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EU member states reluctant to open up benefits of energy transition to consumers

EU energy ministers meet on Monday to agree to a common line on Commission proposals to reform the electricity market, manage a transition of Europe's energy supply to renewables and roll out new technologies like smart meters. Despite much of the positive rhetoric surrounding this file, ministers are emptying the Commission proposals of many of its advantages.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) said: "At stake is the role normal people can play in the transition to clean energy. Will consumers be players or just payers? EU ministers seem unfortunately to be pushing more for the latter.

"There is tremendous potential for more renewables in our energy supply if we make it easier for consumers to install solar panels and sell the electricity they don't need to the grid. But ministers want to leave the door open to a business-as-usual scenario by blocking electricity generated by consumers.

"This is the opposite of what the EU should do if it is serious about being world number one in renewables."

Energy ministers seem to have eliminated many provisions in the Commission's original proposals which would make small-scale generation of electricity more attractive. For example, ministers seem to want consumers to go through complicated and lengthy procedures if they want to upload electricity to the grid. But household consumers are not professionals and need different rules from big power companies.

Member States also seem to want to keep the back door open to imposing heavy taxes on electricity generated from solar energy, a measure which led to a dramatic fall in the installation of solar panels in some countries [1]. This either made existing solar panel installations by consumers more expensive than they initially thought, or closed the door on those consumers who were thinking of cutting their energy bills by installing solar panels.

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Notes to editors

[1] Spain for example [applied](#) a tax on the generation of renewable energy. [Bulgaria](#) also made retroactive changes to its renewable support schemes. For information on how the installation of solar panels slowed dramatically in Europe, click [here](#).