Citizen participation and issues in green transformation processes (emphasis on energy communities)

Abstract

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The development of citizen energy in a republic of Croatia is slow and inefficient primarily due to the inaction of institutions (both government and regulatory). The transposition of EU regulations is inappropriate (also for corrupt reasons) and completely prevents their operationalization. Professional associations are insufficiently active, and the struggle for energy transition is reduced to the activities of the NGO sector and individuals from the academic community.

Although progress has been made in the past period, there is not a single functional energy community that would enable the exchange of energy between its members.

There are strong resistances to the development of energy communities in the Republic of Croatia (as well as in the entire area of Southeast Europe). Namely, large national energy monopolies (HEP in Croatia, EPS in Serbia, etc.) have realized that the networking of the market (where they are now the de facto only players) with energy communities radically changes their position. And instead of accepting this new reality to multiply the advantages it brings (a greater degree of energy resilience, the possibility of substituting energy imports, the possibility of ensuring a more energy-fair society, etc.) we are witnessing the continuous activity of energy lobbies to prevent any serious development.

There is evident inactivity of the academic sector (except for a few individuals) in the promotion of innovative technologies and education of all stakeholders in the energy chain. In this case, the interests of individual institutions outweigh broader social interests and given the complexity and comprehensiveness of the problem of energy transition – without changing this academic mindset, decades will pass until the necessary changes are implemented.

In this sense, it becomes a crucial role of the NGO sector and the citizens themselves in the promotion and struggle for changing relations in the energy sector. Given the great disproportion in the financial and marketing power of the actors, EU-funded projects that enable the "dissemination of news" and education of citizens to achieve a critical mass for change play a major role.

In the practical part of the presentation, we will present some of the current projects and initiatives in which we participate, and which aim to raise consumer awareness and pressure regulators to adopt regulations and regulations that will enable translate and accessible energy transition for everyone.