5th Session

5.1 Transition towards sustainable energy and environmental future practices

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Energy and climate action plans prove to be significant for urban sustainability, as they allow achieving higher energy efficiencies while at the same time air quality is improving and the levels of renewable energy used are increasing. It is likely that novel sensors will prove very helpful in setting up future energy and climate action plans.

Experience with the penetration of photovoltaic systems in buildings, including interactions with the grid, encourage to proceed to the implementation of such systems for energy communities. This will allow meeting the goals of several individuals, while contributing to the decarbonization of the energy system. Efforts are necessary for improving the technologies pertinent to energy community projects, while removing barriers for their implementation.

500 million people in the EU enjoy public water and sanitary services.
At a consumption of 245 liters per person per day, this means around 50 billion m3 of yearly water abstractions. To ensure the sustainable use of water resources, the EU has set, in the context of its Circular Economy Action Plan, ambitious goals considering both water use and reuse and wastewater treatment. To achieve these goals, significant investments will be needed in the utilities' infrastructure in the coming decade in water supply systems and in wastewater treatment plans, so as to reduce both their water and carbon footprint.

Waste management remains a significant issue in Balkan countries. There is a need to drastically increase recycling and at the same time reduce landfilling. Additional waste-to-energy facilities appear to be important ingredients of the overall waste management system in several regions, and it was agreed that this by no means contradicts the general trend towards Circular Economy.