establishes broad EU-

<sup>32</sup> In 2014 Juncker asked Vice-Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič and Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete to work on a draft proposal for the *Energy Union*. In February 2015, The Commission already presented a communication entitled “Energy Union Package, A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy” (European Commission 2015). The document introduced a vision for an *Energy Union* that would ensure secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply (Ringel and Knodt 2018). In March 2015, the Council adopted the proposal of the European Commission, which highlights five interconnected dimensions: energy security, solidarity and trust; a fully integrated European energy market; energy efficiency contributing to the modernization of demand; decarbonization of the economy; research, innovation and competitiveness (Ringel and Knodt 2018).

<sup>33</sup> Within Juncker’s *Energy Union* strategy, in 2014 EU countries have agreed on a “New 2030 Framework for climate and energy, including EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period between 2020 and 2030” (European Commission website c).



wide goals and it does not prescribe binding national targets to deliver on such goals (Ringel and Knodt 2018). Article 194 of the “Lisbon Treaty”, which serves as the legal basis for the Commission’s proposal, does not provide European institutions with specific competences over national energy policies (Ringel and Knodt 2018). Moreover, some authors have underlined how disagreements between North-Western EU Member States and Central-Eastern ones have perhaps prevented the Commission from being more ambitious in the energy sector<sup>34</sup> (Ringel and Knodt 2018).

The legislative proposals in the package cover several areas and policy fields<sup>35</sup>. Its policy instruments range from regulatory and non-regulatory measures to political targets and facilitating measures. They can both be newly-drafted pieces of legislation or amendments to existing laws. The European Commission has highlighted that measures and amendments within the package shall pursue three main goals: “putting energy efficiency first”, “achieving global leadership in renewable energies” and “providing a fair deal for consumers” (European Commission 2016 b, 3).

The first goal<sup>36</sup> implies that Member States shall make sure that the cleanest and cheapest forms of energy are taken into account into energy demand management strategies and that investment in energy efficient<sup>37</sup> infrastructures is actively promoted (European Commission 2016 b). The proposals regarding renewable energy<sup>38</sup> cover six key areas of intervention: further deploying renewables in the electricity sector; increasing renewables in the heating and cooling sector; decarbonizing and diversifying the carbon sector; empowering renewable self-consumers; improving sustainability criteria for bioenergy; and achieving timely and cost-effective EU targets (Rajal, Schiebel and Dizdarevic 2016). The third political goal of the package is instead centered on the consumers’ side. The package aims at

<sup>34</sup> The Central-Eastern Member States of the EU have promoted for a long time the principle of State sovereignty over the choices of national energy mix (Ringel and Knodt 2018).

<sup>35</sup> The proposals in the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package cover issues such as “energy efficiency, renewable energy, the design of the electricity market, security of supply and governance rules for the Energy Union” (European Commission 2016 b, 3).

<sup>36</sup> Among the provisions set up to achieve the goal of “putting energy efficiency first”, the European Commission set a binding EU-wide target at 30% (increased at 32.5% after trilogies); it proposed to extend beyond 2020 the energy saving obligations for energy producers and distributors; and it proposed to strengthen previous provisions on long-term building renovation strategies, with a view to reduce fuel use in the building stock (European Commission 2016 b).

<sup>37</sup> Energy efficiency refers to reductions in the amount of energy used to provide for products and services.

<sup>38</sup> In its initial proposal, the European Commission decided to set a target of at least 27% for the share of renewable energy consumption to be achieved by 2030, increased at 32% after the trilogues. It also issued proposals in order to avoid discrimination against renewables in the energy market and to allow alternative energy producers to access this market. Furthermore, it extended EU sustainability criteria to cover all types of bioenergy (European Commission 2016 b).

reforming the energy market by empowering and better informing customers on their consumption patterns. This would be possible through initiatives that increase energy prices transparency; the creation of a decentralized and technologically advanced energy market, as well as through the direct involvement of consumers in production processes, for example via energy cooperatives (European Commission 2016 b). In the section regarding consumer protection, the package also includes the goal of reducing energy poverty in the EU.

Alongside documents of other natures, the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package is composed of eight legislative proposals (see Box 1 for details), four regulations and four directives<sup>39</sup>. Each of these proposals has followed a separate legislative process, all undergoing the ordinary European legislative process<sup>40</sup>, meaning that the initial policy proposal by the European Commission has been deferred to the European Parliament<sup>41</sup> and the Council of the European Union for them to eventually amend it, negotiate it and, finally, adopt it. Furthermore, they all have been subject to a consultation process involving stakeholders, National Parliaments, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions. ‘Trilogues’ between the two co-legislators and the European Commission started on 18 and 19 December 2017, when the Council issued some press releases announcing that it was ready to start the negotiations with the Parliament (Council of the European Union 2017 a; Council of the European Union 2017 b; Council of the European Union 2017 c; Council of the European Union 2017 d; Council of the European Union 2017 e).

<sup>39</sup> A regulation is an act that must be applied in its entirety across the EU, whereas a decision is only binding for those to whom it is addressed, usually Member States. A directive, on the other hand is also a binding legislative act, but it only sets out a general goal for all EU Countries, which are then responsible to implement national laws in order to comply with the objectives (European Union website).

<sup>40</sup> The ordinary legislative process in the EU should overall take a period of approximately eighteen months (Ringel and Knodt 2018). It envisages co-decision power between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. First, the proposals is drafted by the European Commission and presented to the other EU institution, then both the Council and the Parliament are given the possibility to adopt the text at any of the three readings planned. Because the same text has to be adopted by both institutions, the co-legislators are given the possibility to compromise on an agreed draft through the so-called ‘trilogues’. In case the Council is not willing to accept all the amendments proposed by the Parliament at second reading, negotiations between the two institutions starts in the framework of a ‘Conciliation Committee’.

<sup>41</sup> With respect to the legislative process within the European Parliament, the proposals in the “Winter Package” were referred to the *Industry, Research and Energy* Committee, except for the “Proposal for a Regulation on the Energy Union”, which was assigned to the above-mentioned committee and to the *Environment, Public Health, Food Safety* Committee, both holding joint responsibility. The Committees were responsible for drafting a report about each of the Commission’s proposals. These reports were subsequently submitted for adoption in the plenary session of the European Parliament.

**Box 1****Pieces of legislation in the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package<sup>42</sup>:**

- Regulation on “the Energy Union” or “Governance” Regulation (European Commission 2016 f);
- Regulation on “risk-preparedness in the electricity sector” (European Commission 2016 g);
- Regulation “establishing a European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators” (European Commission 2016 h);
- Directive on “the energy performance of buildings” or “EPBD” (European Commission 2016 c);
- Directive on “the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources” or “RED” (European Commission 2016 d);
- Directive on “common rules for the internal market in electricity” or “Electricity” Directive (European Commission 2016 e);
- Regulation on “the internal market for electricity” or “Electricity” Regulation (European Commission 2016 i);
- Directive on “energy efficiency” or “EED” (European Commission 2016 a).

At the moment of writing (October 2018), the state of play of the legislative proposals is as follows. The Directive on “the energy performance of buildings” was adopted by both co-legislators and published in the Official Journal in 19/06/2018. In June 2018, EU co-legislators reached an agreement following inter-institutional negotiations on the Directive on “the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources”, the Directive on “energy efficiency” and the “Governance” Regulation, all of which still have to be officially adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. Finally, with respect to the other proposals, including the “Electricity” Directive and the “Electricity” Regulation, negotiations are still ongoing.

### **3.3. THE “CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS” AND THE ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH TRILEMMA**

The “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package is evidently an energy-related provision. As stated, it was conceived in the framework of the *Energy Union* initiative by the European Commission, “with the goal of providing the stable legislative framework needed to facilitate the clean energy transition” (European Commission website a). The policy proposals were drafted solely by the Directorate General for Energy of the European Commission (European Commission 2016 b), then deferred to the *Industry, Research and Energy* Committee of the European Parliament and finally presented as a whole at the Energy Council meeting in De-

<sup>42</sup> The box enlists the eight pieces of legislation contained in the “Clean energy for All Europeans” package with their abbreviations, for the full denominations see the ‘References’ section.

ember 2016 (Council of the European Union 2017 b). The compartmentalization of the legislative process is not only indicative of the way the EU works, but also of the policy area that the package was exclusively subsumed into.

Nonetheless, the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” legislative package was conceived a cross-sectoral proposal. This is evident by looking at the three goals of the package itself and at the manifested intentions of the European Commission. The package was designed to not only benefit the energy market in the European Union, but also to spill positive effects over the economy as a whole, as well as over the environment and the social sphere. By “encouraging cross-border cooperation and mobilizing public and private investment in the clean energy sector (it is estimated that EUR 379 billion will be required each year from 2021 onwards) these proposals have the potential to be good for the economy, generating an estimated 900.000 jobs and an increase of up to 1% in GDP over the next decade” (European Commission website a). Additionally, the package indeed promotes an energy transition that shall be clean, i.e. “embracing renewables and other new and innovative technologies” (European Commission website a), as well as just, meaning good for every consumer, especially vulnerable ones (European Commission website a).

In line with the approach the EU has followed through coordinated strategies since the 2000s, the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package seems to address the eco-social-growth trilemma in a sustainable way, i.e. by looking at the environmental, social and economic implications of its energy strategy and by prescribing the simultaneous maximization of performance goals in the three spheres. EU legislators have been ambitious enough to include social and environmental concerns in their energy strategy. However, one could argue that energy is an inherently crosscutting political issue. Energy is a suitable topic to highlight the many interfaces between the physical, or natural, realm<sup>43</sup> and those social systems that were created by humans<sup>44</sup> (Guruswamy 2011). Therefore, an efficient strategy for energy should - almost inevitably - take into account the multi-dimensionality of the phenomenon and its ecologic and social implications and impacts.

Not only is the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package attempting to deliver on such a sustainable approach by supplementing its energy measures with provisions that directly relate to the environmental sphere - like those promoting the use of renewable energies - and the social sphere - like those regarding energy communities and consumers’ rights - but it also attempts to address cross-cutting political issues, such as energy poverty. Thus, on the one hand, the package aims to reconcile social and environmental goals by making its energy strategy just and

<sup>43</sup> The forms of energy used in consumption and production processes have several consequences on the degree of degradation of the environment, since they might heavily impact both pollution and natural resources depletion, which are the two main factors contributing to environmental degradation.

<sup>44</sup> The development of new and modern forms of energy has historically permitted social and economic development. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the redistribution of energy resources among societal members has significant consequences not only on the structures of societies themselves, but also on their cultural background (Guruswamy 2011).

sustainable, at least on paper. On the other hand, by tackling energy poverty, which is a political challenge that inherently lies between the concerns of the social and the environmental spheres, the package concretely attempts to integrate the two dimensions.

### **3.4. ENERGY POVERTY AND THE PACKAGE**

The primary competence for dealing with energy poverty in the European Union is held by Member States, since the matter, although highly inter-sectoral, technically falls into the realm of social policies which remain a national prerogative (EPC 2017). National and local authorities have been left free to address the issue with either short-term or long-term solutions<sup>45</sup>, but there is a high heterogeneity in the way European Countries have dealt - or not dealt - with it.

Perhaps pushed by the need to stimulate convergence among Member States, the European Union has developed its interest for vulnerable energy consumers in recent years. Acting under the umbrella of its competence over the internal market for gas and electricity - a responsibility that it shares with Member States - the EU has recently adopted few initiatives. These initiatives address, among others, the issue of energy poverty, but they do not contain strong binding obligations for Member States to act. Until 2018, the EU legislative framework on energy poverty was composed of two directives adopted in 2009, one concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity and natural gas supply and the other concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas<sup>46</sup> (Bouzarovski, Petrova and Sarlamanov 2012). These directives were accompanied by an opinion on “Energy poverty in the context of liberalization and the economic crisis”, issued by the European Economic and Social Committee in 2010 (EESC 2010) and by a report issued by the European Commission in 2010.

The slow advancement of energy poverty policies in the European Union could be seen as a reflection of a lack of consensus among Member States in developing common definitions and indicators, which has resulted in a lack of commitment to act together through the Union (EPC 2017). Additionally, existing EU-wide fund-

<sup>45</sup> Short-term measures against energy poverty include bans of disconnections; debt protection measures; and, most commonly, financial interventions, such as tariffs, social supports or direct payments, which are aimed at providing relief to energy poor people. Long-term interventions, on the other hand, include energy efficiency investments; the promotion and investment in renewable sources of energy; and measures to improve information and awareness (EPC 2017).

<sup>46</sup> It was the European Parliament, amending the Commission’s initial proposal, to integrate energy poverty concerns in the texts of two Directives adopted in 2009. These pieces of legislation recognized energy poverty as a growing concern in the EU, they urged negligent Member States to guarantee due energy supply to vulnerable consumers and to issue periodic reports on the state of play of energy poverty in their Country. The directives also recommended Member States to adopt an integrated approach for measuring fuel poverty, thus taking into account simultaneously social and energy efficiency concerns (Bouzarovski, Petrova and Sarlamanov 2012).

ing initiatives are considered unfit to alleviate energy poverty and the increasingly stringent supra-national constraints on national finances have hindered the capacity of national authorities to act in this policy area (EPC 2017), leaving space for greater cross-country divergence and lack of compliance.

The “Clean Energy for All Europeans” represents the most prominent recent legislative initiative aiming to change the energy framework of the European Union, including a strategy for the alleviation of energy poverty. Several pieces of legislation within package may be considered relevant for the issue of energy poverty.

Energy Poverty is defined within Recital<sup>47</sup> 40 of the proposal for the Electricity Directive - in a non-binding way - as the inability “to afford basic energy services, such as adequate warmth, cooling, lighting and the energy to power appliances, due to a combination of low income, high energy expenditure and poor energy efficiency of their homes” (European Commission 2016 e). Article 29 of the proposal for the Electricity Directive requires Member States that recognize the existence of energy poverty in their Country to define a set of criteria for measuring it, to monitor it and, finally, to report on the evolution of energy poverty and of those measures taken to prevent it to the European Commission every two years, as part of their “Integrated National Energy and Climate Progress Reports” (European Commission 2016 e; Dunin-Majewska 2017). Article 10 of the same proposal requires Member States to ensure that customers are given due information on alternatives to disconnection sufficiently in advance (European Commission 2016 e). The European Parliament has put forward amendments to the initial EU Commission’s proposal for the Electricity Directive that are more ambitious than the proposal itself when it comes to energy poverty. In particular, it proposed to add ‘Article 3 a)’ designed for the European Commission to assist Member States with due and targeted measures to enable a clean and just transition and it has proposed amendments to Article 29 (Zeitoun 2018). However, these amendments are yet to be approved in inter-institutional negotiations.

By contrast, the Directive on the “energy performance of buildings” has officially been adopted at the moment of writing the present research. Member States shall now submit to the EU an overview of their long-term renovation strategies and, within such strategies, EU Countries shall also outline the most relevant national actions taken to alleviate energy poverty (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2018; European Commission 2016 c). Therefore, through the EPBD, long-term building renovation is recognized as a fundamental tool for the eradication of fuel poverty in the EU (Dunin-Majewska 2017).

The proposal on “energy efficiency” sets an obligation scheme for Member States by asking for a share of energy efficiency measures to be implemented as a priority in energy poor households and social housing. Alternatively, the Directive urges

<sup>47</sup> Unlike articles, Recitals are introductory clauses that cannot count as binding provisions.

Member States to take into account the effects of energy poverty on households<sup>48</sup> (European Commission 2016 a).

Complementing the other initiatives in the package, the “Proposal for a Regulation on the Energy Union” sets an integrated reporting system, which shall be to the benefit of households in energy poverty and shall include both data on the number of households in energy poverty and national objectives for the alleviation of energy poverty in case that number is high. It also includes deadlines, policies and measures to achieve these objectives, which have never been part of EU legislation before. The same Regulation, in line with point ‘(a)’ of Article 7 of the “energy efficiency” proposal, also requires specific actions, as well as policy measures, to increase savings for households affected by energy poverty and for social housing<sup>49</sup> (European Commission 2016 f; Dunin-Majewska 2017).

Finally, the European Parliament has managed to add several clauses regarding the protection of low-income and vulnerable households<sup>50</sup> to the European Commission’s proposal for the “the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources” and agreement has been reached with the EU Council on such amendments (Zeitoun 2018). However, currently, the final text of the RED still has to be adopted.

The European Commission also set up an *EU Energy Poverty Observatory*<sup>51</sup>, which was officially launched in January 2018. The objectives of this project include improving transparency, developing informative resource, enabling networking, disseminating information and providing technical assistance regarding energy poverty in the European Union (Bouzarovski 2017).

Energy Poverty is explicitly recognized as an issue within the “Winter Package”, which sets a new framework to protect energy poor households, by making Mem-

<sup>48</sup> In October 2018, the EED has not been adopted yet. However, the two EU legislators have already reached an agreement, amending the initial proposal, by explicitly referring to the alleviation of energy poverty as an objective for national measures on energy savings and by requiring Member States to refer to such measures in their national energy and climate reports (Zeitoun 2018).

<sup>49</sup> In October 2018, the “Proposal for a Regulation on the Energy Union” has not been adopted yet. However, inter-institutional negotiations have already resulted in an agreement (European Commission website a).

<sup>50</sup> In October 2018, the EU Parliament and Council reached an agreement amending the RED initial proposal. If such an agreement will be translated in an actual legislative outcome (as it probably will), EU Member States will have to make sure that low-income households and vulnerable consumers are given access to renewable energy communities and renewable self-consumption, by providing them with due information and support measures (Zeitoun 2018).

<sup>51</sup> The *Energy Poverty Observatory* “has been developed by a consortium of 13 organisations, including universities, think tanks, and the business sector organizations” (EU Energy Poverty Observatory website). Six organizations are key partners, whereas the other seven are supporting organizations and the University of Manchester leads the consortium. The *Observatory* is also composed by several other organizations, academics and institutions, all of which serve as advisors. The Observatory was awarded a contract by the European Commission.

ber States responsible to identify, empower, better inform and protect them (European Commission 2016 b). States are indeed encouraged to prioritize energy poor households in their national strategies for building renovations, for boosting energy efficiency and for renewable-energy transition. Through the package, the EU also shows its willingness to help Member Countries reducing energy costs for vulnerable customers, by enhancing energy efficiency investments (European Commission 2016 b). Despite being a massive progress relatively to previous EU-wide legislation, when it comes to alleviating energy poverty no common definition was agreed and there is no target, nor binding obligation for Member States to comply with. Member States are urged, yet left free, to monitor, report on and address the situation of energy poverty among their citizens. Despite the package is made up of binding pieces of legislation, if they lack political willingness, Member States might still decide to do nothing at all to combat fuel poverty. This is probably a reflection of the fact that the issue is still perceived primarily as a social issue and, thus, European Countries are reluctant to allow the EU to legislate on such matter.

### 3.5. ENERGY POVERTY IN THE EU

Despite the growing salience of the issue at the EU level, there still is no consensual communitarian definition of energy poverty. In Europe, there has been substantial research on energy poverty as well as increasing awareness on the importance of the phenomenon (Dubois 2017). Moreover, Member States like France, Belgium, Ireland, Slovakia and The United Kingdom have already adopted national definitions (Dubois 2017).

The existing approaches in the literature refer to energy poverty as a level of energy consumption that is not sufficient for customers to meet their basic social and material needs (González-Eguino 2015; Okushima 2017), or to live a decent and healthy life (Okushima 2017). Sources of confusion in defining energy poverty derive from preliminary definitions of: which energy service shall be considered fundamental to satisfy one's social and material needs, or one's wellbeing and health<sup>52</sup>; what poverty is<sup>53</sup>; what the basic social and material needs are, or what

<sup>52</sup> Energy services like adequate warmth, cooling, lighting or the energy to power appliances (EPC 2017) are usually indicated as those basic facilities that a customer should be able to access in order not to be considered energy-poor. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) for instance, considers two energy indicators when it describes the non-income dimensions of poverty: electricity and cooking fuels (Sovacool 2012).

<sup>53</sup> The UNDP adopts a multidimensional and dynamic notion of poverty, not accounting only for income, but also for factors such as life expectancy, housing, and education. However, it expresses multi-dimensional poverty in an absolute way, by setting a universal monetary (income) threshold, currently at 1.25 US Dollar a day (UNDP website), under which people are considered to be poor (Sovacool 2012). This is a rather absolute conception of poverty and, as such, it might fail to include portions of the population of some Countries that should probably be considered poor. That is why the European Union has adopted a rather relative concept of income poverty. The rate of people at risk of poverty in a population, for the EU standards, is the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfers) below a cer-



standards of wellbeing and health shall be met. A good definition of energy poverty is hence one that takes into account the multidimensionality of the issue itself. The present study adopts the following definition of energy poverty: “the absence of sufficient choice in accessing adequate, affordable, reliable, high-quality, safe and environmentally benign energy services to support economic and human development” (Reddy 2000, 44). This definition has several advantages (González-Eguino 2014). It refers to energy services and not to energy sources or vectors<sup>54</sup>, hence trying to target individuals’ energy demand. Moreover, by referring to a lack of capability or choice, it endorses a concept of development that goes beyond monetary needs and income. It also identifies desirable features of the technologies used to provide energy services. They should be adequate - i.e. suited to the geographic characteristics – affordable - i.e. cheap in comparison to available alternatives – reliable - i.e. not subject to continuous breaks – safe - i.e. not endangering human health - high-quality - i.e. efficient and versatile - and environmentally benign - i.e. not threatening the environment for present and future generations.

The difficulties in finding a consensual definition of energy poverty are mirrored by even greater disagreement in measuring its incidence<sup>55</sup> (Bouzarovski 2014). Quantitative estimates for energy poverty rest on arbitrary assumptions regarding which energy devices to take into consideration and what basic needs or levels of wellbeing are to be met (Nussbaumer, Bazilian and Modi 2012). Traditionally, there are three alternative, yet complementary, ways to measure energy poverty (González-Eguino 2014). It could be measured through: a technological threshold, indicating the portion of the population with no access to certain energy sources that are deemed as basic ones - usually electricity and cooking fuels; a physical threshold, estimating the level of energy consumption under which people cannot satisfy their basic necessities; through an economic threshold, establishing the maximum share of income to be destined to energy spending<sup>56</sup>. Other possibilities, besides the three traditional approaches mentioned above, would be to ex-

tain threshold, that is set at the 60% of a certain population median (Eurostat Statistics Explained website). Deciding how to set the poverty threshold, which factors to take into account as determinants of poverty and whether to adopt a relative or an absolute take on poverty are relevant choices that have even more relevant political implications.

<sup>54</sup> For a definition of energy poverty not to be biased by different geographic characteristics, i.e. for it to be universal, it is important to stress on both the access and the affordability of energy services (Okushima 2017) In this way, it would be possible to give centrality to the human need for energy services, which can be considered similar around the world, whereas energy sources and vectors vary considerably from one household to another (González-Eguino 2014).

<sup>55</sup> The task of measuring energy poverty has been proven challenging, perhaps due to the peculiar nature of the phenomenon itself, which is a private challenge for households that significantly varies through time and space and it is sensitive to cultural differences and social expectations (Bouzarovski 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Measuring energy poverty through a physical threshold mirrors adopting an absolute approach to poverty, whereas using an economic threshold for measurement is in line with a relative approach to poverty (see footnote 56).

plore subjective perceptions of households about their energy consumption patterns (Bouzarovski 2014), to measure inconveniences, such as health impacts, and to measure energy deprivation<sup>57</sup>(Pachauri and Spreng 2011). Efforts to provide consistent indexes and/or indicators at a global level are generally lacking and they include those developed by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>58</sup> and the World Health Organization<sup>59</sup>, which account for access to modern fuels and electricity (Pachauri and Spreng 2011). Perhaps the most relevant mainstream international indicator is the *Energy Development Index*<sup>60</sup> created by the International Energy Agency<sup>61</sup> in 2004.

Without a common EU-wide indicator, it is hard to estimate the proper scale of the energy poverty problem. Some studies estimate that between 50 and 125 million people are at risk of energy poverty in the European Union (EPEE 2009). More specifically, “9.4% of the EU population was unable to keep their home adequately warm in 2015; 9.1% accumulated arrears on their electricity bills and 15.2% lived in home with a leaking roof, damp walls, porous windows frames or floors” (EPC 2017, 1). Furthermore, the European Commission has recognized that the share of domestic spending dedicated to energy services has grown from 6% in 2000 to 9% in 2014 among the lowest quantile of the income distribution of the population, whereas it has only increased by 1% for the entire population (EPC 2017). This data clearly demonstrates the existence of a link between economic inequalities and the affordability of energy services for domestic households. Furthermore, certain segments of the population are more at risk to fall into energy poverty than others, particularly retired or elderly people, disable people, single parent families, precarious workers and people whose income largely depend on social security benefits (EPEE 2009).

Most studies assessing the root causes of energy poverty have identified a three main determinants, working in combination (EPEE 2009, Jones 2016). The first driver of energy poverty is poverty itself, combined with declining household in-

<sup>57</sup> Deprivation is defined as the deviation between actual energy access and an estimated minimum threshold (Pachauri and Spreng 2011).

<sup>58</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is an international organization established in 1996 by United Nation General Assembly working on development projects and programmes.

<sup>59</sup> The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations concerned with international public health. The Organization is very active in providing data and recommendations regarding the effects of energy services on human health.

<sup>60</sup> The Energy Development Index is actually a measure of the transition of energy systems towards modern fuels. Studies shows that there is a negative relation between this index and energy poverty (Nussbaumer, Bazilian and Modi 2012). It is a composite indicator that allows for cross-Country, but not cross-time analysis (Pachauri and Spreng 2011). It combines three equally-weighted indicators: per capita commercial energy consumption, share of commercial energy in total final energy use, and share of the population that has access to electricity.

<sup>61</sup> The International Energy Agency is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1974 in the framework of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development and it holds advisory powers.

come<sup>62</sup>. The underlying assumption is that low-income households have a lower amount of disposable funds to spend on energy services (Bouzarovski 2014), which usually constitute a large share of households' consumption patterns. A second major cause of energy poverty is the increase of energy prices in the market<sup>63</sup>. High prices reduce the affordability of energy sources and vectors, making low-income households less able to provide themselves with the needed energy services (Jones 2016). Finally, the quality of thermal efficiency and housing could be considered as the third main source of energy poverty in Europe. "Residents of inefficient dwellings are forced to purchase less affordable energy services than the rest of the population because such homes are more expensive to heat" (Bouzarovski 2014, 279). Therefore, the configuration of the housing<sup>64</sup> stock and the lack of accessibility of housing make energy services less affordable for low-income households<sup>65</sup> (Jones 2016). These three causes overlap and interact with one another and with the specific energy needs of households which vary largely according to factors such as demographic circumstances, household composition, occupation and gender (Bouzarovski 2014).

With respect to the consequences of energy poverty, perhaps the first effect is deterioration of health. Negative health effects caused by long and continuous exposure to indoor pollution generated by unclean energy sources, such as biomasses, make the population more vulnerable to very dangerous cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (González-Eguino 2014). Health effects of even lighter kind prove to be more severe for the most vulnerable sections of the population (Jones 2016). Winter mortality has been proven not to be related to climate conditions, but rather to the quality of housing and energy systems (Jones 2016). Furthermore, living in fuel poor households is related to mental health problems, anxiety and risk of social exclusion and isolation (EPEE 2009; Jones 2016).

A second notable consequence of energy poverty is on the economic and social spheres. The lack of energy services - and subsequent health problems - could potentially provoke negative downturns on education levels and employment performances, often inducing public authorities to increase social spending to over-

<sup>62</sup> While some studies identify income poverty as the main driving force behind increasing fuel poverty levels in Europe (EPEE 2009; Jones 2016); others have concentrated upon the weight of energy-related expenses in consumption patterns, finding out that energy costs are the highest expenses after food for many low-income households (Jones 2016). It has to be specified although, that not all low-income households are necessarily energy poor and vice-versa (Bouzarovski 2014). This makes the case for energy poverty to be a special form of poverty, related to, but not subsumed by, general poverty.

<sup>63</sup> Gas prices have increased by an average of 18% between 2005 and 2007 (EPEE 2009) and electricity prices have increased by an average of 14% in the same span of time (EPEE 2009).

<sup>64</sup> Countries with poor housing have been associated in empirical studies to high rates of winter mortality (Bouzarovski 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Upgrading insulation in poor housing could prove to be too costly or ineffective for energy poor customers (Jones 2016), causing them to be stuck with expensive infrastructures and energy providers.

come and prevent these problems that could otherwise harm the entire performance of an economy (González-Eguino 2014; Jones 2016). Moreover, energy poor households are often faced with the difficult choice between cutting energy consumption or increasing indebtedness to avoid disconnections and evictions (Jones 2016). Energy poverty is not relevant merely from the consumption side of the economy: investments in efficient energy sources and infrastructures could indeed positively affect some production sectors, boosting general economic development (González-Eguino 2014).

Finally, energy poverty has a considerable impact on the environment, mostly linked to climate change<sup>66</sup>, deforestation<sup>67</sup> and land degradation<sup>68</sup>. The excessive use of biofuels, which are the most widespread sources of energy for low-income people around the world, is in fact one of the main causes of deforestation, desertification and land degradation (González-Eguino 2014). These phenomena have further detrimental consequences for agricultural production, food security, land fertility, ecosystem stability and pollution (González-Eguino 2014; Sovacool 2012). In more industrialized countries, greenhouse gas emissions<sup>69</sup> are predominantly caused by electricity generation and transportation, whereas in developing countries, the main responsible for such polluting emissions are the agricultural sector and changes in land use (Casillas and Kammen 2010). Therefore, environmental degradation is predominantly caused by production processes and big-size companies. Consumers, especially vulnerable ones, are arguably less responsible for ecological shocks. However, such shocks have a greater impact on the most vulnerable subsets of the population, since they are less equipped to cope with the negative costs of environmental degradation (Casillas and Kammen 2010, Gough 2013). Thus, some authors have referred to the situation as a “double injustice” (Koch and Fritz 2014 a).

As evident, the causes and consequences of energy poverty are matters of concern for political actors that represent both environmental and social interests. These concerns - and the political demands that raise from them - cannot be treated in isolation, given the many interdependencies and implications that exist among them. Therefore, energy poverty could be defined as a multifaceted political challenge, simultaneously raising claims for the optimization of social and environmental performance goals.

<sup>66</sup> The energy production chain is one of the key drivers of the exacerbation of climate change, which is worsened by reduced CO<sub>2</sub> absorption capacity (González-Eguino 2014).

<sup>67</sup> The loss of woodland prevents the poor to access the only energy source that they consider affordable, despite being environmentally harmful: wood itself (González-Eguino 2014).

<sup>68</sup> Vulnerable subsets of the population are not only directly affected by the decrease in the availability of woodland (see previous footnote), but also indirectly, through the reduction in many services that used to be supplied by now endangered ecosystems, such as water and food (González-Eguino 2014).

<sup>69</sup> A greenhouse gas has the property to absorb and emit radiant energy and it serves to keep the average temperature of the Earth's surface at levels acceptable for biological life. Human activities in the last few decades have increased the level of emission of greenhouse gases, thus giving rise to an extremely dangerous phenomenon called climate change.

#### 4. LOBBYING AT THE EU LEVEL

Lobbies are organizational forms that catalyze sector-specific interests and formulate policy demands. In light of their prominent role in the political sphere, lobbies are the subjects of the present research and, in particular, the focus is placed on European network-based and advocacy-oriented NGOs and trade unions.

The term lobbying is often used as a synonym for advocacy. However, if advocacy is understood as an attempt to induce policy change and, thus, exerting influence represents the main objective of advocacy-oriented organizations, lobbying is perhaps the most common advocacy strategy, alongside campaigning (Yanacopulos 2005). Lobbying and campaigning<sup>70</sup> imply different aims, techniques and tactics. Lobbying is a much more targeted strategy, requiring a remarkable ability to negotiate with, as well as to persuade and provide needed information to key political actors (Yanacopulos 2005). The typical tools of a lobbying strategy are finding facts, conducting policy analyses and developing a solid network of key political contacts to target (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014). Even though the meaning of the term may seem straightforward<sup>71</sup>, different definitions of lobbying exist in the literature of interest representation (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014). The present research adopts the following definition: “lobbying procedure is to influence or attempt to influence<sup>72</sup> legislative administrative decisions by public authorities through representatives interested<sup>73</sup>. Influence is intentional, involves the use of communication and is directed by legislative or executive structures” (Koeppel 2001, 71).

A successful lobbying strategy is based on four pillars: “the ability to create clear objectives and goals”; “the ability to develop connections”; “the access to strategic

<sup>70</sup> Campaigning aims at influencing the public opinion with the purpose to mobilize enough support to put pressure on policymakers (Yanacopulos 2005). Campaigns are typically adversarial, i.e. they work best when there is a fault or an injustice to be fought. They employ a large variety of tools, including the media, slogans and street parades. They also may have other objective besides exerting influence, like publicity or fund raising.

<sup>71</sup> From an etymological point of view, the term ‘lobby’ derives from the old Germanic word ‘louba’, which means hall or roof (Marusca and Irimies 2013). One of the most notable times the term was first used as a verb could be traced back to a quote by United States’ President Ulysses S. Grant, who was in office from 1869 to 1877. The President, forced to live in a hotel for a short period of time after the White House was destroyed by a fire, once complained about people waiting for him in the hotel lobby seemingly willing to influence his decisions (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014). Since in the past politicians used not to have private offices, hallways often became places for discussing matters of political interest (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014).

<sup>72</sup> It should be specified that some authors have argued that lobbying consists more in providing an informational service to allied institutional actors, who are usually too understaffed to do it themselves, than in influencing hostile decision-makers, which could prove to be too costly or unsuccessful (Chalmers 2011).

<sup>73</sup> Representativeness refers to creating a direct contact between the different factors that affect decision in the name of a certain interest (Soimu, Margarit, Andrisan and Stefan 2011). Lobbying is hence the exercise of delegating to certain agents the task to support and put forward specific rights, interests or opinions (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014).

information”; “the analyses of different politics and the ability to promote them in public” (Oanta and Vasilcovschi 2014, 180).

The exact number of lobbies - or interest groups - active at the European level is uncertain and different estimates provide different figures on the scale of the phenomenon. 5.039 interest groups are accredited within the European Parliament, 70% of them being business-oriented and 30% being non-business organizations (Coen and Richardson 2009). The predominance of business interest groups over civil society organizations and trade unions (Greenwood 2007) is a reflection of the fact that access to EU institutions is determined by resource endowment, which is greater for business organizations (Dür and Mateo 2012). Despite the prevalence of business organizations, civil society has gained popularity in recent years and EU institutions themselves<sup>74</sup> have developed a discourse in favor of enhancing social dialogue, mainly with a view to build support for EU initiatives and to contrast EU’s increasing lack of legitimacy (Smismans 2003; Pasquino 2012). This research is particularly focused on NGOs and trade unions acting as advocacy organizations at the European level.

Europeanization refers to the process of adaptation of political actors to European integration (Beyers and Kerremans 2007). For interest groups, it refers to the strategic evaluation - and choice - of shifting activities and loyalties to the European level, as a consequence of the acknowledged impact of the EU on their political interests (Beyers and Kerremans 2007). Europeanization may mean that national interest groups decide to work themselves at the European level, or that they decide to set up cross-national networks that would do so. Typically, the factors that determine the decision for lobbies to Europeanize are: resources<sup>75</sup>, embeddedness in their immediate environment<sup>76</sup>, the perceived importance of the supra-national level, the width of their membership - and hence their degree of representativeness - and the degree of formalization of their network (Scaramuzzino and Wennerhag 2015; Coen and Richardson 2009; Beyers and Kerremans 2007; Binderkrantz and Rasmussen 2015).

The strategic actions that advocacy networks decide to pursue are determined primarily by the phase of the EU policy-making process<sup>77</sup> that they aim at target-

<sup>74</sup> The discursive – and concrete - attempts to engage civil society organizations and trade unions in policymaking have been pursued mostly by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and by the European Commission, primarily for institutional interests (Smismans 2003).

<sup>75</sup> Resources-rich organizations engage more with lobbying at the European level. However, the perception of budget competition and critical resource dependencies are more relevant than resources per se (Beyers and Kerremans 2007).

<sup>76</sup> If interest groups are tied to policy domains over which State sovereignty dominates EU competence, they will likely prefer engaging at the national level.

<sup>77</sup> The European Commission is in charge of legislative initiative. Co-decision is the ordinary legislative procedure. This means that neither the European Parliament nor the Council may adopt any pieces of legislation without the other’s assent (Daniele 2014).

ing. Basically, lobbies have five different opportunities for influencing institutional decision-making (Long and Lörinczi 2009). They could intervene on an early stage, pushing institutions to insert non-salient issues in their political agenda. They could engage with the consultation processes for new policy proposals, usually set up by the European Commission, or with the proper legislative activities of the European Parliament and the Council, intervening by providing inputs to readings, to plenary or committees' positions or to the conciliation phase. After the adoption of a piece of legislation, advocacy can consist in putting forward recommendations for the appropriate implementation of such provision, or in contributing to monitoring implementation and enforcement.

NGOs are regarded to be more successful in accessing the European Parliament than business organizations. However, the European Commission remains the easiest target for any kind of interest group (Long and Lörinczi 2009). When it comes to accessing and influencing decision-making, many differences exist between the various EU institutions with respect to how interest groups are involved. Choosing which institutional channel is more convenient for a lobby to target depends on a series of circumstances, including the nature of the interest group, its resources, the policy area it wishes to target, the legislative procedure and the position of all the various institutions on the issue it wishes to influence (Nugent 2011).

#### **4.1. EUROPEAN LOBBIES CROSS-SECTORAL MOBILIZATION**

Many similarities exist between interest groups operating in the same issue area: they rely on similar financial resources, they tend to be ideologically similar and they work within similar institutional contexts (Geyer 2001). These organizations are often aware of one another and they sometimes even establish alliances together (Geyer 2001). As consequence, the differences between interest groups working on separate policy areas are usually stronger than those existing within a single sphere. This is also valid for pressure groups working in the social and the environmental spheres at the EU level. For this and other reasons, cross-sectoral mobilization for European lobbies is relatively rare. Here below the paper reflects on the potential for European interest groups to either create coalitions or conflict.

##### **4.1.1. COALITION BUILDING**

Coalitions could be seen as advocacy strategies commonly used by pressure groups to associate with other political actors in order to exert political influence. Given a general confusion in defying what a coalition is, some studies (Pijnenburg 1998) have attempted to distinguish inter-organizational collaborative efforts according to two dimensions: the durability of the relationships within the coalition, which is reflected in the degree of formalization of the alliance itself, and the degree of individual autonomy that each organization retains within the group. Unification happens when autonomy is low and when the collaboration is highly formalized. At the two opposite sides of this two-dimensional space, there are interdepend-

ence and coordination<sup>78</sup>, i.e. settings where the degree of autonomy and formalization are respectively both low and both high. Cooperation is instead an ad-hoc form of inter-organizational integration. Ad-hoc coalitions are single-issue thematic alliances, whose mandate is supposed to expire the moment joint work is no more needed or when its members consider it appropriate (Pijenburg 1998). Therefore, ad-hoc alliances are characterized by little to no formalization, a limited duration and a high degree of autonomy of its members.

The only necessary requisite for inter-organizational alliances to be considered coalitions is a high degree of autonomy of its members<sup>79</sup>. In fact, coalitions may bring together like-minded organizations, but also actors that do not share the same views on everything (Ritchie 1995).

Only through durable and formalized structures, organizations can achieve full coordination. However, ad-hoc informal alliances could be more convenient for organizations when they decide to work together. In ad-hoc coordination, communication, decision-making and structures are flexible and adaptable to the changes that are likely to occur frequently in a political context (Pijenburg 1998). Moreover, focusing on a single issues makes agreement on common policy demands and strategies easier for coalition members and it makes their contributions seem more valuable and indispensable (Pijenburg 1998). Needless to say, ad-hoc coalitions also have several disadvantages, including a general instability, difficulties in carrying on the shared work and sometimes incoherence of the coalition's agenda with its partners' own priorities (Pijenburg 1998). However, in general, "maintaining a coalition is surely more often a matter of shared vision and solidarity than a shared rulebook" (Ritchie 1995, 524).

There are several reasons why pressure groups might decide to join forces with other organizations of the same nature. Coalition-building might be seen either as the best strategy to overcome the scarcity of resources<sup>80</sup> that lobbies usually face (Yanacopulos 2005), or as the best strategy to address salient political issues<sup>81</sup> (Junk 2016). Whatever the approach, coalition-building is always a strategic choice for interest groups, in the effort to pursue their own priorities. Lobbies might consider forming coalitions because they see it as an effective way to increase the impact - or the legitimacy - of their advocacy activities. Policy impact is strengthened by alliances either because individual organizations have the opportunity to share resources and, thus, to save economic costs and staff capacity, or because alliances

<sup>78</sup> Umbrella organizations (i.e. alliances of organizations, which delegate considerable responsibilities to a supra-organizational level, which, in turn, provides its members with resources and with a common identity) might be an example of coordination.

<sup>79</sup> In the cases of unification and interdependence, organizations lose their individuality and are subsumed in a single structure, which is not what coalitions are supposed to be.

<sup>80</sup> According to the resources-dependency theory, advocacy organizations are strategic-oriented entities heavily affected by a scarcity of the resources (Yanacopulos 2005).

<sup>81</sup> According to this interpretation, issue-level factors would be the main driving forces for public interest organizations, i.e. for those organizations that promote public goods, to act (Junk 2016). Therefore, salient issues and/or issues that impact public goods are elements that these organizations would consider more important than resources and capacity (Junk 2016).



allow members to exploit the economies of scale arising from coordination<sup>82</sup> (Yanacopulos 2005). Widening the support for an advocacy activity through a coalition allows its various members to increase the legitimacy – and thus the appeal – of the policy demands they all have signed up to (Yanacopulos 2005).

#### 4.1.2. CONFLICT OR COOPERATION?

Despite the above-mentioned benefits that organizations may obtain from joining forces, inter-organizational mobilization mostly remains weak and limited (Geyer 2001). Advocacy networks' cooperative mobilization is significant and durable only around the most basic political issues (Geyer 2001).

Does this mean that interest groups' behavior towards alike organizations is conflictual? After all, their *raison d'être* is to promote their own claims in accordance with their mandate. This implies that such organizations will cooperate or compete depending on circumstances. In many cases, instead of establishing coalitions, lobbies find it more appropriate to pursue their goals on their own, for example because an issue is considered particularly salient for an organization and, thus, it might not want to compromise its demands with those of other organizations.

Conflicts are often favored by the peculiar context in which lobbies operate, particularly European NGOs. Such organizations are often constrained by their limited budgets, which cause them to lobby less than what they would consider appropriate (Gullberg 2008). Lobbies, especially NGOs and trade unions, are aware of the fact that institutions can emphasize, promote or even financially support their work<sup>83</sup> (Mahoney and Beckstrand 2011). Consequently, they have to adjust to a non-regulated environment, constructed upon the principle of free competition among different interests (Svendsen 2011). Therefore, in such a framework, strategic conflicts among lobbies can easily arise. Furthermore, organizations may also disagree on the merits of a political issue. This is not surprising considering that lobbies' main concern is their own agenda, regardless of what others strive for.

Studies about NGOs' cooperation in the social sector have found out that pressure groups are often aware of the benefits of cooperation and they normally want to enhance coordination (Geyer 2001). However, advocacy organization cooperative impetus is constantly undermined by the complex structure of the environment they work in and by their potentially divergent interests. It follows that cooperation is hard to achieve and, thus, it is not frequent and always rather lim-

<sup>82</sup> The economies of scale arising from coordination refer to the benefits members of an alliance have from sharing information and communication skills with other organizations (Yanacopulos 2005). By increasing specialization through coalitions, the quality of research and evaluation also increases, normally making alliances more informed and more efficient than individual organizations (Yanacopulos 2005).

<sup>83</sup> NGOs oftentimes tend to compete for available national or European funds (Mahoney and Beckstrand 2011). In the case of the European Commission, for example, organizations know that this institution is generally willing to fund non-governmental actors, provided that they respond to specific requirements and that they are able to provide the Commission itself with the services it seeks from them (Mahoney and Beckstrand 2011).

ited (Geyer 2001).

There are several factors that make coordination difficult to develop and to maintain and they are the same that push lobbies to compete with one another. First, even when members share similar views, coalitions tend to reflect a hierarchical structure that, in turn, is determined by the capacity and the financial resources of each coalition member. This could result in capacity imbalances and in biased decision-making within alliances and it could ultimately discourage organizations from joining coalitions in the first place (Geyer 2001). Furthermore, establishing informal common structures is not necessarily a way to render deliberations easier to reach, as the confusion around the rules that regulate decision-making may as well create personal struggles and divisions in the groups (Geyer 2001). The fact that organizations sometimes compete for funds or resources and that they may hold divergent political views could also be mirrored in the dynamics of a coalition (Geyer 2001). Each pressure group is the depositary of a complex set of interests, which mix coherently within the organization itself. However, this complexity could easily hinder full cooperation with other organizations, that are also composite themselves (Geyer 2001). While agreeing on some political views, organizations may strongly disagree on others. It could be difficult for a group of different organizations to share a detailed programme on many salient political issues, without compromising their core values. If they compromise their core values, interest groups would lose their autonomy, which is a detrimental condition for coalitions to be defined as such.

## **5. CASE STUDY: THE COALITION ‘*RIGHT TO ENERGY FOR ALL EUROPEANS*’**

### **5.1. COMPOSITION, HISTORY & POLICY OBJECTIVES**

Established in June 2017, the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition is a “coalition of trade unions, anti-poverty organizations and environmental NGOs” (EAPN et al. 2017) that is “committed to join efforts to fight energy poverty and defend the right to renewable energy for all” (EAPN et al. 2017).

At the moment of writing, the coalition includes sixteen organizations. A complete list of the co-partners of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition is provided in the box below. The members enlisted are those reported on the coalition’s official website (*Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition website) and social media accounts (*Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition *Twitter* account). However, as it will be discussed in the following sections, the coalition does not have a proper formalized setting. As consequence, the composition of the alliance has varied considerably since its original formation<sup>84</sup> and several other organizations have

<sup>84</sup> The organizations that signed the letter addressed to EU policymakers in June 2017 could be considered as the original members of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition.

taken part to the coalition's meetings, despite not being counted as official members<sup>85</sup>, including those national organizations that are part of the networks of some coalition's members. As illustrated above, the composition of the coalition is heterogeneous, meaning that it encompasses organizations of different nature, including and balancing different interests. If originally it was meant to only envisage trade unions, social and environmental NGOs, now the coalition defines itself as a "European coalition, uniting trade unions, anti-poverty organizations, social housing providers, environmental organizations and energy cooperatives" (*Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition website).

### Box 2

#### Members of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition<sup>86</sup>

- COFACE-FAMILIES Europe
- Droit à l'énergie SOS Futur
- Energy Cities
- Europe Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
- European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
- European Climate Foundation (ECF)
- European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW)
- European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)
- European Federation of Renewable Energy Cooperatives (REScoop.eu)
- European Public Service Union (EPSU)
- Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE)
- Greenpeace - European Unit
- Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)
- Housing Europe
- Social Platform
- The Energy Action Project (ENACT)

The box below provides a brief overview of the history of the coalition's main activities since its creation.

These organizations were: EAPN, EPSU, Greenpeace Europe, FoEE, Droit à l'énergie SOS Futur, ETUC, Coface-Families Europe; EFBWW, FEANTSA and the Social Platform.

<sup>85</sup> Some of the European organizations that got involved with the activities of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition at different stages include the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation, NEON and the Transnational Institute.

<sup>86</sup> More information about these organizations can be found on their official websites, respectively: [www.coface.eu.org](http://www.coface.eu.org); [www.energiesosfutur.org](http://www.energiesosfutur.org); [www.energy-cities.eu](http://www.energy-cities.eu); [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org); [www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu); [www.europeanclimate.org](http://www.europeanclimate.org); [www.efbww.org](http://www.efbww.org); [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org); [www.rescoop.eu](http://www.rescoop.eu); [www.epsu.org](http://www.epsu.org); [www.foeeurope.org](http://www.foeeurope.org); [www.greenpeace.eu](http://www.greenpeace.eu); [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org); [www.housingeurope.eu](http://www.housingeurope.eu); [www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org); [www.en-act.org](http://www.en-act.org).

**Box 3****Chronology of the most relevant activities of the  
Right to Energy for All Europeans coalition**

**April 2017:** Following the joint publication of “The Right to Energy for all Europeans!” leaflet (EAPN and EPSU 2017), in a closed meeting, EAPN and EPSU launched the initiative of a coalition gathering European civil society organizations and trade unions to work together on the issues of energy poverty and on the right to energy (EAPN 2018).

**8 June 2017:** The “kick-off meeting” of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans Coalition* took place in EPSU’s offices.

**21 June 2017:** A letter, drafted by FoEE and announcing the formation of the coalition, as well as its political positions, came out (EAPN et al. 2017). The letter was subsequently published on several websites of the signatory parties. Then it was sent to Permanent Representatives<sup>87</sup> and key Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) within the *Industry, Research and Energy* and the *Environment, Public Health, Food Safety* committees, in light of their involvement with the legislative processes related to the “Winter Package” (International environmental NGO 2018). To present the letter, members of the coalition has also organized private meetings with MEPs, such as Miriam Dalli from the S&D political group.

**1 September 2017:** The coalition created its own *Twitter* account. Through social media, the coalition is able to forward its policy position, publications and events and to spread information about energy poverty in the EU (FoEE 2018 b).

**7 September 2017:** The coalition published its first op-ed on the *Euractive* website (Euractive 2017) containing its position on energy poverty.

**12 September 2017:** The coalition organized a breakfast event in the European Parliament, hosted by S&D MEP Theresa Griffin, with the name “How to achieve the right to energy for all Europeans?” (EPSU 2017). Members of the European Parliament from the Greens and the United Left political groups also attended the meeting.

**October – November 2017:** The coalition engaged with political groups within the European Parliament to lobby the voting within the *Industry, Research and Energy* committee on the EED and RED - which happened in November - pushing for a higher target on energy efficiency and for the prioritization of energy poor households in renewable energy strategies. In November, the coalition agreed on a set of seven key demands for policymakers (FoEE 2018 b).

**5 December 2017:** The coalition, with the support of the political groups S&D, Greens, EFDD and GUE/NGL, organized another conference entitled “Ensuring the Right to Energy for all Europeans” at the European Parliament in Brussels (Coface-families Europe 2017). The event took place one day before the vote

<sup>87</sup> Permanent Representatives are heads of the diplomatic missions of EU Member States in Brussels and, among other tasks, they are responsible for preparing the agenda for the meetings of the Council of the European Union.

within the *Industry, Research and Energy* committee of the European Parliament on the Governance Regulation and during the trilogies on the EPBD, with the manifested intent to influence both processes. At the event, a series of recommendations were put forward for EU policymakers to deal with the issue of energy poverty. The coalition also presented its policy demands, agreed internally the previous month. The event was attended by nearly seventy people, included several MEPs (EPSU 2018).

**29 January 2018:** The coalition engaged in social media activities related to the event organized by the European Commission for the launch of the Energy Poverty Observatory (*Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition *Twitter* account).

**February 2018:** In the occasion of the vote of the *Industry, Research and Energy* committee of the European Parliament on the Electricity Directive and Regulation, the coalition organized bilateral meetings with key MEPs, sending them voting recommendations as well. At the same time, the coalition also did social media work on the two initiatives. As a result, the European Parliament strengthened the language on energy poverty in the abovementioned pieces of legislation (FoEE 2018 b).

**March 2018:** The coalition was funded by one its own members, i.e. the European Climate Foundation. As a result, the alliance decided to provide resources to Clémence Hutin, Climate Justice and Energy Campaigner within Friends of the Earth Europe, to dedicate 50% of her working hours to work for the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition. Hutin took over the role of coordinator of the coalition's activity (EPSU 2018). In the same month, the coalition sent a series of letters to Permanent Representatives, in an attempt to influence trilogues on the entire “Clean Energy for All Europeans” legislative package.

**April 2018:** The coalition held an internal strategic meeting, with a view to reflect on what they had already done in terms of activities, achievements and policy impact. In the same meeting, coalition partners also evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the coalition and established upcoming objectives and activities. Thereby coalition partners decided to expand their activities by involving their members at the national level and to keep working together even after the end of the legislative process related to the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package (EPSU 2018; FoEE 2018 b).

The *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition is “committed to join efforts to fight energy poverty and defend the right to renewable energy for all” (EAPN et al. 2017). Hence, the primary idea behind such an alliance was to put together a comprehensive group of interests groups that could effectively tackle the issue of energy poverty from different angles and in a cross-sectoral manner (Housing Europe 2018; International environmental NGO 2018). In fact, “Energy poverty lies at the intersection of different issues: a warming world that puts people and planet at risk, increasing social inequality, and an unjust energy system. These multiple dimensions of energy poverty call for a holistic political approach, to jointly tackle its causes and consequences” (*Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition website). Therefore, recognizing the multi-dimensionality of energy poverty, the coalition

developed common cross-sectoral goals and a strategy to effectively address the issue. These goals were then translated into more concrete demands for policymakers, in order influence the legislative process on the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package (Housing Europe 2018; FoEE 2018 a). However, “the coalition was not formed only to influence the package” (Housing Europe 2018) and with the expansion of its mandate, its policy demands will remain valid guidelines for future lobbying activities beyond the package. Member organizations, in fact, share basic common principles, views and objectives on energy policies, which could potentially bind them together even beyond their current campaign on the package and regardless of its results.

Seven key demands for policymakers were put together in November 2017 and presented during the event that the coalition organized on 5 December 2017. Box 4 below enlists these demands. Additionally, the list identifies in brackets the pieces of legislation in the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” legislative package that each demand targets.

#### **Box 4**

#### ***The Right to Energy for All Europeans coalition’s key demands to eliminate energy poverty***

- “Provide a definition of energy poverty (Governance Regulation);
- Ban disconnections (Market design files)
- A binding 40% energy efficiency target to ramp up renovation efforts (EED);
- Target vulnerable consumers in renovation efforts (EED)
- Ensure a minimum provision of energy for all (Market design files)
- Support community energy initiatives in the fighting against energy poverty (RED)
- Recognize energy as a basic human right”

## **5.2. THE RATIONALE BEHIND JOINING FORCES**

There are at least two reasons why the members of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition decided to join their forces with other organizations and work on energy poverty together.

A first justification is related to capacity and resources. Some organizations do not have sufficient means to work on energy poverty on their own (EAPN 2018; Housing Europe 2018). Despite considering energy poverty as a key area of interest, capability issues prevented NGOs and trade unions’ staff members from working on it by themselves, since many of them are struggling to carry out even their ordinary activities and to deliver on their mandate (EAPN 2018). Joining a coalition could be seen also as a valid opportunity for organizations lacking sufficient economic and human resources to make sure that the work is carried out on their behalf. Needless to say, organizations would still have to contribute somehow

to the activities of the coalition if they want to be sure that their proposals are taken on board. Nonetheless, sharing responsibilities makes the individual effort much less demanding than it would be if organizations had worked separately: it could be seen as a way for them to minimize their effort and still try to exert political influence (Housing Europe 2018).

Furthermore, joining a coalition could also be a strategic move for organizations to impact policymaking in areas that are not their core business. Sometimes, especially for organizations with less formalized networks, coalition-building is a rather top-down choice. This means that members often do not give their secretariat a mandate to work on certain political issues, since these topics might be related to, but not fundamental for, their interest. However, given that lobbying through coalitions is relatively less costly, staff members may take the opportunity to join an alliance when it comes along, even in the absence of a specific mandate to do so (Housing Europe 2018).

*“From our perspective, in general, when we decide to join a coalition is because we are not able to do the lobbying ourselves and/or because we do not have a mandate to talk about some issues from our members” (Housing Europe 2018).*

*“Most of the work on energy poverty is concentrated in the internal electricity market directive, which is where we can find the article with the definition of energy poverty. So, this is a directive where we, as an organization, had not a mandate actually from our members. They usually ask us to work on energy performance of buildings, or on energy efficiency, but less on the internal energy market for many reasons” (Housing Europe 2018).*

The second most relevant reason that justifies the decision to affiliate with the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition - or with coalitions in general - relates to political influence. NGOs and trade unions have recognized that that coalition's actions are more impactful than they would be if carried out individually (EPSU 2018; EAPN 2018; International environmental NGO 2018). This is due to the fact that, unlike many of its members, the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition has the resources and the willingness to work on energy poverty and to impact policy outcomes.

Moreover, the idea of delegating responsibilities to an alliance is understandably attractive for every organization if the coalition's work seems to get positive feedbacks (International environmental NGO 2018; EPSU 2018). The broad, inclusive and heterogeneous composition of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition has been recognized as added value by policymakers (EAPN 2018; Housing Europe 2018; International environmental NGO 2018; FoEE 2018 b). This coalition seemingly caught the attention of people and decision-makers precisely because it was cross-sectoral, thus involving social and green organizations, as well as actors of other nature, that would not normally be expected to work together.

*“I think it is not a secret that unions and us have sometimes different views and I think that the pure fact that we reached out to each other and that we are [engaging] in a dialogue [with each other] to find solutions to a series of social, economic and environmental problems, like energy*

*poverty, is appreciated. That clearly is a key to our successful advocacy. We could do it as individual organizations, but with different success*” (International environmental NGO 2018).

The pretext to found the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition was the publication of the “Clean energy for All Europeans” legislative package. 2017 was a crucial and unique time for the redefinition of energy poverty policies in the European Union. This raised the opportunity, if not the need, for NGOs and trade unions to influence legislation (Housing Europe 2018; FoEE 2018 a). Given that energy poverty is a multidimensional issue (FoEE 2018 a) and knowing that environmental organizations were already working on the package, EAPN and ESPU decided from the start to involve green actors in the coalition. This choice allowed the alliance to be wide and heterogeneous and, hence, to increase its resources and its strength as a pressure group. The idea was to create a ‘political momentum’ around the package, by finding synergies between the demands of social NGOs, trade unions and environmental NGOs (EPSU 2018). Ultimately, the cross-sectoral nature of the coalition grew out to be perceived as an added value, not only by external witnesses, but also by coalition members themselves.

*“The reason why we have joined the coalition was because the objective of the coalition was to raise the point of energy poverty in a cross-sectoral manner across different pieces of legislation”* (Housing Europe 2018).

Even though some sees it as inevitable (International environmental NGO 2018) and all the organizations seem to welcome it (EPSU 2018), the heterogeneity of the coalition’s composition was not the principal reason why such a *rassemblement* was formed. It is clear that allying was primarily a functional - or strategic - choice for each organization, since their main concern was the effectiveness and/or the potential impact of the coalition (EPSU 2018; EAPN 2018; International environmental NGO 2018; Housing Europe 2018). This is reflected in the fact that the coalition, especially in the beginning, qualified as an ad-hoc form of cooperation (EAPN 2018). By keeping decision-making and internal management informal, the coalition has been able to carry out the work smoothly and effectively and to be impactful when needed. A more formalized structure would have perhaps forced coalition members to deal with their differences, hence questioning the soundness of the alliance itself.

### 5.3. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

Unlike other more formalized alliances, since the beginning, the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition has functioned through an ad-hoc informal structure (Housing Europe 2018; EAPN 2018; EPSU 2018). This informal setting reflects how coalition partners approach decision-making.

*“Decision-making is very transparent, in the way that we have set up an e-mail list with everyone*



*“... subscribing to that. So, every direction, every position that the coalition proposes is shared with all members [with a view] to get wide support. [The process] is very transparent and open for contributions”* (International environmental NGO 2018).

Thus, the coalition has opted for a transparent and horizontal approach to its internal management. Initially, coalition partners deliberately decided not to define a common terms of reference, detailing the mandate of the coalition, the requirements for membership and the division of roles and responsibilities, nor they elected a coordinating group responsible for the guidance of the coalition’s activity (EAPN 2018). This choice was due to either capacity reasons (EAPN 2018) or to make proceedings more effective and easier to manage (Housing Europe 2018). However, this changed in March 2018 when the coalition got funded.

*“At first it was really not formalized. [...] But it just so happened that we got funded in the beginning of the year and, so, I think that changed everything, because suddenly I was kind of mandated, as Friends of the Earth Europe’s Campaigner, to talk on behalf of the coalition and since then we have Twitter and Facebook profiles and a website. We have also defined a terms of reference for me, so I have clear roles. Those are to coordinate the coalition and its initiatives and to support members’ activities on energy poverty”* (FoEE 2018 b).

Therefore, the alliance went from an initial phase, when it was an ad-hoc cooperative effort aiming to influence the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package alone, to a more stable EU-wide grassroots movement, involving national networks and enlarging the scope of its activities, while still functioning informally (EPSU 2018).

Besides the leading role of FoEE, the division of responsibilities and tasks is decided either during meetings or afterwards and it is made in an informal way: whoever can and wants to contribute volunteers to do so (EAPN 2018). The same applies to voting, which happens by consensus (EPSU 2018), and to the rules regulating membership requirements for organizations that wish to join the coalition, that are only asked to subscribe to the coalition’s demands (EPSU 2018).

*“[We adopt] a quite informal way of working, but at the same time we try to have a quite democratic process in the coalition. The idea is to be the most inclusive as we can and to create an interest in the coalition, otherwise it is not going to work.”* (EPSU 2018)

Concretely, decisions are taken in an informal way during coalition’s meetings, which usually occur monthly, unless there is an incumbent occurrence that requires more frequent encounters (FoEE 2018 a; EPSU 2018). Meetings are functional and mainly focused on agreeing upon lobbying and awareness-raising activities and on how to deliver on such strategies (EAPN 2018). In between meetings, coalition members keep in touch through e-mail exchanges, which are useful to update partners on eventual progresses (International environmental NGO 2018; Housing Europe 2018; EPSU 2018).

The result of this horizontal and informal approach to decision-making and re-

sponsibilities is that some actors have ended up being more active than others. Even though the coalition was initially created by EAPN and EPSU, it is generally recognized that, over the time, FoEE has taken a leading role alongside EPSU (EPSU 2018; EAPN 2018; Housing Europe 2018; International environmental NGO 2018; FoEE 2018 b). The prominence of Friends of the Earth Europe increased even more when one of its staff members got funded by ECF to dedicate part of her working hours specifically to the coalition (FoEE 2018 b; EPSU 2018). If environmental organizations' commitment to the coalition was fundamental to deliver on the common agenda, on the other hand, social NGOs have contributed relatively less and they have provided fewer inputs to the activities (International environmental NGO 2018; FoEE 2018 b). EAPN (2018), calling for a better balancing between social and environmental organizations within the coalition, blames a lack of resources and capacity for social NGOs' scarce dedication to the coalition.

As already stated, the informal way of working has been seen as an incentive for organizations to join, because they can contribute to coalition's activities and decisions, relying on the fact that other coalition partners will carry out most of the work on behalf of the group, hence minimizing individual human and economic costs and saving their often-scarce resources (EPSU 2018; ETUC 2018; Housing Europe 2018). However, the more informal internal management and decision-making are, the harder it is for coalitions to broaden the scope without compromising their members' own interests.

*“I do not think [a more formalized setting would be more beneficial]. In the past, I have been involved with the Spring Alliance, which was an attempt to organize the same conversation in a more structured way. Actually, for very pragmatic reasons, I do not think [the Spring Alliance] was very successful. Coordination costs were too high. All the organizations have to cope with the same funding problems, limited human resources, [confusion around the] policy agenda [...]. If on the top of that we create a kind of monster to structure the discussion among Civil Society Organizations, it might be counter-productive! So, I think that the way we have been working for the last five years is the most appropriate one. We have ad-hoc collaboration when it make sense, when we have a common interest, when we have the resources. Our priority is to maximize the impact we can have together on a series of very specific demands. The Spring Alliance approach was more top-down [...]. It helps to be more targeted [and] more focused on some specific demands” (ETUC 2018).*

Therefore, informal management helps alliances to be more effective in delivering on a pre-determined agenda, while at the same time, making sure that unification does not happen, i.e. that the specificity of each organization's values, mission and nature are safeguarded and not undermined by being part of a coalition (EPSU 2018).

#### **5.4. THE COALITION'S STRATEGY TO INFLUENCE EU'S LEGISLATION ON ENERGY POVERTY**

With respect to the strategy followed by the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition, the first step was to coagulate all the different organizations around some key policy demands addressing the eradication of energy poverty (EPSU 2018). These demands, which would be later formalized in a list of seven recommendations for policymakers, are general enough to be shared by all partners unanimously (Housing Europe 2018). They are also crosscutting enough to ensure consensus (EPSU 2018) and a win-win situation for both social and green actors within the coalition (EAPN 2018; International environmental NGO 2018), because they seek to push policymakers to recognize both the social and environmental implications of energy policies (FoEE 2018 a; FoEE 2018 b).

*“I think this kind of campaigns work [best] on general issues. This is how you work: you come to look at what the common issues are, you agree on common statements or principles and then you allow people to speak separately”* (EAPN 2018).

*“The coalition so far is not really a lobbying machine with precise demands [and] ready to advocate also for multiannual frameworks or similar provision. This is something that we have put together because it is important to give some arguments in favor of having a pragmatic, ambitious and cost-efficient legislation on energy at the EU level”* (Housing Europe 2018).

The coalition’s lobbying activity has so far mostly been concentrated upon the “Clean Energy for all Europeans” legislative package, which is a reasonable choice, since the package “will define the EU’s energy policy for the next crucial decade” (FoEE 2018 a). Having mostly the same assessment of the situation regarding energy poverty in Europe (EPSU 2018), the organizations joined forces to put a spotlight on energy poverty within the package and to make sure that policymakers would take into account the social implications of EU energy policies, by designing appropriate measures to alleviate energy poverty in Europe (FoEE 2018 a; International environmental NGO 2018).

*“In terms of policy objectives, what we wanted to do, as I said, was to show where energy poverty can be an issue in the different pieces of legislation. So, we did not come up with recommendations or a clear view on what we wanted to achieve in terms of concrete policy measures. [...] There was more the idea that the coalition should help to increase visibility and raise the awareness of stakeholders on the fact that [the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package] is not only about technical legislation, but also [about] social aspects and impacts on energy poverty”* (Housing Europe 2018).

Therefore, the coalition’s strategy aimed at formulating political demands, recommendations and proposals that had to be both concrete (ETUC 2018) - i.e. applicable to the “Clean energy for all Europeans” legislative package and to the issue of energy poverty - and universal (Housing Europe 2018) - i.e. not detailed and valid beyond the current political context. This means that, even though these demands were formulated in light of the actual legislative proposals in the “Winter

Package”, they do not address the details of the texts of these proposals. Interestingly, prior to the coalition setup, EAPN and EPSU drafted a set of amendments applicable to the provisions regarding energy poverty in the European Commission’s initial proposal for package, but when the two organizations expanded their alliance to other actors, the amendments were dropped.

As stated before with respect to the coalition’s view on the package, coalition partners seemed to share similar negative views on the package (EPSU 2018; FoEE 2018 a; EAPN 2018).

*“We believe that [the proposed package] does not adequately tackle energy poverty. The language is often imprecise, as it leaves Member States the choice to tackle energy poverty or not and to define it. We wish to make [the definition of] energy poverty and the specific policy measures to tackle it mandatory. Also, we believe it’s necessary to roll out massive renovation programs across Europe to tackle climate change and energy poverty jointly” (FoEE 2018 a).*

Therefore, the coalition followed closely the legislative processes related to the various pieces of legislation in the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package that have a relevance for energy poverty, attempting to influence the processes themselves. First, the alliance concentrated upon the RED, the Governance Regulation and the EED, obtaining an increase in the energy efficiency target relatively to the EU Commission’s initial proposal, as well as the mainstreaming of energy poverty concerns in measures regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy communities (FoEE 2018 b).

Then, it concentrated on the Energy Directive and Regulation, pushing for the inclusion of a definition of energy poverty and of a binding ban of disconnections for energy poor households. Despite attempting to drive public attention on the topic and being able to have some impact, the coalition was not satisfied with the ultimate legislative outcome, mainly because it lacks strong binding obligations for Member States to alleviate energy poverty (EPSU 2018; FoEE 2018 b).

With respect to the actual activities the coalition has carried out in order to deliver on its strategy, the alliances opted for a classic advocacy campaign (EPSU 2018).

*“It is a classic campaign [...] It is an advocacy campaign, which means that, on one hand, you lobby European decision-makers [...]. Then also we have organized a series of public events [...]. Of course, we have our regular meetings - internal ones [...] - but that is for the internal coordination. And also we have the communication activities.” (EPSU 2018).*

On the one hand, the advocacy campaign translates into lobbying activities, aimed at getting in touch with policymakers to urge them to support coalition’s demands (EPSU 2018). Such activities include bilateral meetings with MEPs or their assistants, as well as with Permanent Representatives, and writing and mainstreaming policy deliverables - such as letters or policy briefing - for EU decision-makers (EPSU 2018). These exchanges are organized with a view to grasp relevant infor-

mation about the ongoing legislative process and, at the same time, to feed the process itself with the coalition's position (International environmental NGO 2018). On the other hand, the advocacy campaign also attempts to raise public awareness on the coalition's policy demands. This second strand of activities have mainly taken the shape of public events, usually held in institutional venues and co-organized with legislators. Finally, the communication activity of the coalition, acting through its social media accounts, through its website and by writing a series of publications on energy poverty - mainly op-eds for the *Euractive* website – complement its advocacy actions (EPSU 2018).

Besides the campaign structured around the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package, the coalition has also defined an action plan for its future activities. In the short term, the coalition is planning to direct its focus towards opportunities for further EU legislation on energy poverty and monitoring the actual implementation of the package, for example by working on projects dedicated to national energy poverty definitions (Housing Europe 2018). This means that the coalition will mostly adopt a concrete approach to work. In this way, the activities should be even more consensual, given that they would not have to address those obligations and restrictions that are usually contained in legislative measures. Targeted obligations and restrictions are, in fact, likely to generate conflicts, given that what might benefit one's interest could be detrimental to others' (Housing Europe 2018).

However, work related to legislation will not be the only way forward for the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition. The goals for the upcoming period will be the following: to strengthen the coalition, by pursuing alignment and trust building, and to further build a network involving national organizations (FoEE 2018 b). With respect to specific action points, the Coalition has already agreed to work on EU budgets and on the 2019 European elections, by attempting to make sure that party manifestos will include energy poverty (FoEE 2018 b). It will also try to influence the priorities of the next European Commission, it will lobby Eurostat to keep monitoring energy poverty in the Union and it will issue a report on a new index on energy poverty (FoEE 2018 b).

## 5.5. AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As already stated, in an attempt to build a common advocacy strategy, the partner organizations of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition initially gathered to outline their priorities with respect to the alleviation of energy poverty in Europe and then they managed to agree on a set of common policy recommendations (EAPN 2018). The seven demands presented in the previous paragraphs thus represent the common ground for coalition members, i.e. those priorities that they have all been able to jointly promote (FoEE 2018 a; International environmental NGO 2018).

Different interest groups have different priorities when it comes to energy poverty, determined by what their core interest are and by the demands that their members raise with respect to energy poverty. Each organization tends to consider mostly the implication of any political issues for its core interest or for its members

(Housing Europe 2018). When working in alliances, they try to bring their expertise and priorities to the discussion, hoping, or even pushing for the coalition to take their claims on board. The result is not necessarily to “water down” (Housing Europe 2018) the coalition’s proposals. It might rather be the one to “put a bit of reality check in the overall discussion” (Housing Europe 2018). Indeed, all these different views inform common goals and proposals, thus pushing the alliance to adopt a more comprehensive view.

*“[We are] making an effort in the coalition to highlight renewable energies and [the needs of] energy citizens and energy communities. [...] Our motivation is to fight energy poverty with renewable energy and with ownership of electricity production by the people, putting poor households in the center of energy transition and not marginalizing them. I think that will remain our organization’s continued input in the coalition”* (International environmental NGO 2018).

The coalition’s demands need to be shared unanimously and they shall not be contradictory with organizations’ own values. Collective priorities do not have to necessarily coincide with individual priorities, they just have to be coherent with them (Housing Europe 2018). It is convenient for organizations to support the coalition in the promotion of a common multidimensional agenda. Each organization indeed remains free to express its point of view, both in external activities and internally, i.e. in the discussions that take place within coalition’s meetings (EAPN 2018).

*“Many demands [by the coalition] are not necessarily issues on which our members have an opinion, but we are happy to support the coalition with these demands, because they will improve the overall policy environment, legislative framework and, also, living conditions for people”* (Housing Europe 2018).

Reaching consensus is easier due to the fact that the recommendations put forward by the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition for policymakers to improve the overall situation of energy poverty in Europe are demands general enough for each organization to be willing to support them (Housing Europe 2018). These proposals are designed to influence specific legislative provisions without going into textual details. Going into details might prove hard and time-consuming for the alliance, given that the design of energy policies have implications – in terms of costs and benefits – for different interest groups. That is why the coalition has never actually discussed the amendments drafted by EAPN and EPSU for the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package. It would have likely required such a wide and heterogeneous set of lobbies to compromise the interests they represent, in order to find political agreement on policy details, because what might benefit one’s interest could be harmful for others’. Instead, the coalition has focused on a set of clear and synthetic demands. Furthermore, agreement was perhaps made feasible by informal decision-making procedures, which allowed coalition partners to focus on what was consensual, while leaving out of the discussion what was not (FoEE 2018 a; FoEE b).

*“Right at the beginning of the coalition, we decided to [...]focus on things that bring us together: the seven demands we have outlined” (FoEE 2018 a).*

*“The challenge was really to bridge [the gap between the] the social and the environmental agenda and the question was how [to do it]. We decided, as a coalition, to steer clear from this debate [on regulate prices, which was a controversial topic] and to promote some other solutions, particularly energy efficiency and renewable [energy].” (FoEE 2018 b)*

While they were able to identify a broad common denominator, coalition partners have admittedly conflicted on some key aspects related to energy poverty, perhaps the most salient one being energy prices. Before deciding to open their alliance to external subscriptions, EAPN and EPSU together demanded to “stop the phasing out of regulated prices in the energy sector for domestic households and support social tariffs for vulnerable customers” (EAPN and EPSU 2017, 3). Unlike all their other demands, EPSU and EAPN’s proposal about regulated prices was the only one that the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition has not taken on board and this is explicitly recognized by coalition partners (EAPN 2018; FoEE 2018 a; FoEE b; International environmental NGO 2018; ETUC 2018; EPSU 2018).

Social organizations and trade unions are supportive of regulated prices in the energy sector, as they believe fighting the liberalization of energy markets to be a fundamental tool to make energy services more affordable and more accessible for low-income people (FoEE 2018 b). Green NGOs, on the other hand, have reservations when it comes to recognizing regulated prices as an appropriate solution to alleviate energy poverty. In their opinion, regulated prices could hinder the development of small-scale renewable energy projects (International environmental NGO 2018) and could end up boosting subsidies towards polluting forms of energy (FoEE 2018 b). EAPN hypothesizes that green NGOs are reluctant to support pricing regulation, because that would result in an increase in energy consumption, which would ultimately foster environmental degradation (EAPN 2018).

Therefore, one could argue that the case of regulated prices shows that social and environmental organizations have different economic visions, with the latter being more market-oriented than the former (EAPN 2018). However, as it will be shown below, this does not seem to be the case. European social NGOs, trade unions and environmental organizations mostly agree on their long-term vision for a just and sustainable world, in which wellbeing should have more relevance than economic growth (FoEE 2018 b; EPSU 2018; ETUC 2018). Therefore, the divide on regulated prices seems to be more a debate about short-term tactics to alleviate energy poverty, than about long-term strategies (ETUC 2018).

*“I think [that] if you look at the portfolio of instruments that public authorities have in their hands to fight energy poverty, there are short-term and long-term instruments. I think that all members of the coalition will agree in saying that we first need to look at structural and long-term instruments, like renovation of public housing, or concrete support for tenants [...]. We all*

*agree that this is something to be done, but it takes time [...]. Sometimes the problems that the most vulnerable households face with their energy bills are really concrete and urgent, so you need [to display] all kinds of instruments. Our position is not to say that regulated prices is the panacea. What we are saying is that in some context, in some regions, or in some Member States, that specific instrument might help public authorities to cope with the [extremely] urgent situations where electricity prices, for any reasons, suddenly skyrocket. Then, you should be able, as a public authority, to cover the basic needs of households – I don't know, for the first 500 KW - ensuring that prices would be below that threshold, just to be sure that people will be able to heat and enlighten their homes properly” (ETUC 2018).*

The coalition main strategy to cope with conflicts has been to open spaces for discussion about eventual points of disagreement (EAPN 2018; International environmental NGO 2018). Even though in some cases – like for regulated prices - these discussions did not help solving the conflicts, dialogue is perceived in a positive way by coalition partners. Each organization is given the possibility to bring its instances to the attention of their coalition partners and to promote their point of view, while recognizing the others' too. When common understanding is too challenging, the coalition delists the controversial topic from its political program (FoEE 2018 a; International environmental NGO 2018; EPSU 2018). The way conflict resolution is managed is thus ad-hoc, meaning that each issue is treated separately and not following precise rules (EAPN 2018).

Despite the presence of unsolved conflicts and the relative lack of detail in the agreed demands, the members of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition generally seem not to give too much relevance to disagreements. Conversely, many members perceive a cooperative atmosphere (Housing Europe 2018; FoEE 2018 b) and major conflicts have not emerged since the initial period. This positive atmosphere could be explained by looking at the informality of decision-making and procedures, which perhaps allow coalition members to have open and democratic discussions and to ignore conflicts if they find appropriate not to discuss them.

*“Despite the differences, I am not aware of any strong disagreement. Actually, I think it was Friends of the Earth that came up with this proposal [for the demands] and we all agreed basically from the beginning” (Housing Europe 2018).*

## 6. COMPARING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTEREST GROUPS

Because the present research is attempting to assess whether and how coordination between social and environmental interest groups is feasible, it would be essential to briefly sketch differences and similarities between the two types of organizations.

### 6.1. SYMMETRICAL VALUES & THE RISE OF JUST TRANSITION DISCOURSES



Needless to say, each interest group is devoted to the promotion of specific principles and values. However, when it comes to their visions, many similarities emerge, not just between organizations operating in the same sphere, but also between social and environmental ones. Their principles are determined by the interest they represent and such interests also shape their political priorities. Nonetheless, many trade unions and NGOs have committed, at least in principle, to an overarching sustainable agenda (FoEE 2018 a; FoEE 2018 b; EAPN 2018) and some of them have even engaged in policy areas which would not normally be considered as their prerogative (EPSU 2018; Housing Europe website). This has allowed some of these organizations to work in a cross-sectoral manner, addressing the multifaceted implications of their core interests.

*“[EAPN commits] to a social and sustainable European and Global agenda since 2010. It has always been an important part of [EAPN] key objectives: [promoting] a transformative social and sustainable agenda” (EAPN 2018).*

*“I think that is really part of Friends of the Earth’s uniqueness [the fact] that we have always from the start linked social and environmental issues together. There has been this movement among environmentalism, for which you have to focus on abstract nature, animals and science. I think that seems very far away from people’s concerns in their everyday lives. Our position has always been to say that humans are part of the environment and that social inequalities are translated into environmental inequalities. For example, we know that low-income families have less access to energy and that they usually live in highly polluted areas, even though they pollute less. It is not the same to go through a climate catastrophe if you are a millionaire or poor” (FoEE 2018 b).*

*“Of course we are a trade union organization, so we mainly focus on the issues that are important for workers. Since five or ten years, we have started a big movement, which is called ‘no jobs in a dead planet’. So now we are focusing a lot on environmental aspects, on climate policies and on making sure that the EU is very ambitious when it comes to decarbonization policies” (EPSU 2018).*

Despite many NGOs and trade unions seem to be committed to the same values, a closer look highlights that they probably do so from different perspectives and for different, yet specular, reasons. We could argue that their values are symmetrical, in the sense that they look similar and they embrace the same holistic sustainable vision for the world, but only because this is coherent with their core goals.

*“Even though we are an environmental organization, we share of course a lot of values with social NGOs and in the past, in many occasion, we have closely worked together. We support each other in mobilizing. [...] At the end of the day, it is clear for our organization that it is about people and the planet. We do not work for the sake of the planet [alone]. We work on the planet for the benefit of citizens” (International environmental NGO 2018).*

*“Friends of the Earth Europe has always been committed to environmental justice, which bridges*

*the gap between historically collaborating closely with social movements. Points of disagreements can exist for specific policy recommendations, but we agree with the underlying principles of progressive social organizations” (FoEE 2018 a).*

Values look so similar because, by endorsing a sustainable holistic vision for the world (Housing Europe website; EAPN 2018; FoEE 2018 a; FoEE 2018 b), they are designed in a way that envisages multiple goals - social, environmental and economic ones. Therefore, NGOs and trade unions have an incentive to commit to sustainable overarching values, because such values are coherent with – or even include - their core claims. Moreover, such organizations seem to be even more willing to subscribe to a certain political principle if this benefits more interests than simply their members’ (FoEE 2018 b; International environmental NGO 2018).

When it comes to concretely applying overarching sustainability, if some organizations engage with cross-sectoral advocacy activities (EPSU 2018; FoEE 2018 a; FoEE 2018 b), others find it hard to translate principles into actions, given that they are mainly focused on their core priorities (EAPN 2018) and, thus, they do not have the capacity to implement sustainability in their daily work.

To sum up, NGOs and trade unions’ priorities are determined by the mandate that each organization is assigned by its own members. The nature of their constituencies determine the nature of their claims and the nature of the whole organization as well. Most of these organizations commit to sustainable principles that take into account both social and environmental performance goals. However, on concrete issues there could be conflicts between the priorities of social and environmental actors.

Disagreement between social and environmental actors is frequent (FoEE 2018 a) and it occurs any time their priorities clash. These conflicts occur whenever there is a trade-off between social priorities and environmental ones. Trade-offs are oftentimes linked to the different economic vision of social NGOs, trade unions and green NGOs, which might cause them to part their ways on concrete political issues, but also on a more ideal level. If social NGOs and trade unions generally take issue with an economic model that fosters unbounded growth and laissez-fair market economy, the same is not necessarily valid for many environmental civil society organizations (EPSU 2018; EAPN 2018).

*“Some of [the green NGOs] do not have problems at all with [economic] growth, they just want it to be green; they see nothing wrong with money, they just want them to be green money; or they see nothing wrong with inequality, [they just push for] making it green. But that is not valid for all of them, one should not [make generalizations] about who is what. I did not realize it so much that there are quite big differences” (EAPN 2018).*

However, such a divide between the social and the environmental worlds might have been the norm in previous years. More recently, the pattern seems to be shifting, at least at the EU level. There has been much more awareness among NGOs and trade unions about the fact that social and environmental issues are linked

(FoEE 2018 b). Green organizations are pushing policymakers to consider the social implications of environmental policies and viceversa (EPSU 2018). At the EU level, this was made possible by the fact that more and more of these organizations – social NGOs, trade unions and green NGOs – have started to endorse the concept of ‘just transition’, as a guiding principle for their activities (FoEE 2018 b; EPSU 2018; ETUC 2018). This principle has allowed them to go beyond the classical socio-environmental divide, by advocating instead for a paradigm that could be simultaneously socially and environmentally just and sustainable (FoEE 2018 b), hence making it a win-win situation (EPSU 2018). There is an incentive for both social and environmental political actors to promote just transition and work together. Indeed, by creating social acceptance for policies that could contrast environmental degradation without hurting the population and workers disproportionately, an environmentally friendly transition might actually happen quicker (EPSU 2018), because societal actors would not resist it (FoEE 2018 b). Another implication of endorsing the just transition paradigm is that social and environmental organizations can be on the same page with respect to the economic sphere, unlike what many used to think. Just transition means contrasting the current neo-liberal economic model, with a view to correct the social inequalities and the detrimental effects on the environment that such a model would create (EPSU 2018; FoEE 2018 b). Just transition questions production and consumption systems that are structurally wasteful and hurting the Planet and societies and it attempts to shift the focus from growth – including green growth, which many business organizations endorse – to wellbeing and human needs (FoEE 2018 b).

*“As far as I can say, the biggest green NGOs in Brussels – WWF, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Climate Action Network – are much more on the ‘just transition’ paradigm than on the ‘green growth’ one. Within these constituencies, you have differences among organizations, but, I think, none of them is [supporting] a market approach. [...] [Social and environmental organizations] might still have diverging views on some specific issues, but I really believe that we are much beyond the classical divide ‘jobs versus environment’. At the national level, you still have that simplistic divide, but at the EU level and in many Countries it is not really relevant anymore?” (ETUC 2018).*

## 6.2. DIFFERENT WORKING METHODS

Social and green organizations’ working methods share some similarities. First, these organizations all have a network of members to coordinate and take inputs form and they all work to influence EU policymaking. Their typical activities range from lobbying to campaigning, from awareness-raising to research and exchange (EAPN website; FoEE website; Housing Europe website; ETUC website; EPSU website).

Several organizations also recognize the existence of some differences in the way social and environmental interest groups work:

*“You feel that when you meet them, that they are different. You are like Venus and Mars. So,*

*you need to take the time to understand each other and respect each other and then you can have trust to build something. It is not so easy, there has to be commitment to work things through and to get a common aim” (EAPN 2018).*

*“Of course, we are a campaigning organization, not a think-tank and we have different ways and means on hands to carry out our campaigns. That is sometimes different or adding to, the ways and means of social movements or unions” (International environmental NGO 2018).*

Actually, strategies and techniques vary considerably from one organization to another and there seems to be a pattern, when it comes to methods of working, separating the social and the environmental sectors. Environmental organizations tend to employ younger staff members in their offices and they seemingly have more skills about technology and social networks than social NGOs (EAPN 2018). Green actors also make use of campaigning more than social ones do and some of them even consider campaigning as their principal activity (International environmental NGO 2018). Many environmental organizations have a network that expands beyond the borders of the EU and Europe (International environmental NGO 2018). This does not only mean that NGOs’ European offices often work on global projects and issues, but also that these offices are considered more like local branches than headquarters. Moreover, green NGOs lobby the European Parliament and MEPs more frequently than social ones and, as a result, they tend to have sounder connections with people working in that institution (EAPN 2018).

Social NGOs concentrate their lobbying activities more on soft laws and coordinated strategies, than on hard laws (FoEE 2018 b) and they tend to work more closely with the European Commission. Nevertheless, the European Commission seems more keen to ally with environmental NGOs than with social ones, perhaps because it is seeking support from civil society organizations on its climate and ecological agenda (EAPN 2018). Finally, environmental organizations tend to concentrate more on influencing public opinion, if compared to social actors (EAPN 2018).

All these differences in means and expertise (International environmental NGO 2018) may actually contribute to create two opposite cultures (EAPN 2018), which raises the question of which factors have contributed to this separation. A first element to consider is that EU environmental and social policies have historically developed in opposite ways.

*“I think the other element to take into account is hard and soft law. That is really crucial. The social area, particularly our side of the social area, is mainly about soft law and that implies a completely different way of working” (EAPN 2018).*

As a result, environmental organizations have developed more skills to lobby binding pieces of legislation, mostly leaving behind the work on soft law measures, which social NGOs are usually highly involved with (EAPN 2018). Furthermore, this could also explain why green actors are more accustomed to work with mem-

bers of the European Parliament, that hold proper legislative powers, while social ones tend to work more with the European Commission, which is in charge of coordinated strategies.

Another element of difference among the two worlds is funding. Some social lobbies are funded directly by the European Commission, whereas environmental NGOs rely more on donations, crowd-funding initiatives and contributions from their members (EAPN 2018). This has implications for the nature of these organizations and for their relationships with EU institutions.

Finally, the socio-environmental cultural difference seems to be determined also by divergences at the local and national levels. Social interest groups are normally more member-driven than environmental NGOs. They come from the culture of social services (EAPN 2018) or employees' representation. Their goal is usually to work for and alongside their members, focusing a lot on participation and on the involvement of underrepresented groups of people as stakeholders (EAPN 2018). Therefore, social organizations work in support of - and to deliver on - their members' interests, whereas, in the environmental sector, the opposite seems to be more likely: members subscribe and fund an organization, so that it can develop and carry on its own agenda. That is perhaps the reason why green NGOs have more expertise around campaigns and crowd-funding initiatives and why they work more on public opinion, making more use of new technologies.

In the description above, social NGOs and trade unions have been treated as similar entities, since they both work mainly on social issues and represent the claims of societal actors. However, several differences exist between trade unions and social NGOs, rising from the fact that they are organizations of different nature. Trade unions are usually more institutionalized than NGOs, given that social partners are better embedded in EU policymaking than civil society (EPSU 2018). They have larger networks and complex internal structures, which give rise to strict and highly formalized mandates (EPSU 2018). Finally, perhaps due to a relatively higher abundance of resources, trade unions tend to work not only on social and employment policies, but also on several other policy areas, such as taxes or energy (EPSU 2018), which is not equally frequent for NGOs. Thus, they are more accustomed to work on hard laws than social NGOs.

If such a "difference of culture" (EAPN 2018) really separates the social and the environmental worlds – but also NGOs and trade unions - when they intend to work together, interest groups need to identify common aims and to build trust and understanding through dialogue, so as to overcome stated differences (International environmental NGO 2018). This so-called cultural difference could be seen as a factor that caused the *Right to Energy for All European* coalition to adopt a lighter and informal setting. Indeed, informality allows the coalition to deliver on its programs and plans in an effective and timely way, while creating a space for an open and democratic exchange of opinions, with a view to tie these different cultures together.

*"I think we are going to keep moving cautiously. I think it is good to keep following people's rhythm and capacity, because a lot of the social NGOs [in the coalition] do not have much ca-*

*capacity to work on [the coalition's activities]. Social policy is Member States' competence and so, when I talk to social organizations, they tell me that they are not used to work on hard law and directives. They work on the [European] Semester especially. So, it is very overwhelming to suddenly [have to deal with] all these directives and a different way of working, [for example implying] meeting with MEPs directly and getting amendments in [the legislation]. Usually that is not how they work, or how they are used to. So, I would say that has been kind of a challenge [for the coalition], to make sure that social NGOs understand the process and [know] where we are going and how we work. So, I think we are taking it one step at the time basically" (FoEE 2018 b).*

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the experience of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition has shed a light on some key aspects related to green-red mobilization, i.e. to the joint mobilization of social and environmental interest groups at the EU level.

The coalition is an ensemble of organizations created primarily for strategic reasons. Such organizations normally lack the time and resources to work outside of their mandate. Considering the efficiency gains of working through alliances, by joining them, interest groups have the opportunity to minimize their efforts and still manage to be impactful on policymaking with their proposals.

The *Right to Energy for All Europeans* alliance could be classified initially as a form of ad-hoc cooperation and, while it has more recently attempted to go beyond its ad-hoc agenda, it still maintains an informal setting to this day. Keeping such an informal functional architecture can be understood either as a consequence of the strategic rationale behind the coalition - given that simplified proceedings favor timely and effective delivery - or as the inevitable by-product of mixing the two cultures existing in the social and in the environmental spheres at the EU level.

Both green and social pressure groups seem to commit to a similar multidimensional sustainable agenda, but they do so from symmetrical perspectives. The primary goal of each of these organizations is to represent a specific interest, or a particular group of people. They do not have problems in committing to an overarching agenda, because this agenda usually takes into account their core interest as well. When they want to work together on specific policy issues, such as energy poverty, conflicts may emerge in how lobbies concretely apply sustainability to their policy demands. In the case of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition, trade unions and NGOs have used dialogue to identify common goals and to build trust and understanding.

As a result, common demands have to be multidimensional, hence benefiting all the interests involved. This often implies that agreement would be easier to reach the least detailed the proposals are. Also, when lobbies' fundamental priorities diverge on a specific issue, it is usually hard for them to come up with a synthesis.

Conflicts are normally handled through internal discussions and consequently downplayed, as alliances concentrate more on supporting agreed – thus, consensual - issues and goals.

Full cooperation between social and environmental interest groups at the European level is undermined by their potentially divergent interests and by the complex structures they operate in. Despite a widespread cooperative attitude and the several benefits that coordination may bring, joint mobilization does not display its full potential. Forms of cooperation may be created and may also become effective lobbying machines, but each organization sits at the alliance's table primarily to represent its own interest. This means that organizations maintain their individuality and they are open to cooperate if and only if this is in line with their mandate and it is overall convenient for them to join.

Furthermore, the highly structured context and the constraints in which lobbies normally operate also hinder full cross-sectoral coordination, making it more convenient for them to work through ad-hoc and informal structures. Scarce resources only allow lobbies to allocate such resources to ad-hoc and targeted advocacy strategies, whereas the compartmentalization of EU policymaking gives rise to 'silos' and to cultural differences between European interest groups that work on different policy areas, making cross-sectoral mobilization more difficult to achieve.

Therefore, the prevalence of immediate interests and the complexity of lobbies' structures justify the presence of informal cooperative structures, the fact that common positions are not detailed and that conflicts are not solved.

However, EU-level cooperation among interest groups is not only weak between social and environmental actors, but also among organizations of the same type. So, what role should NGOs and trade unions play in solving the eco-social-growth trilemma? Can green-red cooperation go beyond its current constrictions?

Full coordination – i.e. a form of coordination that goes beyond the above-stated constraints - would still not be sufficient for trade unions and NGOs to solve eco-social disputes, such as the one related to regulated prices in the energy market that emerged within the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition. The issue of energy prices shows that pursuing simultaneously the three performance goals of sustainability may sometimes be impossible. Environmental and social priorities potentially clash in several different policy contexts, in the framework of the eco-social-growth trilemma. It is the political sphere, composed by actors responsible for policy demand and supply, that has the duty to channel different priorities and evaluate the various trade-offs among them. To deliver on such trade-offs, political actors have to endorse ideal constructs, which can guide them in the quest to reconcile social, environmental and economic priorities. While EU institutions, responsible for policy outcomes, seem to have given priority to economic and financial goals, to the detriment of ecological and social sustainability, the opposite atti-

tude characterizes social and green pressure groups at the EU level. Such organizations have carried out a sustainable narrative. Unlike EU institutions, NGOs and trade unions are seemingly going beyond the discourse on sustainability, as they are more and more frequently endorsing the “just transition” concept, which provides a theoretical framework to deliver on eco-social goals.

Through just transition, European NGOs and trade unions have become more aware of the links between the social and the environmental worlds and they have been able to find a common ground, attempting to go beyond the divides that traditionally existed between these worlds. By reinforcing each other’s demands, they seem to be willing to build a cross-sectoral consensus for a developmental model focused on well-being and human needs – instead of growth –, which should favor social justice and cohesion, while also attempting to reverse environmental degradation.

The key aspect is that just transition is different from sustainability. On the one hand, just transition provides a clear objective that is easier for lobbies to apply to concrete policy issues than sustainability, since it only prescribes the simultaneous satisfaction of two out of three performance goals. On the other, it is also a rather radical view, which unsurprisingly does not attract the support of many economic interest groups and business. Going against powerful economic actors, pressure groups might not get the institutional support they would need for their policy demands to be taken on board and, thus, just transition might never actually translate into political outcomes. Being aware of this and reasoning strategically, as they normally do, NGOs and trade unions might hence decide not to go against such powerful interests and to concentrate on their core interests, instead of multidimensional objectives.

Nonetheless, the case of the *Right to Energy for All Europeans* coalition appears as one of the first attempts to promote social-ecological mobilization at the EU level. Members of the coalition even provided recommendations to strengthen it and make it long-lasting, for example by involving national networks and broadening the scope of the coalition beyond the ad-hoc work on the “Clean Energy for All Europeans” package. Moreover, on the one hand, NGOs and trade unions are possibly realizing that, against the backdrop of pressing eco-social challenges, they cannot keep focusing on their immediate interests alone. Workers and societal actors are aware that climate shocks and environmental degradation are already affecting people disproportionately, thus, they are progressively calling for a transition that would not be even more unjust. On the other hand, green organizations are realizing that they would not be able to implement a clean transition if people will resist it.

To conclude, full green-red coordination is still far from happening. Divergent interests and complex structures are likely to water down attempts to improve it. However, eco-social alliances may potentially have the strength and the resources to partly tackle and restructure established frameworks and interests, in the name of a virtuous combination between social and ecological goals.





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