

Affordability under pressure: how to keep energy accessible

How do we keep energy affordable for consumers and businesses? This question was central during the recently held Energiepodium Dinner, made possible by PwC. More than twenty key figures from the energy sector gathered to discuss how we can prevent the increasing costs and complex sustainability goals from putting too much pressure on households and industry.

Consumers and energy poverty

The first part of the discussion highlighted a clear signal: rising energy bills are severely impacting households, especially those with lower incomes. Emergency funds, it was emphasized, play an essential role in addressing acute problems such as energy poverty. They provide relief but are by definition temporary solutions. Structural change requires more than that.

Many attendees pointed to the possibilities of targeted tax cuts and a revision of net tariffs. It is a political choice, it was noted, to relieve families who are financially struggling. Criticism was voiced from various quarters towards the government for the lack of consistent policy lines. This complicates investments in sustainability and leaves households uncertain about their future.

During the evening, poignant examples emerged of how households are coping with the current crisis. Saving by heating or cooking less has become a daily reality for many. An additional complication is that insufficient heating leads to mold and moisture in homes, with all the associated health problems.

Industry: innovation under pressure

For the industry, sustainability is indispensable, but the high costs of technologies such as CCS, direct electrification, and hydrogen make investments challenging. The Dutch industry supplies a large part of Europe with goods and services but now largely bears the financial burdens of sustainability itself. This places companies in an untenable position, where billions of euros in subsidies are needed to remain competitive. There is also a joint task to clearly convey the importance of the industry for the Netherlands to politics and certain ministries.

The evening highlighted the need for a joint European approach. By financing subsidies at the European level, costs can be distributed more fairly, and strategic autonomy can be strengthened. A joint European investment climate offers not only financial benefits but also opportunities to accelerate the energy transition on a larger scale.

Here too, there was criticism of politics. For twenty years, a clear long-term vision from the government has been lacking, forcing companies to operate in an unpredictable policy environment. This leads to uncertainty and reluctance to make large investments. One suggestion was that the industry might need to take the lead in creating a clearer future perspective, rather than waiting for direction from politics.

Working together on structural solutions

What the evening mainly showed is that the affordability of energy is not an isolated problem. The balance between temporary relief and structural solutions requires clear choices and a joint approach. Households and businesses are inextricably linked in this challenge: the transition can only succeed if both parties can continue to play their role in a future energy system.

About Energiepodium.nl

[Energiepodium.nl](https://www.energiepodium.nl) is an online platform with news, opinions and background information about the energy transition. PwC is a platform partner because it makes an important contribution to the social debate on energy and climate. In addition to the online platform, Energiepodium also organizes physical events, such as dinner meetings. This series theme is 'Beyond 2030'. In doing so, we look ahead and create insight into what the energy market and climate policy will look like – or should look like – in the next decade.