YES - Europe
Young leaders in Energy and Sustainability

EYEN
YOUTH ENERGY

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European Young Engineers

POSITION PAPER · COP31

EUROPEAN YOUTH POSITION ON ENERGY AT COP31

The joint European youth position on energy, by Europe's largest youth energy and climate organisations

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Prepared for the 31st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP31)
Young Europeans in energy and sustainability

COP31 · ENERGY

European Youth Position on Energy at COP31

Young Europeans working in, studying, or passionate about the energy transition have come together to outline our collective position at COP31. COP31 provides a significant opportunity for meaningful progress on the energy transition, especially taking place in a highly fossil-exposed country at the forefront of renewables build-out, but also comes at a time when COP, and the UN system as a whole, is extremely fragile. This position paper reflects a shared ambition between YES-Europe, EYEN, European Young Engineers (EYE), reflecting the largest European youth energy and climate organisations, and representing the voices of 10,000+ working in energy and climate and a broader community of over 500,000.

OUR POSITIONS

1. **Urges Parties to commit to meaningful action, including thematic tracks with a permanent, dedicated structure, within a continued Mitigation Work Programme (MWP), or in case of failure to agree tangible outcomes, establish a dedicated voluntary pledge, focused on energy sector emissions, separate to official UNFCCC consensus-based negotiations:**
    - **a.** Recognising the importance of a meaningful outcome on the MWP at COP31, being the only global mechanism directly tackling the 1.5ºC target and explicitly mandated to "urgently scale up ambition and implementation in this decade", as well as encouraging reforms to promote meaningful implementation to accelerate emissions mitigations;
    - **b.** Emphasises the urgent need to transition from high-level target-setting to tangible, sector-specific NDC implementation, including for the systemic integration of quantified energy efficiency targets, addressing both supply- and demand-side measures, within all updated Nationally Determined Contributions.
    - **c.** Urges that regional dialogues are integrated into the MWP, with meaningful civil society participation and direct input into official reports.
    - **d.** Calls upon Parties to formalize youth and civil-society consultation processes to decision-making within the MWP, urging the establishment of structured capacity-building frameworks that equip young professionals with the technical skills required to deliver, govern, and monitor equitable NDC implementation at the regional and local levels.
    - **e.** Notes that the MWP should be complementary to GST, integrate outcomes of GST1 and that MWP outcomes should inform the GST2;
    - **f.** Further suggests a multi-stakeholder consultation process to reform multilateral energy governance, improving coordination across existing energy institutions and accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 7(SDG7).

2. **Requests Parties to accelerate the implementation of the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake (GST) in a nationally determined manner, quantified and time-bound targets and policies that:**
    - **a.** In line with the COP31 Presidency's Action Agenda, commit to a binding 35% demand-side electrification by 2035 – bringing efficiency, security, and sustainability benefits across stakeholders;
    - **b.** Expand access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all, consistent with SDG7, including targets for electricity access and clean cooking;
    - **c.** Aim to triple renewable energy and double energy efficiency in their energy mix by 2030, in line with the Triple Up Double Down pledge as agreed at COP29, considering long-term affordability and promoting energy security;
    - **d.** Set out time frames and science-driven common but differentiated pathways for transitioning away from unabated fossil fuels, in particular by reducing fossil fuel import dependency, in a just, orderly and equitable manner;

e. Define a path towards a global phase-out of direct fossil fuel supply-side subsidies, while progressively redirecting public financial support toward clean energy deployment, energy efficiency, and system flexibility, alongside regulatory and market reforms that enable the long-term sustainable viability and scalability of low-emission energy solutions.

f. Encourages multilateral agreement on carbon border adjustment mechanisms to reduce the risk of industrial carbon leakage to emissions intensive energy sources while ensuring that such measures support global decarbonisation rather than create new barriers for developing economies;

3. Encourages Parties to adopt national development strategies and implementation road maps that:

a. Include measures to address the social and economic impacts of the transition on youth and communities, including through youth-sensitive social protection policies, green skills development, reskilling and upskilling programmes, as well as measurable youth employment and green-skill objectives in NDC implementation and just transition plans, supported by clear institutional responsibilities, financing and timelines;

b. Promote decent work and quality jobs in renewable energy, energy efficiency and related sectors, with attention to gender equality and inclusion of underrepresented groups, and strengthen pathways from education and training into employment, including paid apprenticeships and work-based learning;

c. Ensure a just transition of the workforce through the expansion of low-carbon jobs, services and infrastructure; the facilitation of job substitution for workers, including for youth, transitioning out of high-carbon activities; adequate social protection for those whose roles are phased out or significantly reduced; and the progressive greening of skills, practices and job profiles for the existing workforce.

4. Invites global cooperation to urgently address the most polluting fossil fuels, including:

a. Implementing an immediate global moratorium on the financing towards prospecting and exploration of new coal resources, heavy-polluting oil, and fossil fuel activities within recognised conservation areas;

b. Moving towards a gradual but complete shut-down of all unabated coal power electricity generation plants in advanced economies by 2030, and globally by 2040;

c. Aligning remaining fossil fuel production with the limits laid out in the Global Methane Pledge, including reducing global anthropogenic methane emissions by at least 30% below 2020 levels by 2030.

5. Urges Parties to accelerate the planning, expansion, and modernisation of flexible and interconnected power grids, including transmission, distribution, storage and smart-grid infrastructure, in order to support renewable energy integration, energy security, climate resilience, and universal access to affordable electricity, including through:

a. Developing anticipatory grid planning frameworks that account for electricity demand growth, renewable energy deployment targets, climate adaptation needs, and long-term system flexibility requirements, including cross-border coordination where appropriate;

b. Establishing regulatory and enduring market frameworks that enable demand-side flexibility, energy storage, and distributed energy resources to participate in electricity markets and ancillary service provision on a level playing field with centralised generation assets;

c. Prioritising investments in smart-grid infrastructure, digitalisation, and interoperable system technologies, including advanced forecasting, dynamic grid management, and secure data-sharing systems, to improve system efficiency, reduce renewable curtailment, and enhance operational resilience;

d. Supporting decentralised and community-based energy systems, including local flexibility markets, community energy initiatives, and micro-grids, to improve resilience and expand equitable access to affordable and reliable electricity.

e. Encourage large electricity consumers, including data centres and industrial facilities, to provide demand-side flexibility, storage and other system services where technically feasible, and to incorporate flexibility requirements into their connection and planning frameworks.

6. **Notes with concern that the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience contains no explicit reference to energy system resilience, despite climate change directly disrupting energy systems, which cascades across adaptation sectors, and therefore:**

   a. Urges the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies to include energy system resilience as a dedicated topic in at least one of the two annual workshops under the first phase of the Baku Adaptation Road Map (2026–2028), addressing its interlinkages with the targets of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience;

   b. Urges Parties, in pursuance of the goal of increasing the resilience of infrastructure and human settlements under the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, and as part of National Adaptation Plans, to assess and strengthen the resilience of energy supply chains, digital control systems, energy and communications infrastructure against extreme heat, flooding, storms, drought, wildfire and other climate-related hazards up to 1-in-200 year events;

   c. Requests the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies to ensure structured youth participation in the workshops under the first phase of the Baku Adaptation Road Map (2026–2028), recognising youth as active contributors to adaptation planning and implementation rather than solely as a vulnerable group.

7. **Calls upon the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), multilateral development banks and other financial institutions, in line with the NCQG, to:**

   a. Establish or strengthen dedicated or prioritised funding windows or facilities for youth-led and community-based SDG7 projects;

   b. Develop tailored accreditation pathways and support mechanisms to enable youth-led organisations, community-based entities and local authorities to access climate finance for sustainable energy projects, tracking and reporting on finance flows contributing to SDG7 and to youth-led and youth-benefiting activities, in line with guidance from the Standing Committee on Finance and the enhanced transparency framework.

   c. Notes the need to substantially increase / strengthen the availability, accessibility and affordability of finance for transmission and distribution infrastructure, clean energy, storage, flexibility and energy access in developing countries, including through concessional finance, guarantees, blended finance, and risk-sharing mechanisms, recognising the cost of capital and limited revenue models as key barriers to deployment.

8. **Requests Parties to actively use the progress towards a global UN carbon market under Article 6 to deliver a sustainable energy transition, including:**

   a. Ensuring that residual fossil fuel emissions are balanced with durable carbon removal in line with the like-for-like principle matching geological and natural carbon cycle timelines;

   b. Advising Parties to implement carbon takeback obligations to support the Net Zero Decarbonization Charter for oil and gas production, ensuring residual fossil production reaches net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2050 at the latest through CCS and/or CDR compensation;

   c. Suggesting Parties use Article 6 to generate concessional investment for a green energy system and industry in emerging markets, recognising the importance of international cooperation.

9. **Notes that AI technologies can meaningfully accelerate whole system change and optimisation towards Paris Agreement targets, including energy consumption and distribution, minimising energy waste, and identifying emission hotspots in industrial processes, while also noting that the potential of AI can only be fully realised through robust framework is developed responsibly and without compromising energy affordability, security or equity, and therefore:**

   a. Ensure that the energy needs of households, essential services and critical infrastructure are not adversely affected by rapidly growing data-centre demand, and prevent the externalisation of AI-related energy and network costs onto consumer;

   b. Calls upon Parties to ensure that the physical expansion of AI infrastructure does not cannibalise, displace, or unduly delay grid capacity at the expense of communities and the general public;

c. Concurrently, recognises that, where appropriately planned and located, data centres can increase utilisation of existing electricity infrastructure and support investment in renewable generation and grid infrastructure, potentially reducing unit costs for other consumers; and encourages such development to be assessed on the basis of its overall impact on costs, system resilience and benefits for households, SMEs and critical industry;

d. Requests Parties to ensure that the expansion of AI infrastructure does not exacerbate existing inequalities between developed and developing countries, by ensuring that AI does not accelerate climate impacts felt most acutely by vulnerable nations;

e. Requests Parties to ensure that workforce transitions driven by AI automation in the energy sector are managed in a just and inclusive manner, with particular attention to intergenerational equity, reskilling and upskilling, and the creation of green jobs for young people;

f. Advises Parties work with Local Planning Authorities to limit the use of fossil fuel mobile generation as redundancy solutions, given its disproportionate local environmental impact on marginalised communities, and promote long-term, clean power alternatives.

10. Calls upon Parties, in the context of the midterm review of the Glasgow work programme on Action for Climate Empowerment and the development of its new action plan, to strengthen the role of ACE in enabling a just, inclusive and informed energy transition, including through:

a. Integrating accessible, science-based energy and climate literacy into formal, non-formal and vocational education and professional training, with particular attention to equitable access and the needs of young people;

b. Strengthening pathways for young people to acquire the technical, policy and interdisciplinary skills required to participate in the design, implementation and operation of future energy systems;

c. Promoting information integrity in the energy transition by improving public access to accurate, accessible and evidence-based information, strengthening critical thinking and media literacy, and addressing climate and energy-related misinformation and disinformation;

d. Ensuring meaningful and sustained participation of youth, including students, young professionals and youth-led organisations, in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national and subnational energy and climate policies, through transparent, inclusive and institutionalised consultation and decision-making mechanisms;

e. Strengthening the institutional mandate, capacities and resources of national ACE focal points, as appropriate to national circumstances, to facilitate cross-sectoral coordination, contribute to relevant national climate and energy policy processes, and support the integration of ACE priorities into nationally determined contributions, national energy and climate strategies and just transition planning;

f. Establishing or strengthening mechanisms for national ACE focal points to engage directly with relevant decision-making bodies, including energy ministries, education and labour authorities, and national climate coordination structures, while facilitating regular and meaningful dialogue with youth organisations, academia