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# Decarbonizing Europe

NGOs Setting the Agenda and Lobbying the EU  
Energy Union

Master's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Michael J. Geary

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Faculty of Humanities  
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## Abstract

This thesis analyses the room of action for CAN Europe and ISES, two NGOs working towards climate action and promoting solar energy as components of the decarbonization of the EU. The purpose is to highlight the room for action, especially the position NGOs hold in developing frameworks, which in this case is the EU Energy Union. Utilizing a document analysis, this thesis show that CAN Europe and ISES are central actors that contribute to putting decarbonization on the EU agenda, by the means of public engagement, internal and external networks, as well as having direct access to the EU decision-makers in meetings with officials from the EU Commission. Especially for ISES, it is essential that they have access through their advisory position to governments and decision-makers in the EU. Further, the EU Energy Union is subject to analysis, to highlight the room of action for CAN Europe and ISES members. The conclusion shows that the EU Energy Union provides a framework that is very relevant for CAN Europe and ISES' members, as it includes ambitions and limitations for the implementation of renewable energy, as well as climate action for both private households and businesses, and this relates directly to the practices found among the actors in CAN Europe and ISES.

## Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven analyserer handlingsrommet til CAN Europe og ISES, to ikke-statlige organisasjoner som arbeider med klimatiltak og promoterer solenergi som en del av løsningen til avkarbonisering av EU. Formålet er å belyse handlingsrommet, og spesielt posisjonen ikke-statlige organisasjoner har under utformingen av rammeverk, i denne sammenhengen EUs energi union. Ved bruk av en dokumentanalyse viser denne oppgaven at CAN Europe og ISES er sentrale aktører som bidrar til å sette avkarbonisering på EUs politiske agenda ved hjelp av offentlig engasjement, interne og eksterne nettverk, samt at de har direkte tilgang til sentrale aktører gjennom møter med EU kommisjonen. Spesielt for ISES er det viktig at de har rådgivere for de lovgivende aktørene som utformer rammeverkene i EU. Videre blir EUs energi union analysert, med formål å belyse handlingsrommet for CAN Europe og ISES' medlemmer. Konklusjonen viser at EUs energi union legger til rette for et rammeverk som er svært aktuelt for både CAN Europe og ISES medlemmer, da det tilbyr ambisjoner og begrensinger for implementering av fornybar energi, samt klimatiltak både for private hjem og bedrifter, og dette relaterer direkte til praksisen vi finner blant aktørene i CAN Europe og ISES.



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## List of Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| EU     | European Union                           |
| GHG    | Greenhouse gas                           |
| EU ETS | European Union Emission Trading Scheme   |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization            |
| CAN    | Climate Action Network                   |
| ISES   | International Solar Energy Society       |
| CCU    | Carbon capture and utilization           |
| CCS    | Carbon capture and storage               |
| CCUS   | Carbon capture, utilization, and storage |



# 1. Introduction

With the European Union (EU) aiming at climate neutrality by 2050, several technical and systemic changes must be implemented. The EU has introduced several strategies and legislative packages in order to achieve this goal, for example, the EU Energy Union, the European Green Deal, and the 2050 long-term strategy (European Commission, 2022a). The EU is also one of 196 signatories of the Paris Agreement of 2015, and therefore legally bound to achieve the target of limiting global temperature rise to below 2°C, preferably below 1.5°C. So far, the EU has been able to legally enshrine the 2050 climate neutrality goal into EU law, by introducing the EU Climate Law (European Commission, 2022a), proposed in the official European Green Deal communication. Furthermore, the EU member states are required to periodically update national strategies explaining how they aim to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and contribute to achieving climate neutrality in the EU. However, to what extent the EU member states adhere to climate mitigating measures is not necessarily uniform, and greatly varies across regions and levels of society (Salvia, 2021, p. 12).

The EU member states work towards climate neutrality on their behalf and the EU as a whole. The idea of climate neutrality suggests there will be net-zero emissions in the EU. Therefore, the EU must either produce no greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or implement legislation and technology that allows for the removal of more GHG emissions than they release into the atmosphere. To achieve this, key sectors such as industry and energy must be reviewed and evaluated in terms of what strategy would be best suited for the respective field, or in other words, decarbonized. Legislative measures and mechanisms are already in place, as we see with for instance the EU Climate Law and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). The field of energy is of high importance to the EU, as has been exemplified by the significant revisions, such as introducing the REPower EU Strategy as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2021 (European Commission, 2022c). Consequently, the EU revised many of its practices related to energy security, sustainability, and competitiveness, often referred to as the energy policy triangle (Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 549), which has resulted in more focus on these three components in any frameworks related to energy (Szulecki, et al., 2016; Arning, et al., 2019; Lenox and Duff, 2021). Technological advancement in energy is occurring at a rapid pace, and implementation of fossil-free energy sources is becoming more widespread in the EU (Cornot-Gandolphe, 2021, p. 3), justified by efforts to decarbonize the EU towards climate neutrality. The room of action provided by frameworks that focus on the energy policy triangle and technological advancement of renewable energy is precisely what will be in focus in this thesis, and imperative to study due to it being contemporary and a field with a lot of movement with implications to numerous actors.

The case of the EU commitment to the Paris Agreement is unusual, because not only are the EU member states legally bound to the Paris Agreement as EU members, but also as individual signatories. The member states are followed up by the EU with periodic check-ins on their path towards climate neutrality but are also committed to achieving reduced GHG emissions independently. It is not always transparent who initiates the developments that are necessary for the EU to achieve climate neutrality, especially since the EU member states also have commitments of their own. The Respective governments within the EU implement legislation to reach the global temperature goal provided by the Paris

Agreement, while also contributing to the climate neutrality of the EU. Some member states are more inclined to do so, as scholars have found a more rapid technological development in the larger EU states such as Germany (Shogenova, et al., 2014; Szulecki, et al., 2016). This may be attributed to the fact that Germany has a highly developed energy sector and is a large industrial nation, making them dependent on political support at all levels in order to reach net-zero emissions (Cornot-Gandolphe, 2021, p. 5). Interest organizations such as industrial organizations arguably play a vital role in the decarbonization of the EU (Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 334). This is underpinned by, for instance, the 18 Germany-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are taking part in the Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe (CAN Europe, 2022d) on their path towards climate action, pointing to active effort from the industries in promoting climate action. Similarly, we find more energy-intensive nations as members of the International Solar Energy Society (ISES), such as Germany, France, and Norway (ISES, 2022b).

CAN Europe is an NGO coalition in Europe with members in 38 European Countries, representing 1500 NGOs, “empowering civil society organizations to influence the design and development of effective climate change policy in Europe” (CAN Europe, 2022a). It is the European branch of the much larger CAN International, working directly with influencing the decision-makers in Brussels on behalf of their members and their interests. It is a non-profit that receives funding from the European Commission, and European governments, in addition to contributions by its members (CAN Europe, 2022c). The ISES is a membership-based NGO working to provide a network for sharing knowledge and community building to accelerate technological advancement and implementation of renewable energy (ISES, 2022a). It is the most prominent international organization for solar energy and works in 110 countries with its industrial members while also advocating for young professionals to connect to the ISES vision worldwide. The organization provides advisory consultations for governments, and they can lean on research to provide objective technical and political guidance in their field (ISES, 2022a). In this thesis, both CAN Europe and ISES will be referred to as NGOs. Although CAN Europe specifies they are an NGO coalition, while ISES defines itself as an international solar organization, they both promote members organized interests and therefore will be treated as overarching NGOs rather than interest organizations.

The EU Energy Union was proposed by the Commission of then President Jean Claude Juncker in 2015 and became a cornerstone of his presidency of the EU Commission (European Commission, 2022b). The main idea was to provide EU citizens with affordable, sustainable, and competitive energy by the means of packages containing measures to achieve the overall Energy Union strategy. The Energy Union includes five main dimensions: Security, solidarity, and trust; a fully integrated energy market; energy efficiency; climate action and decarbonizing the EU economy; and research, innovation and competitiveness (European Commission, 2022b). In 2018 the Commission issued the “Regulation on the Governance of the energy union and climate action”, emphasizing the cooperation between the EU and its member states, as well as the internal collaboration among member states towards the climate neutrality goal of the EU (European Commission, 2022b). In 2022, the Commission of Ursula von der Leyen introduced the initiative REPower EU as a response to the energy crises that occurred as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This plan aims at ensuring energy security, producing clean energy, and diversifying energy sources so the EU no longer relies as much as it historically has on the Russian energy supply (European Commission, 2022c). This shows that energy is of a high priority to the EU, and thus is a field with a lot of movement and room for influence by interest actors.

Although the national governments provide the legislative framework for industries and organized actors to operate within, in terms of, for example limitations on emissions, it is the NGOs that present the governments with contemporary issues that need to be taken into consideration, because the NGOs are at the center of continuous change. It is arguably the NGOs that set the agenda of contemporary issues for which the governments must provide the legislative framework. Although the political agenda of the EU is rather large and complex, with input from several actors at multiple levels, it is interesting to recognize the effect of non-state actors and interest groups as drivers for decarbonization policies. Limiting the scope of study to the timeframe between the presentation of the EU Energy Union in 2015, and the subsequent implementation of the Energy Union, this thesis seeks to investigate the two research questions:

1. *In what ways do CAN Europe and ISES affect the EU decarbonization policy agenda?*
2. *To what extent does the EU Energy Union provide a framework for both CAN Europe and ISES members to operate within?*

The EU policy agenda is complex and encompass many fields of interest. By scrutinizing the decarbonization agenda of the EU in terms of the EU Energy Union, the aim is to highlight the agency of CAN Europe and ISES in agenda-setting, by investigating their impact on the decarbonization field of the policy agenda and highlight possible challenges in their efforts with regards to keeping their members' interests on the agenda. Further, the focus of the thesis will provide useful insight into key dissimilarities in their approach to affect the decarbonization policy. Additionally, the room for action for the given NGOs in relation to the EU Energy Union will emphasize the role which NGOs play in the field of energy, and thus, their position as drivers of decarbonization in the EU. Existing scholarly literature concerns general agenda-setting and the effects of NGO activity on the political agenda, as well as the role of national and EU positions in policy development and societal progress in the field of decarbonization (see: Szulecki, Fischer, Gullberg & Sartor, 2016; Arning, Offerman-Van Heek, Linzenich, Kaetelhoen, Sternberg, Bardow & Ziefle, 2019). Also, studies have looked at agencies in the EU and their ability to provide useful information to decision-makers, as well as the impact of the interest organizations' structure and thereof effects (see: Jevnaker, Saerbeck, Szulecki & Claes, 2019; Bunea, Ineskas & Weiler, 2022). This thesis will further concentrate on the effects of NGO involvement concerning energy specifically. It is important to accentuate the specified agencies NGOs hold, and especially their role in the development of frameworks such as the EU Energy Union, because not only are they vital actors in the design of the frameworks, but they also represent the actors who are directly affected by its implementation, that is businesses and other organized interests. Further, CAN Europe and ISES will in this case provide an example of the ways in which the decarbonization policy can be lobbied, as well as the extent to which the Energy Union provides a functional framework for EU-based interests to operate within, allowing for assumptions to be made on the actions of similar NGOs and their route of action to lobby EU policy. Lastly, this thesis will provide an analysis of the actions of CAN Europe and ISES, which have yet to be compared in existing scholarly literature, and thus contribute to an understanding of the relevance of including NGOs in the development of EU policies.

## 1.1. Literature Review

The development of the decarbonization policy has resulted in increased interest among scholars from a number of fields. There are numerous studies on the feasibility of decarbonization, the concept of decarbonization, and the advantages and disadvantages of decarbonization technologies. This literature review will account for articles that explain the relevance of agenda-setting with respect to policy initiatives in climate and energy policy in the EU. This literature review will focus on the political and implementation aspects of decarbonization policy and renewable energy technologies from the EU, the member states, and NGOs. Although it is primarily the NGOs that are important to this thesis, the aspects of the EU and member states are also included as it provides a better overview of the actual limitations to NGO involvement in policy development. Based on the findings here, the thesis will thus contribute with a contemporary analysis of the room of action for the CAN Europe and ISES as NGOs with a focus on sustainable and renewable industries, highlighting who sets the agenda, and how their actions affect the development of the overarching EU decarbonization agenda. Although the concepts of agenda-setting will not be revolutionized in this thesis, the articles provide a base for the thesis analysis to be conducted. There is available literature on both the concepts of agenda-setting and climate and energy policy (Szulecki, et al., 2016; Drummond & Ekins, 2016), as well as the role of agency and network in policy development (Jevnaker, et al., 2019; Duwe, 2001). However, this thesis will contribute with a case analysis in light of the energy union and thus the role of NGOs and their room of action within the Energy Union framework.

### 1.1.1. Agenda-Setting

As with any other policy area, climate and energy policy are highly affected by agenda-setting actors. When a policy field is subject to change, there are central actors, either actors at the industrial level, the member states themselves, or the institutional level of the EU, that propose alternative processes of doing so. The concept of agenda-setting has been utilized as a framework to explain changes in policy areas, especially in such a contemporary field as climate and energy policies (Arning, et al., 2019; Ku, et al., 2020; Przyborowicz, 2021; Schoenefeld, et al., 2021; Szulecki, et al., 2016). Although the attention to carbon mitigation is relatively new in terms of its prominence in the last decades, the ideas have been circulating in the political arena for quite a few years. The literature on agenda-setting for the implementation of decarbonization technologies and policy in the EU is somewhat limited, but growing. It will provide a framework for the analysis that is to come in the thesis.

The idea of an Energy Union received some backlash upon its proposal in 2014, and is subject to analysis in Szulecki et. Al. (2016), with respect to four energy utilization cases, is Germany, France, Poland, and Norway. The article discusses the four positions the countries pose in terms of the proposed Energy Union that were put on the agenda by then Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and incoming Commission President Jean Claude Juncker (p. 552). It argues that agenda-setting in terms of EU Energy policy is a dynamic and complex process, drawn between the desire for Europeanization of policies versus maintaining the sovereignty of EU member states in terms of climate and energy policy (p. 560). The article states that bargaining power is a helpful tool for core member states to set the agenda for the EU policies, an aspect that is highly relevant with respect to this thesis because the idea of having influence in key member states that are promoting change will be a part of the baseline in the argumentation.



In terms of acceptance of carbon-mitigating technologies, Arning, et. Al. (2019) provides an analysis of public perceptions of both carbon capture and utilization (CCU) and carbon capture and storage (CCS, referenced together as CCUS) in Germany, arguing that existing knowledge on CCS affects acceptance of CCU. However, it also shows that CCU gains a better public perception compared to CCS due to potential risks in storage and transport of CO<sub>2</sub> (p. 236). Their contribution regards the development of communication concepts with respect to public concerns when implementing sequestration technologies. The awareness of potential risks and benefits of the technologies is of great importance when a country is re-evaluating its position on fossil-based fuels and energy sources, so the article provides a social science-based analysis based on perceived public opposition in Europe. This thesis will agree with the argument of the importance of public perceptions when it comes to introducing new technologies that deal with waste products from industries, as it directly affects the political agenda. However, this thesis is not targeted towards sequestration technologies, but rather the implementation of renewable energy as part of the decarbonization of the EU, thus the article serves as a complementary source for the importance of public perception rather than posing an argument for discussion.

Continuing with the issue of limiting emissions through policies, Ku, et. Al. (2020) presents an analysis of industries' role in promoting a paradigm shift in terms of introducing mitigating measures and how important it is to share the lessons and accrued knowledge across borders. The article reviews three archetypes of CCUS deployment, namely low-carbon grids, green growth, and resource recovery, with the prospect of clarifying technical issues and providing a framework of policy requirements. This puts the industries at the center of change and introduces the industries as agenda-setting actors (p. 205), and is largely in line with the argumentation of this thesis. Part of the aim of the thesis is to analyze the levels of influence that are neither national nor EU positions in agenda-setting for the decarbonization of energy in terms of political frameworks, thus complementing the study presented by Ku (et al., 2020).

Although ambitious, the goal of net zero is a process of constant concern for the EU. The need for development politically, while keeping a particular position in the international arena may be difficult. According to Schoenefeld, Schulze, Hildén, and Jordan (2021), this is an issue that collides with the EU goal of carbon neutrality (p. 35). The case presented regards stable policy mixes in member states, while the expected per-policy-instrument emission reduction in the EU is declining (p. 31). This article thus provides a third view of agenda-setting actors, as it puts the EU member states' position at the forefront, while the EU needs to pick up the pace and re-evaluate its position. The EU member states are also relevant in terms of development on behalf of the NGOs operating within their borders. The member states have other channels for influence than the NGOs, and therefore are vital actors for NGOs to cooperate with.

The EU's role in international politics has long been a leading one, and as stated in Przyborowicz (2021), the EU wants to remain a leading actor with regard to limited GHG emissions as well. In his article on the EU Climate Law, a measure of the EU Green Deal, the process of creating the law is scrutinized in terms of the policy transformations in the EU with the aim of a net-zero economy (p. 44). The development and implementation of a specific law, such as the climate law, emphasize the EU's interest in reaching the goal of climate neutrality and may serve as an example for other international actors. The argument of the necessity of the EU acting as a global actor and posing as an example for other states is important for this thesis, because it directly affects the limitations for the influence of the political agenda for actors lower than the EU level, in the sense that all

actions aimed at influencing the decarbonization agenda are expected to be within the overarching goals of the EU.

This thesis will follow the arguments made by Szulecki et al. (2016), and their claims of both bargaining power and agenda-setting made by core EU member states and key actors in the field of energy and technological deployment. Additionally, the presented results of increased positivity towards CCU rather than CCS in Arning (et al., 2019) will to a certain extent be relevant for the thesis, but the technologies will instead refer to the interaction with the implementation of renewable energy sources compared to solely CCUS implementation. The overall concept of agenda-setting is the subject in both Szulecki (et al., 2016) and Ku (et al., 2020). It is of relevance to the thesis when analyzing whether the EU, the member states, or the industries and NGOs are core actors in terms of pushing for change in the field of decarbonizing energy. With regards to Schoenefeld (et al., 2021), the issue of the EU having to enhance its policy-instrumental efforts will to some extent be in line with the thesis' argumentation, concerning the necessity of EU instruments allowing for the implementation of renewable energy solutions. Przyborowicz's (2021) article on the EU Climate Law will provide a base for EU policy development that ensures the possibility for the implementation of such technologies. The thesis will therefore not pose any new concepts concerning agenda-setting, but rather rely on this as a framework and further contribute with a deeper analysis of the room of action for NGOs in relation to the decarbonization agenda.

### 1.1.2. Agency and Networks

The legislators in the EU frequently utilize expert groups to keep their decisions contemporary and relevant to society, and they are also being advised on what are the more urgent issues that need to be addressed. The idea of agencification includes "the establishment of EU agencies that are executive-administrative entities operating at varying distances from politics" (Jevnaker et al., 2019). These agencies frequently operate within networks with other organizations that serve in the same domain. Understanding the importance of agencies and networks is essential when reviewing the effect NGOs can have on the policy agenda (Bunea, et al., 2022; Jevnaker, et al., 2019; Salvia, et al., 2021). Although not mutually exclusive, agency and network are closely related and can have a crucial effect on the outcome depending on how they are utilized in the lobbying process.

EU decision-making affects actors at all levels in the EU, so naturally, the EU utilizes expert groups and advisors within the respective fields when proposing and implementing new legislation. The idea of agencies in the EU has especially received attention following the reorganization presented by Jean Claude Juncker when he became Commission President, and in light of the EU Energy Union (Jevnaker, et al., 2019, p. 60). In their article on EU agencies in the field of climate and energy policy, Jevnaker (et al., 2019) analyze two agencies in the EU, namely the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, and the European Environmental Agency, and how their route of providing information to the Commission is helpful or not in the making of environmental legislation (p. 61). The issue at hand revolves around the idea that the information provided should be relevant, and the findings show that the agencies provide more expert knowledge for the Commission, and even provide the Commission with an advantage vis-à-vis the member states in terms of information and thus the development of the policies. This underlines the assumption being made in the thesis, that NGOs and agencies are essential components of the legislative process, as the organizations work in specialized fields and therefore will

promote relevant issues accompanied by appropriate solutions that should be on the policy-maker's agendas.

The use of networks is an important aspect in the shaping of the political agenda, and Bunea, Ibenskas, and Weiler (2022) scrutinize the interest-group network formation concerning EU policy domains in their article on the importance of interest-group networks (p. 719). The article is the first large-scale investigation of the networks found among interest groups in the EU. The results show that it is less likely that being from the same country makes the interest groups more inclined to work together. In contrast, interest type and having a foot inside the right domain is viewed as a more crucial component when forming the networks. The findings show that policy context is essential when reviewing interest group networks (p. 735-736), which applies to this thesis as the case study is based on two NGOs operating in the same domain, while also having roots in multiple countries and thus not complying merely with the interest of one state.

The work towards climate neutrality relies on cooperation on all levels of the EU, also the local levels. Salvia, et al., (2021) provides a comparative analysis of local-level mitigation targets in 327 European cities, encompassing 25% of the EU population, revealing a low average mitigation target of 47% (p. 13). This shows that the studied cities are not on track to reach the targets of the Paris Agreement. However, the study also finds that city size, climate network memberships, and local motivation are key factors in local targets, and emphasize the need for inter-municipal government cooperation in the development of climate strategies (Salvia, et al., 2021, p. 13). Not only is this compatible with the arguments of this thesis, but it also depicts the importance of lower levels of engagement in climate action, which is a key component in the objective of CAN Europe and may be considered a segment for ISES in their promotion of solar energy as well.

## 1.2. Methodology

This thesis will be conducted as a case study of CAN Europe and ISES, and their effect on decarbonization policy development in the EU in light of the European Energy Union. By utilizing a case study with two NGOs, the thesis will be able to explore the topic at hand in more detail and further highlight important similarities and differences in action taken by the two NGOs. The selection of these cases has been based on their field of operation. Both CAN Europe and ISES are NGOs with a substantial member base in Europe, and both work on behalf of their members to promote sustainable climate policy. CAN Europe's activity level is very high, as they continuously post policy letters, reports, and briefings on their websites, and are present in the arenas in which decisions are made on behalf of their members. Similarly, ISES has 18 European contacts alone, with operations worldwide, and the organization hosts conferences and webinars, and publishes journals, white papers, and newsletters. Both NGOs' ability to reach a broad audience would therefore strengthen their position when working on decarbonizing the energy sector with their members' interests in mind. The strategy of using two cases assumes that they will provide insight into practices that will answer the research question, and therefore allow a certain generalization to be made on behalf of NGOs that are not included yet operate in the renewable energy and decarbonization field as well. The two cases will to some extent be compared, however this is not with the intent of analyzing which NGO has more agency than the other, rather

To execute the case study, the data collection will be based on documentation from both CAN Europe and ISES, primarily found on their websites, complemented by official documents provided by the EU institutions. CAN Europe publishes policy briefings,

statements, reports, and position papers on its official website, all divided into different topics such as climate action and the energy transition. ISES provides reports, newsletters, and journals, and continuously updates relevant news articles for their members on their website. The primary method of research will therefore be document studies, meaning that the provided sources will primarily have been generated for other purposes than research, but it also allows for the study to be less invasive than other methods (Tjora, 2018, p. 182). The selection of documents is case-specific to highlight the route of action taken by CAN Europe and ISES to promote their members' interests in decarbonization, while documents from the EU would serve as general information to underpin the context of the NGOs' actions.

The thesis will utilize a simple case study design with the aim of providing an in-depth study of CAN Europe and ISES. Both NGOs work in a plethora of countries, and therefore have links to governments around the globe, but also a broader reach in terms of availability in the political arena. The simple case study is based on the assumption that the cases may be regarded as both similar and different. As the thesis has yet to find which one applies, the design will be based on a simple case design, because there can be no assumption which one will prove to be accurate. It is also based on the case selection because it is expected to find similarities between CAN Europe and ISES given that they are NGOs with a similar purpose, namely promoting engagement around renewable energy and climate action, while also working at different levels with differentiated member organizations. Based on this, the thesis does not assume any similarity or differences, but rather treat the cases in a simple case study to argue for both sides in the discussion. To perform a case study, this thesis aims at providing an intensive study of a certain unit to understand similar units in the same field (Gerring, 2004, p. 342; Nielsen, 2016, p. 571). Both CAN Europe and ISES are formal units of analysis because they are both chosen as the units for intensive analysis (Gerring, 2004, p. 344). The similar characteristics found in the selection of CAN Europe and ISES as cases, while allowing for potential differences also to be highlighted, will enable this thesis to use the simple case approach, because the NGOs operate in the same field and promote similar interests on behalf of their members, creating the assumption of parallel proceedings in terms of affecting the EU decarbonization aspect of the Energy Union. This is also the justification for why the thesis cannot disregard a most different design, because comparisons of the cases may highlight areas in their field of operations where they differ substantially.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows: in chapter two, the contextual background for the cases will be provided. The section includes the make and purpose of each NGO and their main form of public communication. This will provide a base for the analysis in which their channels of influencing the EU decarbonization agenda will be in focus. Chapter three concerns the EU Energy Union, its purpose and history, as well as featuring a section on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package which creates a legislative framework for actors affected by the Energy Union. In the analysis of chapter four, the main focus is highlighting the pathways for which CAN Europe and ISES utilize to affect the decarbonization policies, and how they promote renewable energy and decarbonization as contemporary issues for the policy agenda. In chapter 5, the discussion, the prior sections of contextual background and analysis will come together to highlight the focus of the thesis, which is addressing the issues regarding how CAN Europe and ISES affect the decarbonization policies in light of the EU Energy Union, as well as the extent to which the Energy Union provides a framework for the CAN Europe and ISES members to operate within. Chapter six summarizes the thesis and concludes that there is a close relationship between the two research questions posed in the introduction. The activity performed by both NGOs allows them to be central

actors who contribute to setting the decarbonization agenda in the EU. At the same time, their efforts also have provided their members with an applicable framework to operate within in the form of the EU Energy Union. The conclusion shows that both CAN Europe and ISES' lobbying activities directly affect the decarbonization agenda and the EU Energy Union, supporting the justification for both case selection and assumptions posed on their role as NGOs in the political arena.

## 2. The Background and Role of CAN Europe and ISES

Of the many international organizations working to promote their members' interest in the political arena, this thesis will focus on CAN Europe and ISES. It is important to investigate the role of NGOs and their contribution to agendas and policy development because they are not represented in the decision-making process to the same extent as member states, and therefore must utilize alternative routes (Rietig, 2016, p. 269). In this chapter, we will look more closely into the shape and structure of the two NGOs and highlight their primary tools of influence when promoting their members' interests. This will contribute to the literature with a simple case study of CAN Europe and ISES, with the focal point being their effect on the decarbonization agenda in the energy field. The structure of the chapter goes in-depth into the construction of the NGOs, but also utilizes this information to put the NGOs in the realm of the concepts of agenda-setting, and agency and networks. This way, although descriptive, this chapter conceptualizes the structure of CAN Europe and ISES, which will thus provide an analytical aspect of their organizational design and room for action.

### 2.1. CAN Europe

Since its creation in 1989, CAN has been a prominent environmental NGO (Duwe, 2001, p. 178). CAN operates in a decentralized network, and CAN Europe is the regional branch for the European members (Duwe, 2001, p. 179), which has grown to include over 140 member organizations from 38 European countries today, representing 1700 NGOs and more than 47 million citizens (CAN Europe, 2022a; Lobbyfacts, 2023). CAN Europe primarily works within five areas, that is climate action, energy transition, Europe in transition, financing the transition, and global transition. Of the five, the primary focus of this thesis will be the energy transition and Europe in transition because they relate the most to the research questions. The NGO operates with an informal network, but utilizes unwritten rules of conduct that all members must abide. The common ground for the members are a shared set of beliefs and values such as "environmental justice, sustainable development, and the necessity to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to its unavoidable consequences" (Duwe, 2001, p. 179; Rietig, 2016, p. 278). The overarching structure of CAN provides all regional branches with a forum to exchange information, cooperate on demonstrations, and a coherent profile in the media when promoting their positions. CAN Europe, therefore, was well established when the Energy Union was introduced and may thus have had quite the impact on the development of the Energy Union Strategy. At the same time, they also had the advantage of working within an extensive network, with access to resources and information that are of great help in the process of influencing the decision-makers (Rietig, 2016, p. 278).

#### 2.1.1. Agenda-Setting

CAN Europe has a number of channels to use in order to affect the political agenda, and this section will look closer at the channels applicable for affecting the decarbonization agenda in the form of the Energy Union. Of the channels apparent on their official website, we for instance find that CAN Europe run campaigns, voice their opinion on contemporary issues by taking part in conferences, and continuously provide publications for their members in which the organization communicate their objective for the members to use in national settings or even when cooperating across borders. The Energy Union initiative

came from Jean Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk in 2014 (Szulecki, 2016, p. 552), but the final strategy was subject to influence from many parts of society in order for it to be applicable and all-encompassing in terms of the aims of the Strategy.

Campaigns are an efficient tool to use to engage the public in matters that NGOs and interest organizations want to emphasize, but they also allow for closer cooperation within the NGO coalition on matters that are urgent, or that should receive more attention at the time (Rietig, 2016, p. 274; Peters, 2021, p. 76). One of the running campaigns by CAN Europe is the "*Together for 100% Renewable Europe: Prosperous. Sustainable. For Everyone*" campaign, with a focus on a sustainable transition to a 100% renewable energy system by accelerating the implementation of solar and wind energy as a means to achieve the goals of limiting climate change (CAN Europe, 2022f). In this campaign, CAN Europe calls for growth in the renewable energy sector to avoid deepening the climate crises, as the actions necessary must be implemented by governments across the globe, thus utilizing their position to influence the agenda by including the public (Peters, 2021, p. 76). By using a campaign, CAN Europe is able to increase the number of participants that are eager to take part in the objective, and therefore emphasize their agenda in national settings and promote this to the decision-makers (Rietig, 2016, p. 279). Another campaign is the "*Together for 1.5: Accelerate Climate Action in Europe*" campaign, which emphasizes the 1.5 degree Celsius target of the Paris Agreement (CAN Europe, 2022e). The campaign build on national and EU-level efforts to limit climate change, accentuating the available funding and opportunities already in place yet unused by national governments and the EU itself. CAN Europe, therefore, wants the policy process to mirror the necessary societal and economic opportunities that are in place, which will accelerate the overall EU transition to climate neutrality. This campaign runs from September 2022 to September 2025, giving CAN Europe a timespan of three years to engage with the public and accentuate their opinions in national and EU governmental settings. Arguably, the agenda in the sense of the Paris Agreement is already set by the signatories, however, by running campaigns that are solely focusing on the implementation of solutions (Peters, 2021, p. 74), CAN Europe inserts itself in the forefront of the agenda-setting on this issue, voicing the necessity of accelerating the implementation of measures rather than merely talking about them.

As seen with the running campaigns, CAN Europe's focal point is within highly contemporary issues. Their overarching objective is working with climate action. By differentiating their work within five working areas, their goal is further specified depending on which working area one finds interest in. Climate action is a highly contemporary issue, allowing CAN Europe to be a frontrunner in discussions on the issue, both because they have national advocates with the same objective at the lower levels, but also because this allows them to have specified expertise on the issues at stake (Bunea, et al., 2022, p. 721). As for the energy transition, which is the main working area concerning this thesis, CAN Europe advocates 100% renewable energy implementation, and fossil fuel phase-out, as well as energy savings. These issues affect individuals from all EU states, and the issues are closely linked to the implementation of the Energy Union strategy, which is accounted for in chapter 3. The energy transition objective by CAN Europe emphasizes its correlation to the Paris Agreement goals, an agreement which has been scrutinized by researchers, CAN Europe members, and representatives from academia, in order for all the stakeholders to promote an educated position on the issues at stake, as well as promote any necessary measures to reach the Paris Agreement objective. By focusing to such an extent on the decarbonization of the energy sector, CAN Europe poses as an informed entity with great knowledge on the issue (Rietig, 2016, p. 278), and therefore an enlightened actor with

authority to pose opinions on decarbonization and renewable energy with expert awareness to put these issues on the agenda.

The main form of public communication from CAN Europe to its members is arguably the publications found on their website. Although the information found here is targeted towards their members and therefore biased, it still allows for information to be retrieved in terms of updated stances on issues applicable to the CAN Europe members, as long as this information is handled with skepticism. The publications are largely news that is relevant to the members of CAN Europe, but also annual reports, position papers on political development that apply to the CAN Europe members, as well as policy briefings for the members to be up to date on political development. By doing so, CAN Europe is able to continuously update the members on their stance on certain political issues, for which the members then can use in meetings and discussions with national political actors. This, therefore, allows CAN Europe's position to be prominent on more levels than merely their own meetings and public portrayal, which consequently increases their area of reach in terms of setting the agenda and influencing policy-makers (Bunea, et al., 2022, p. 721). By continuously updating its position on the energy transition and necessary measures for decarbonization in Europe, CAN Europe promotes itself to be a central actor with a large audience with the power to influence the political agenda both on behalf of themselves in the EU and also for the members at national levels (Peters, 2021, p. 73).

### 2.1.2. Agency and Networks

CAN Europe enjoy the benefit of having quite a large member base, with representatives from 38 European countries and over 1700 NGOs in their roster (CAN Europe, 2022a). This way, CAN Europe profits from a substantial internal network, which subsequently branches out to corporations and states that CAN Europe themselves does not represent. The internal network between CAN Europe members provides access to like-minded organizations working towards the same goals around issues of climate action, which has been shown to be the preferred organizational procedure (Bunea, 2022, p. 721). This facilitates internal discussions and information-sharing, and it provides the members with a shared platform in which they have the opportunity to further develop their objectives and strategic encounters when working up towards decision-makers. For instance, CAN Europe represents the Greenpeace European Unit, but also Greenpeace Spain, Luxembourg, and Greece. These internal relationships further exemplify the agency of CAN Europe, as they have representation in multiple arenas at more than one level of governance (Jevnaker, 2019, p. 63), while it also points to specific units that work on contemporary issues where they are taking place, such as Greenpeace Spain being able to handle urgent matters when they occur in Spain and take part in any campaigns and demonstrations there, while CAN Europe provides the links to promote these issues in the European Unit and up towards the EU institutional bodies (Duwe, 2001, p. 180; CAN Europe, 2022d). Therefore, the Agency of CAN Europe is widely embedded in the prosperity of its internal network, providing support and more channels for influence towards the decision-making institutions.

The benefit of a substantial member base also spillover to the benefits of cross-border networks. The members of CAN Europe are located all over the continent, with their own sister organizations and collaborators working with similar issues. Therefore cross-border cooperation is possible, and further allows for the objective of CAN Europe and its members to reach a wider audience and multiple levels of governance (Bunea, 2022, p. 724). This is also emphasized in the fact that CAN Europe serves the European members' interests, while the overarching CAN organization provides a global arena for all regional CAN



networks to collaborate (CAN Europe, 2022d). Additionally, the larger issues at stake in which CAN Europe works within are not limited to the European continent, or even within the EU. The issue of climate change is a global matter, which needs international cooperation (Duwe, 2001, p. 179; Bunea, 2022, p. 724). It is therefore important for CAN Europe to have a substantial external network as well as an internal network in order to provide feasible solutions, and push for measures that are both realistic and relevant in the different regions. Their network is therefore one of the main contributors to the continued and growing relevance of CAN Europe, as they are regarded as a serious agency with expertise that is significant for the development of feasible policies in the urgent matter of climate action.

In terms of providing the EU decision-makers with up-to-date information and knowledge on contemporary matters, CAN Europe holds agency in the sense that they provide information that is not limited to national interests. This is highlighted in Jevnaker's article on EU agencies (Jevnaker, et al., 2019), in terms of NGOs contributing with cross-border information that allows the EU decision-makers to have a particular advantage over member state governments (p. 66). Further, the network facilitated by the number of members in CAN Europe and thus their farther-reaching external network provides a base for information sharing based on common interests in working with climate action, and to a certain extent disregards state borders as the issues at hand are more important than the nationality of the actors (Bunea, 2022, p. 735). Therefore, CAN Europe holds agency in the EU political arena in the sense they have access to up-to-date information that is not limited by state borders and can utilize a far-reaching internal as well as external network when promoting their agenda of decarbonization and implementation of renewable energy solutions.

## 2.2. International Solar Energy Society

The ISES is an international NGO working towards "100% renewable energy for everyone used widely and efficiently" (ISES, 2022a). As the largest international solar organization, the ISES advocates universal energy access, knowledge sharing within the society, integrated renewable systems, and international cooperation. The NGO was founded in 1954, making it the oldest solar society, and has since taken part in a plethora of important events such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences, as well as the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development meetings. In addition to this, the ISES is present on advisory boards which is important in terms of influencing the decision-making process (Bunea, 2022, p. 722), allowing ISES to provide research and scientific advice to policymakers all over the world while promoting their renewable agenda (ISES, 2022a). By hosting regular events, the ISES provides its members with an arena to connect and network with their like-minded peers, where scientists, engineers, and architects contribute with their knowledge and discuss developments and opportunities going forward (ISES, 2022c). ISES, therefore, has quite a large network to utilize as a channel for lobbying (Bunea, 2022, p. 730), as the biggest international NGO within solar energy, and the advantage of leading experts in the field taking part in events that occur quite regularly (Jevnaker, 2019, p. 66). This allows ISES to stay up to date on the industrial developments, while they also can promote this information and their position to the governments and decision-makers on multiple arenas given their access as advisors in the field (Rietig, 2016, p. 270).

### 2.2.1. Agenda-Setting

To put an issue on the agenda, it is easier to promote the urgency if the perceived effects are severe, such as climate change (Peters, 2021, p. 74). For ISES, this allows them to utilize their interest in a rapid shift to renewable energy sources as a solution to the pressing consequences of climate change, as it is a measure of climate action. As with CAN Europe, ISES also provides publications on its websites, an important tool for lobbying in the sense that it serves as a tool for communication, and information, and allows ISES to have an online platform for monitoring the environment of policies (Bunea, 2022, p. 721). This allows for up-to-date information on the stance of ISES on contemporary issues and makes it clear to the members what the overarching organization thinks about issues on the agenda (ISES, 2022f). This further goes into potential changes that need to occur in ISES' interest, which may spill over into the political arena. This way, ISES has a platform to accentuate their political opinions and issue measures that align with ISES official interests, thus putting their interest on the agenda. This does require that the members transfer the issues to their respective arenas of influence and take part in any decision-making processes early on (Hassel, 2010, p. 158; Cook, 2018, p. 479), in order for the ISES interest to be pushed forth on the agenda in terms of national governance.

Other arenas in which ISES promotes its agenda are its regional conferences and Solar World Congress. The regional conference aims at steering development towards more implementation of solar energy in national and regional energy mixes to help nations reach their goals of renewable energy implementation. The purpose is to provide members and interested actors with an arena to promote new research, investment opportunities, and current developments and propose future developments for the organization (ISES, 2022d). This further extends into the network aspect of ISES, as it provides actors with an arena to share information with groups they may not correspond as much with on a regular basis (ISES, 2022d; Bunea, 2022, p. 724). Similarly, the ISES Solar World Congress is held every other year, with the aim of advancing ideas within the ISES. Here, researchers, the community, industries, and political actors take part in the programme, and together promote a unified view of the way forward in terms of advancing solar energy in the energy mix (ISES, 2022e). By hosting conferences and congress with the specified aim of advancing a common objective, ISES is able to set the agenda on behalf of their members, and also promote their opinion towards the ones making decisions, as politicians also take place in the proceedings.

A significant role the ISES plays with regard to setting the agenda is serving as advisory agents to national governments and the EU. By providing expertise to governments on issues such as renewable energy, and especially solar energy, ISES holds a position in which they can give informed and educated knowledge to decision-makers at governmental levels, and thus advance their expert opinions on matters that are relevant to ISES and their members (Bunea, 2022, p. 722). One way in which they provide this information is also by publishing articles in their own ISES Solar Energy Journal. The studies found in this journal are relevant to the shift towards renewable energy sources, and credible in the sense that they are objective and scientific by principle to yield trustworthy information.

### 2.2.2. Agency and Networks

Continuing from the agenda-setting with ISES providing expertise to governments, this provides agency for ISES and allows them to have a specialized network for the influence of decision-makers (Bunea, 2022, p. 722; ISES, 2022a). As mentioned in the previous section, ISES aims at providing objective and factual scientific research in their advisory

settings, yet the position they hold as an agency of expertise allows ISES to have formal and regular meetings with decision-makers in which they can front their position and interest on energy-related issues. Since ISES is an international organization, it is safe to assume its network is rather extensive, both in the sense of the internal network between members of the Society, as well as the external network each member provides themselves which directly affects their influential activity (Bunea, 2022, p. 721; Ku, 2020, p. 211). The extent of ISES' network, therefore, allows them to have a substantial foundation to retrieve updated information (Smith, 2008, p. 65), as well as giving ISES the benefit of having a plethora of contacts with connections to decision-makers in the important political arenas.

Due to its organizational structure, ISES, like CAN Europe, benefits from a substantial internal network. However, in contrast to CAN Europe, ISES provides an internal network with a specialized programme for younger individuals who want to participate in the organization. Known as "Young ISES", the programme offers a professional and social network for younger members of the organization, connecting a new generation to experienced ISES members. Some of the arenas in which these connections are made are for instance the Regional Conference and the Solar World Congress (ISES, 2022g). Further, since ISES is an international organization, its national branches with connections to levels of governance at other levels than the EU institutions, increase the surface for both utilizing the network and room for influence. For instance, ISES Italy works on promoting the implementation of renewable energy in Italy. To do this, they focus their operations on the institutions and organizations directly related to implementing energy policy, to overcome the barriers necessary by means of information, lobbying, and technical assistance (Smith, 2008, p. 66; Ecohub, 2023). The multitude of arenas in which ISES thus have access to allows their network to be utilized to a great extent, while also putting ISES in a position of great influence in matters that are important to their organization.

### 3. United in Energy: The EU Energy Union

The main political framework for analysis in this thesis is the EU Energy Union from 2015. The aim of the thesis is to highlight the ways in which CAN Europe and ISES affected the development of the EU Energy Union, as it is expected for the NGOs to use routes of influence to promote their members' interests when the decision-makers produced the Energy Union Strategy. This section will therefore present the key parts of the EU Energy Union. The Strategy is quite comprehensive, and includes several packages and measurements implemented to achieve its objective, and therefore this chapter is rather descriptive, however, it is because the dimensions presented in the Energy Union provide the framework for the analysis in the next chapter. The Energy Union was presented by Jean Claude Juncker in 2015, with the objective of delivering an ambitious climate policy that would facilitate "secure, sustainable, competitive, and affordable energy" to EU consumers (European Commission, 2015, p. 2; Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 552). The communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of Regions, and the European Investment Bank is a primary document and states the initial objective of the Energy Union as it was in 2015. This document will serve as the official EU proposal and position of the Energy Union, thus it will also be the primary source of information for this chapter. Still, the communication, complemented by studies into the effects of the Energy Union, will provide the analytical foundation for CAN Europe and ISES to be linked to in terms of their actions of influencing the Energy Union.

Overall, the governance of the Energy Union is at the EU level, but energy-related actions at all levels, that is both regional and national, should commit to the objectives of the EU Energy Union (European Commission, 2015, p. 17-18). To achieve this, all levels of government should adhere to the purpose and targets of both the internal energy market as well as the defined 2030 targets concerning renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, emission regulations, and cross-border cooperation. Administratively, the expectation is to streamline the entire process of planning and reporting potential requirements, as this would avoid any unexpected administrative burdens (European Commission, 2015, p. 18; Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 563). Consequently, communication with stakeholders would be simplified, as the pooling of knowledge and accessible information on policy-making and management will be readily available to any actors involved in the energy transition, which is prominent in the linking between sustainability and industrial interests (Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 556). However, there is also an act of balance to adhere to national autonomy on policies and EU coordination of said policies (Fischer & Geden, 2015, p. 4). The final point of governance concerns annual reporting on the state of the Energy Union to the European Parliament and the Council. This will allow the EU to have an overview on how the Energy Union is functioning, while allowing for key issues to be addressed (European Commission, 2015, p. 18). Political commitment from all actors at all levels of governance is crucial for the successful implementation and continuous development of the Energy Union, and this section will summarize key aspects of the communication by the Commission. This section will thus provide a base for analysis in the next chapter, where CAN Europe and ISES will be seen in relation to the Energy Union.

### 3.1. Five Key Dimensions

The EU Energy Union strategy is a comprehensive plan containing actions and measures needed for the objective of the Energy Union to be achieved. By presenting five key dimensions, “mutually-reinforcing and closely interrelated” (European Commission, 2022b), the Commission provides a deep-dive into the contents and especially the purpose of the Energy Union. The five dimensions include: energy security, solidarity, and trust; a fully integrated European energy market; energy efficiency contributing to moderation of demand; decarbonizing the economy; and research, innovation, and Competitiveness (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). All five dimensions will together contribute to the objective of the Energy Union (Fischer & Geden, 2015, p. 1), and they are all overarching dimensions that allow us to assume there will be elements of which both CAN Europe and ISES would have an interest in affecting.

#### 3.1.1. Energy Security, Solidarity, and Trust

Energy security, solidarity, and trust is the initial dimension, consisting of four elements which include diversification of energy supply, that is in terms of suppliers, routes, and sources, as well as cooperation on the security of supply, a robust and more prominent European role on the international energy markets, and more transparency on gas supply (European Commission, 2015, p. 4-7). The idea is that cooperation on energy in general will make the EU more resilient in the energy market, and diversifying sources and suppliers will be in line with the concept of competitiveness globally. The strategy also states that the Treaty mentions solidarity on energy matters, making it a key component in implementing the Energy Union. Further, by domesticating more energy production, the EU will be more independent from the import of energy (European Commission, 2015, p. 5). The EU is expanding its portfolio with more renewables, which is in line with the decarbonization aspect of current EU aspects, but also utilizes traditional and non-traditional fossil fuels, although these are arguably on a downward trend (Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 109). The main challenge here regards public perception and acceptance due to the negative effects fossil fuels have on the climate and subsequent climate change, an important aspect to consider for the successful implementation of the strategy (European Commission, 2015, p. 6; Bunea, 2022, p. 731). Cooperation across borders is found in many areas of the EU and is no different when it comes to energy. In case of low supply, EU member states should be able to rely on neighboring states, which is specified in the communication in relation to security and cooperation in energy, and further emphasized by Tusk as a core component of the Strategy (European Commission, 2015, p. 5; Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 552). Some member states may also have inadequate access to energy in relation to their supply frameworks and domestic production, which is why cooperation across borders already exists, but it needs to be strengthened (European Commission, 2015, p. 6). A more connected Europe will also allow the EU to hold a more robust position globally, as energy can be used as a foreign policy tool with significance to third countries that hold a strong position in the energy arena. Energy is therefore a crucial tool used when negotiating with these countries, such as Norway and Russia, and will in light of the Energy Union hold a stronger position on the agenda when discussing international agreements (European Commission, 2015, p. 7). In terms of transparency, the EU acknowledges the difficulty in negotiating international agreements related to energy, as this is to a large extent at the hands of individual member states and third countries (Schoenefeld, et al., 2021, p. 26). Still, the commission puts itself in a leading position and should be informed of all such negotiations, which consequently should result in more coherency between member state agreements and the EU internal market regulations

(European Commission, 2015, p. 7). Energy security, solidarity, and trust are important aspects of the Energy Union, and of great importance to both CAN Europe and the ISES. CAN Europe and ISES each represent industries with a special interest in energy, so having the fundamental aspects of solidarity, trust, and security included in the Energy Union is in the NGOs' best interests. The concepts would also imply increased and improved cross-border cooperation, a field in which both CAN Europe and ISES already operate within. Thus, the first dimension of the Energy Union is a target for CAN Europe and ISES to influence in terms of their members' interests.

### 3.1.2. A Fully-Integrated Internal Energy Market

An integrated energy market includes connecting markets through interconnections, implementing, and upgrading the internal energy markets software, enhanced regional cooperation within a common EU framework, and a new deal for consumers as well as protecting vulnerable consumers (European Commission, 2015, p. 7-12). All points in this dimension rely on a renewal of the political framework to facilitate the internal energy market by the means of a "political boost" (European Commission, 2015, p. 8). Infrastructure must be prioritized in order to allow for the expansion of networks which will further accelerate generation and energy efficiency (Schoenefeld, et al., 2021, p. 28). Financial instruments would reflect this, so the burden is not entirely on private investments but rather a joint project on behalf of all European citizens (Ku, et al., 2020, p. 210). In terms of upgrading the internal energy market's software, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package is the main policy instrument, which aims at providing a stronger foundation for further policies to build upon (European Commission, 2015, p. 9). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package will be revisited in sub-section 3.2, as it highlights the legal framework for energy policies to be implemented, while also setting a framework for legislators, energy suppliers, and energy consumers in terms of the room of action (European Commission, 2022e). The overall electricity market will be redesigned to complement the aim of energy security and better adaptation to the energy transition, in light of the increased production of renewable energy sources and the inclusion of consumers in the market (European Commission, 2015, p. 10; Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 110; Szulecki, 2016, p. 553).

Further, the coordination of energy policies between member states is emphasized, as it is crucial for there to be coherence in order for the Energy Union to be functional (European Commission, 2015, p. 10). The Communication from the Commission underlines the need for trust between all member states, perhaps especially towards the central and south-eastern European countries, as they should also be included in the cooperation but historically have been subject to diminished trust and even higher energy prices due to their relationship with Russia (European Commission, 2015, p. 11; Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 552; Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 117). With regard to the consumers of energy, consumer protection rules are to be implemented. The process will further be simplified by adopting smart technologies for the consumers to take control of their own energy consumption, while allowing the market to be flexible and possibly reduce the cost for the consumers (European Commission, 2015, p. 11). Vulnerable consumers are also to be protected, "preferably [...] provided through the general welfare system", which insinuates more attention towards energy poverty within the EU (European Commission, 2015, p. 12; Morata & Solorio, 2012, p. 4). Some citizens cannot afford their energy bills or live in housing with poor standards and are therefore subject to increased bills during difficult times, which is an issue addressed in the Energy Union strategy. The goal is to keep costs generally low and limit any distortions from regulated prices (European Commission, 2015,

p. 12). Similar to the dimension of solidarity, security, and trust, an integrated internal energy market is relevant for CAN Europe and ISES. Since CAN Europe represents European NGOs and interest organizations with certain members having special interest in the energy market, this dimension provides a foundation for cross-border cooperation in the market. It is therefore of great relevance to CAN Europe. As with ISES, which represents organizations advocating renewable energy, an integrated internal energy market would allow for better cooperation, while also providing a better overview of what is happening in Europe and what may need attention in terms of ISES individual research and advisory positions in governments.

### 3.1.3. Energy Efficiency as a Contribution to the Moderation of Energy Demand

The Energy Union strategy aims at putting the Commission at the head of regulating energy policy, although most of the work occurs at the national and regional levels. For instance, the communication encourages member states to put energy efficiency at the forefront when considering general policies, in order for implementation to be more feasible (Morata & Solorio, 2012, p. 2). The Commission oversees that there is coherency in national and regional political frameworks and aims at creating synergies in line with a circular economy (European Commission, 2015, p. 12). This includes increasing energy efficiency in the building sector and working towards an energy-efficient and decarbonized transport sector, directly referencing the importance of including industrial actors (European Commission, 2015, p. 12-14). Local levels of government must consider energy efficiency potential in buildings, while also considering the United Nations' sustainable development goals at their level of governance. Funding can be provided by the EU and the European Investment Bank, and further result in increased growth and job opportunities for European citizens, however, as shown in Karakullukcu (2016), funding schemes are having issues coordinating benefits economically and politically. This is based on high costs eroding competitiveness, and subsidies subsequently damaging national economies, while the relationship between subsidies and high costs decreases the support for public funding (p. 110).

The communication also points out fuel efficiency, especially in terms of decarbonizing the transport sector which accounts for more than 30% of energy consumption in Europe (European Commission, 2015, p. 13). Integrating electric vehicles is one measure, accompanied by urban mobility policies and a developed electricity grid (European Commission, 2015, p. 13-14), pointing to measures that adhere to the general populations inclusion in the efforts. Energy consumption relates in this sense to the thesis by showcasing the demand in certain sectors such as transport and highlighting the need for innovative solutions in introducing renewable sources to a larger extent in order to replace traditional fossil sources to ensure energy efficiency and security (Morata & Solorio, 2012, p. 9). Although this dimension appears somewhat distant in terms of the objective of CAN Europe and ISES, it still provides a focal point of an area that needs attention. It presents itself as a field in which CAN Europe and ISES can have a larger influence in the case of them extending their field of operations. This dimension also, to a more significant extent than the other four dimensions, reference the general population to a more significant extent, which is relevant for CAN Europe and ISES in the sense that they work towards these regional levels of influence, which will be shown in the analysis and discussion.

### 3.1.4. Decarbonization of the Economy

EU climate policy leans on a foundation of decarbonization, in terms of both national GHG reduction and implementation of more renewable energy sources rather than utilizing traditional fossil sources. An ambitious EU climate policy and becoming the number one in renewables are points related to decarbonizing the EU economy, which insinuates cost-efficient emission reduction in existing infrastructure and industry, as well as further developing renewable sources to remain competitive and technologically advanced in the global arena. The majority of industrial sectors are included in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, that is the EU carbon market, but for the sectors not included, the member states should ensure that there are incentives in place e.g., forestry to mitigate GHG emissions and take part in the decarbonization of the economy (European Commission, 2015, p. 14; Ku, et al., 2020, p. 209). Similar to the energy efficiency in the domains of large-scale energy demand such as transport, the implementation of renewable energy sources requires new infrastructure that will lower the cost of renewable electricity (Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 110), which is directly related to the interests of ISES and their members. The EU had a target of achieving 20% renewable energy in their energy mix by 2020, which they surpassed by reaching 22.3% (European Commission, 2015, p. 15; Eurostat, 2023), however, as will be shown in the analysis, both CAN Europe and ISES continuously worked to increase these targets to be more ambitious. Implementation of renewable production relies heavily on financial schemes and needs a stable investment framework to reduce risks, and as have been shown in the prior sections, there are some issues with implementing support schemes for renewable energies, yet it is a crucial factor for increased implementation of renewable energy sources in the energy mix. The Commission will provide member states with an arena for discussions and cooperation to ensure compliance with the guidelines and regulatory framework in place (European Commission, 2015, p. 15; European Commission, 2022d), and it is exactly these arenas this thesis expects to find activity from CAN Europe and ISES, as it is of their best interest to take part in discussions early in the regulation-development processes (Cook, 2018, p. 478). Decarbonization is the overarching theme of this thesis, and one of the criteria for choosing cases in which to analyze in terms of the Energy Union, which makes this fourth dimension highly relevant to the thesis. This fourth dimension highlights the need for functional measures and mechanisms to further accentuate renewables' position in the EU Energy mix and is arguably one of the dimensions that are of great importance to ISES, as well as CAN Europe.

### 3.1.5. An Energy Union for Research, Innovation, and Competitiveness

The last dimension concerns research, innovation, and competitiveness in the field of energy (European Commission, 2015, p. 16-17). The Commission wants to involve all member states and stakeholders in a research and innovation approach to become world-leading in developing renewable technology, including the public in the energy transition, provide efficient energy systems, and develop sustainable transport systems towards reduced GHG emissions (European Commission, 2015, p. 16). This is arguably directly linked to ISES and their channel of influence, as will be shown in the discussion. In addition to this, the Energy Union proposes increased use of carbon capture storage and use technologies, while also ensuring safety and proper management around nuclear energy, which is in use in some EU member states and alone produce up to 30% of electricity in the EU (European Commission, 2015, p. 17). CCUS serve as a central option for decarbonization and climate action, and has been subject to multiple studies regarding its position as a feasible technology for various industries aiming at lowering their GHG



emissions (Ku, et al., 2020, p. 225). The EU Commission wants public perception to act as an initiator for technological advancement and business innovation to facilitate green growth.

Consequently, there will also be a need for up-skilling of employees within certain sectors, and training of new employees as the aim includes creating new jobs (European Commission, 2015). This final dimension allows ISES to insert themselves directly into the Energy Union, as one of their main fields of operation is to provide contemporary research and advice to governments aiming at advancing renewables in their energy mix. Similarly, CAN Europe is a representative of organizations with an interest in promoting sustainable development, and therefore have an interest in taking part in the developments within this field, for instance through research.

### 3.2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package

In 2009, the Commission initiated a round of new EU energy legislation known as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package (European Commission, 2015, p. 19; European Commission, 2022e). The aim of the package was to restructure energy policy and improve the efficiency of the internal energy market. The Package covers five main areas: unbundling, independent regulators, ACER, cross-border cooperation, and open and fair retail markets (European Commission, 2022e; Jevnaker, et al., 2019, p. 62). The Commission defines unbundling as “the separation of energy supply and generation from the operation of transmission networks” (European Commission, 2022e), complemented by Karakullukcu (2016), adding that this policy package allows for better transparency, and facilitating cooperation independent from national regulations (p. 116). The idea is to ensure fair competition and decrease the risk of one company operating both a transmission network and generating or selling energy, thus obstructing competitors’ access to infrastructure (European Commission, 2022e), while also being an active response to the perceived monopoly on energy by Russia (Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 116).

Independent regulators are essential to the internal energy market as they ensure compliance with the rules (Morata & Solorio, 2012, p. 2), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> internal energy market package introduced some changes to the requirements for national regulators. Firstly, the regulators are to remain independent from both industry interests and governments, serving as their own legal entity with their own budget, although the governments should allocate resources for their work to be executed. Second, the regulators have the authority to impose binding decisions and even present penalties in the case of non-compliance among the subjects. Third, it is a requirement for gas network operators, electricity generators, and energy suppliers to provide accurate data to the regulators. Lastly, regulators are to cooperate across borders to ensure competitiveness and an open and fair market with an efficient and secure network system (European Commission, 2022e).

The Package also established the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, known as ACER. The purpose of the agency is to help the national regulators cooperate across the borders and facilitate a functional internal energy market (European Commission, 2022e; Jevnaker, et al., 2019, p. 62). ACER operates independently from the Commission, national governments, and energy companies, however, it has been scrutinized for its practices of information-sharing to the commission (see: Jevnaker, et al., 2019). ACERs primary areas of work are drafting guidelines for the cross-border gas pipelines and electricity networks, implementing EU-wide development plans, and concluding in matters between national regulators in case they do not come to an agreement. The most important part of their work is still monitoring internal energy retail prices and network access for electricity

produced from renewable sources and consumer rights (European Commission, 2022e; Ku, et al., 2020, p. 116).

Some designated organizations are tasked with developing standards and drafting network codes to ensure cross-border cooperation, which is essential as electricity and natural gas are transported through pipelines and grids across borders, affecting energy security directly. The organizations coordinate network investments, as well as publish Europe-wide 10-year investment plans for both gas and electricity, with the aim of identifying investment gaps (European Commission, 2022e; Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 116). Lastly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package address the issue of open and fair retail markets, which essentially means the right for consumers to freely choose from a multitude of energy suppliers, obtain information on consumption, and change energy supplier without any issues (European Commission, 2015, p.9; European Commission, 2022e). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package is an integral part of the Energy Union, and the relevance to this thesis is based on the mechanisms of which it includes, meaning that member states, suppliers, and consumers comply with EU energy legislation. This, therefore, means the Package provides a base for the objectives of the Energy Union to be implemented and is applicable to both CAN Europe and ISES in terms of having a framework to operate within. Additionally, the Package provides a foundation of which the Energy Union is built around, making it central in terms of CAN Europe and ISES affecting the decarbonization agenda of the Energy Union Strategy.

### 3.3. Key Takeaways from the Energy Union

The idea of intensifying the focus on renewable energy in the EU is very much emphasized in the EU Energy Union Strategy, and an integral part of the study of CAN Europe and ISES's position in the development of the Energy Union. The Strategy implicitly addresses the need to update existing infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of renewable energy sources into EU society (European Commissions, 2015, p. 3), as it is an essential component towards climate neutrality in Europe (Lenox & Duff, 2021, p. 40). It is also a crucial part of the fourth dimension of the Energy Union, which emphasize the need to decarbonize the economy. In this section of the Energy Union strategy, the Commission reiterates the EU's commitment to be a world leader, which in this sense regards the field of renewable energy. The Commission proposes ambitious targets, for instance, to achieve 27% of the EU energy mix consisting of renewable energy sources (European Commission, 2015, p. 15), and it is precisely these targets, accompanied by emission reduction targets, we will see CAN Europe and ISES emphasizing their efforts towards in the next chapter. Overall, the dimensions in the Energy Union Strategy are inter-connected and together provide a sturdy framework for the EU to achieve its goals of a deeper integrated energy market as part of a decarbonized economy. Actors from all levels of governance, as well as industrial and interest actors, should take part in the development, and work together within the given framework to put the EU at the forefront of the energy field. For CAN Europe and ISES, this is relevant because it provides them with a contemporary agenda to work within, with regard to their members, and provides a developing arena in which decisions are made on behalf of the members. It is of special interest for CAN Europe and ISES to be part of the negotiations and the progress of the Energy Union, as any decisions on energy and implementation of renewables for a decarbonized EU directly affect their member base. Therefore, it is assumed to find activity from both CAN Europe and ISES within all deciding arenas in terms of developing the dimensions of the Energy Union, but perhaps more emphasis on the integrated energy market and decarbonization of the economy, as these two dimensions appear to be of more relevance to the two NGOs.

## 4. Giving Teeth to Energy Targets

There are a number of approaches an NGO can utilize in order to influence the decision-makers regarding political areas that are in the NGO's interests. As we have seen in Chapter 2 regarding the two cases, CAN Europe and ISES, they both utilize common lobbying tactics on arenas in which they have access, promoting their members' interest in arenas that are out of reach to a common interest organization. In this chapter, these lobbying tactics adopted by CAN Europe and ISES in the years leading up to the implementation of the Energy Union will be analyzed, taking a base on the tactics presented in chapter two, while integrating annual reports provided by the NGOs, and complemented by secondary studies on the lobbying activities by the NGOs. Based on chapters 2 and 3, this chapter will use the presented information to highlight the ways in which CAN Europe and ISES are able to affect the decarbonization agenda in light of the Energy Union, as well as the extent to which the Energy Union provides a framework for CAN Europe and ISES' members to operate within.

### 4.1. Climate Action and Increased Ambitions

As was seen in chapter 2 on CAN Europe and their process of setting the political agenda in terms of decarbonization, CAN Europe utilize campaigns, and consistently communicate with their members to promote their opinion on relevant matters for their objective. With regards to the European Energy Union of 2015, CAN Europe embedded itself as a central actor on behalf of interest organizations in the creation of this strategy, as they state in their 2015 annual report (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 12). 2015 was an important year for climate and energy policy, because both the Energy Union and the Paris Agreement were presented and adopted. CAN Europe insert itself into this agenda in its annual report by emphasizing its important role in the discussions surrounding both the Energy Union and the Paris Agreement, aligning their objective with the agreed goals of both the Strategy and the Agreement, and point to the efforts they posed in order for the Energy Union Strategy to adhere to the CAN members wishes. This section does to a large extent utilize this annual report from 2015 as a base for the impression CAN Europe has of their efforts in the creation of the Energy Union, however, this is supplemented by position papers, and studies on organized lobbying (See: Bunea, 2022; Drummond & Ekins, 2016).

In 2014, CAN Europe had 6 registered meetings with representatives from the EU Commission, all of which were related to energy policy, the Energy Union, and climate policy. In 2015, CAN Europe had 20 meetings officially recorded in the transparency register, of which half were related to energy and climate policy (Lobbyfacts, 2023). The majority of the meetings in 2014 and 2015 were with the cabinets of President Jean Claude Juncker and Vice-President Miguel Arias Cañete, indicating that CAN Europe both have access to higher authority in the Commission when they want to discuss matters relevant to their NGOs objective (Bunea, 2022, p. 719 & 722), but also the other way around; That their objective is a matter of high relevance to the ones at the top of the EU Commission hierarchy. CAN Europe was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> out of 8000 lobbying organizations in 2015, in terms of meetings with Commission representatives, and if only NGOs are considered, CAN Europe is ranked in second place (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 4). This is very important because this is the year the Energy Union Strategy was completed and published, and it insinuates a definitive impact by CAN Europe in terms of affecting what matters should be included

in the finished proposal of an Energy Union. In their annual report, CAN Europe emphasized that their primary objective in all these meetings with representatives of the Commission was to increase the EU targets in terms of renewable energy implementation and decarbonization of the EU (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 4; Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 110). Ambitious targets within EU borders would potentially put the EU at the forefront of climate action, which we know is the main objective of CAN Europe as a whole.

Although it is not a unit of analysis for this thesis, the Paris Agreement is referenced in relation to the Energy Union in multiple of the CAN Europe reports and publications, and therefore also included in this section. This is because the lobbying activities performed by CAN Europe in the months leading up to the implementation of both the Paris Agreement and the Energy Union are closely related, as seen in the previous section on meetings with commission representatives. Additionally, the Paris Agreement has a different position in society, as the first international climate agreement with signatories from all over the globe, posing its objectives that are closely linked to the objectives found in the EU Energy Union Strategy. Therefore, we may also look at the actions taken by CAN Europe in order to influence the outcome of the Paris Agreement, such as the ambition to “Work for climate action and not against it” (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 7). For instance, CAN Europe reports they, alongside essential partners, worked to ensure that subsidies were in place in the Paris Agreement for shifting from fossil fuels to renewable sources, a position we can see in earlier reports and publications such as the CAN Europe position paper on support schemes for renewable energy sources from 2013 (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 7; CAN Europe, 2013, p. 2). This adheres explicitly to the assumption that the CAN Europe network serves as a key channel for Can Europe to achieve its targeted lobbying. In the position paper, CAN Europe positions the necessity of a functional framework for support schemes of renewable energy sources parallel to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package, which was presented in 2009.

Further, CAN Europe presents suggestions for the design of such support schemes, for instance, diversification of energy sources nationally, and consequently support schemes adapted to the different energy sources, because the maturity of energy technologies will vary as much as the maturity of the market related to the energy source (CAN Europe, 2013, p. 4). Although, as have been emphasized by Karakullukcu, (2016, p. 110), issues may arise in the combination of the political and economic aspects of such support schemes. However, studies show that support schemes for the renewable energy sector is crucial for the technological advancement of renewable deployment (Drummond & Ekins, 2016, p. 67), and in addition to this, certain barriers must be removed in order to implement diversified energy sources, as well as limiting potential barriers to the grid. At the time of implementation of the Energy Union, this was a significant issue for energy project developers, and thus limits the development and implementation of certain renewable energy sources that may have great potential on the market.

As stated in both the section on CAN Europe and the Energy Union Strategy, energy efficiency is a critical feature in this relationship. “Our vision is of strong, innovative and competitive European companies that develop the industrial products and technology needed to deliver energy efficiency and low carbon technologies inside and outside Europe”, is stated in the introduction of the Energy Union Strategy (European Commission, 2015, p. 2). This prominently puts energy efficiency at the forefront of priorities in terms of delivering on the strategy and is undoubtedly also in line with the vision of CAN Europe. In the year leading up to the presentation of the Energy Union, CAN Europe, and partners “advocated for the adoption of energy efficiency as the first principle”, as this priority was seen as a crucial step towards substantial renewable energy implementation in Europe,

and towards 100% renewable energy systems in the EU (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 12; Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 110). Energy efficiency is arguably consistent with all five of the working areas of CAN Europe, that is climate action, energy transition, Europe in transition, financing the transition, and global transition. In the annual report, CAN Europe emphasize their advocacy for increasing the energy saving target of the EU at the time, at a mere 27%, and how this should be higher at 40% by 2030 for a frontrunner such as the EU (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 12). However, this largely depends on coordination with commitments from the Member States (Fischer & Geden, 2015, p. 4). Also here is a prominence of meetings with EU officials to convey CAN Europe's position on matters. More importantly, it reveals the results these meetings can have in collaboration with other central actors and publications communicating their position on energy efficiency.

A repeating instance is an idea of CAN Europe "reminding" the EU that their targets are too small or even shallow, such as the EU renewable energy target of at least 27% by 2030, and in their own words, they are "Giving teeth to the EU 2030 Renewable Energy Target" (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 13). Although the target for the EU for 2020 was for 20% of energy to come from renewable sources, which they overshot by achieving 22.3% (Eurostat, 2023), CAN Europe consistently emphasize that ambitious targets are crucial tools for the overall success of the EU to develop and implement more renewable energy sources in their energy mix (CAN Europe, 2016, p. 13; Przyborowicz, 2021, p. 44). In addition to this, we find significant engagement from CAN Europe in terms of renewable energy in their campaigns, namely the *"Together for 100% Renewable Europe: Prosperous. Sustainable. For Everyone"* and *"Together for 2.5: Accelerate Climate Action in Europe"* campaigns. Promoting their cause to the public is one way CAN Europe emphasizes its objective, which also creates engagement from a wider audience and may therefore provide more leverage to bring into discussions with decision-makers (Karakullukcu, 2016, p. 109). It is emphasized in the annual report that there is a need for an enforceable framework for the implementation of renewable energy to be feasible, which correlates with the previous section on renewable energy subsidies. Using campaigns to promote a common responsibility towards a wider audience is therefore a valuable tool for CAN Europe to use in order to promote their objective and take part in the developments that are occurring in the field of energy and climate action.

## 4.2. Promoting Renewable Energy

Turning our attention towards ISES, the access to information is much more limited compared to CAN Europe. The primary sources for the analysis of ISES strategies for lobbying the Energy Union will therefore be based to a more significant extent on general information retrieved from their website and potential analyses made by other authors, rather than specific Energy Union documentation. Although this approach is not ideal, it will still provide an understanding of the ways in which ISES is able to affect the decarbonization agenda during the negotiations of the Energy Union, while also providing a base to analyze the ways in which the Energy Union caters to the operational status of ISES' members. ISES benefits from a number of channels to lobby the EU decision-making process, some of which are highlighted in this section. Meetings with officials, publications, providing an arena for young professionals, and the already established network to national governments are the selected points on behalf of ISES' lobbying practices. These channels together provide the ISES with a wide-reaching audience and a number of arenas to promote their objective, that is implementation and development of solar power, which consequently should contribute to the objective of the EU Energy Union. Solar energy has grown in popularity during the last few decades, becoming a competitor to fossil fuels, and

therefore a reasonable alternative to the traditional fossil energy sources (Lenox, 2021, p. 29). This provides room for action for ISES in the discussions on the implementation of more solar energy into the EU energy mix.

ISES is not registered in the transparency register, an online registry for lobbying groups to document their meetings with EU officials and state their funding for lobbying activities and the purpose of the meetings with the EU officials (Lobbyfacts, 2023a; Lobbyfacts, 2023b). However, members of the Energy Society such as the Swedish Solar Energy Association are registered in the transparency registry (Lobbyfacts, 2023b), yet they provide little to no documentation on their lobbying practices. In the Swedish case, this may be attributed to the fact that they registered in April of 2022, and therefore have yet to update their registration fully. In terms of meetings with decision-makers, we still find ISES stating that they continuously work closely with decision-makers, as they affirm their position as advisors and consultants to governments and the public (ISES, 2022a), pointing to their access as policy-insiders (Bunea, 2021, p. 722). The way ISES describe itself is in terms of "objective, scientific advice", of which they use their network of researchers and scientists to back up claims regarding the implementation and development of solar energy (Gordon, 2001, p. 1).

One of the arenas in which ISES uses to promote its objective and scientific advice to a larger audience is its own journal focusing on solar energy development and implementation, namely the "Solar Energy- Official Journal of the International Solar Energy Society" (ISES, 2022f). In this journal, ISES-related researchers and scientists publish up-to-date research on solar energy, its benefits of such, limitations, and potential of solar energy. The journal reaches a large audience, and is published bi-weekly, although sometimes with a month in between, and therefore allows current research to reach the intended audience at a rapid rate (ISES, 2022f; ScienceDirect, 2023). Continuously updated research provides the actors in conversations with EU officials and decision-makers with specific evidence when promoting their objective and allows ISES to lean on scientific data when discussing the limitations and possibilities of the Energy Union. This arena is relevant for the agenda-setting of ISES, as researchers provide updated information on solar energy and show new research in the field and the progress of the technologies. This allows outsiders to get an insight into the field of solar energy, in a more accumulated and specified sense because it is found in their journal, which concretely focuses on solar energy (Gordon, 2001, p. 2).

Another arena for ISES to advocate their message regarding solar energy implementation is the scene they provide for young professionals with an interest in solar energy. The Young ISES programme allows young professionals and curious individuals to participate in the Regional Conferences and the Solar World Congress, and puts potential future scientists, researchers, advocates, and decision-makers in contact with actors who possess those roles today (ISES, 2022d; ISES, 2022e). The overall network of ISES is thus extended and reaches a bigger audience of actors that will have a say on the matter in other instances in which these issues will be discussed. It also provides the already established researchers and advocates with an arena to retrieve input from a younger generation, and thus may result in a different view on issues regarding the implementation and development of solar energy. Here, young professionals are also introduced to the arena in which the authors of the Solar Energy publications are, facilitating conversations and for both sides to gain insights into contemporary issues to work further with. At these events, speakers come from a variety of backgrounds, which therefore allows for a broader perspective in terms of solutions to current issues and presents the young ISES attendees

with a plethora of options to specialize their interests when discussing solar energy issues with senior experts (ISES, 2022e). This arena is relevant for the network of ISES, as it facilitates conversations between actors who may not normally get together to discuss issues relevant to their field of expertise, while also including the younger generation of professionals who will be working with solar energy implementation and development in the future.

The Internationality of ISES allows the organization to have a substantial span of national advocates that continue and promote their work in national arenas. For instance, both Norway and Sweden have associate organizations, as well as Greece, Italy, and Cyprus, to name a few. As shown in Bunea (2022), interest groups are more inclined to work together when their field of interest correlates rather than their country of origin (p. 735), which seems to be the case for ISES and their members as well. The national branches of ISES thus have more explicit access to national decision-makers, and can further increase the focus on decarbonization and renewable energy in national arenas and forums of discussions. This facilitates the agenda-setting for ISES, based on the organization of the NGO becoming more flexible due to the national branches having more room for action in national arenas (Hassel, 2010, p. 155). This does, however, limit collective action in certain arenas, but also provides the ISES with a benefit in terms of reaching a wider audience when utilizing this network. National governments were favorable to the Energy Union in 2015, but an issue would be their inclination to shape it to fit their own national policies on the matter (Fischer & Geden, 2015, p. 2). In this sense, it is important for NGOs such as ISES to be proactive in order to coordinate the national positions to fit their NGO's internationality, and put solar energy at the forefront, rather than allowing the continued focus on fossil energy sources (Lennox, 2021, p. 31).

Of the five key dimensions of the EU Energy Union, the decarbonization of the economy, energy efficiency, and R&D dimensions may be regarded as the most relevant to ISES. General advocacy of the implementation of renewable energy may be considered the overall aim of the ISES, although their main focus is on solar energy, and renewable energy plays an integral part in the decarbonization of the EU. Energy efficiency also depends to a large extent on the availability of energy sources, and thus the implementation of alternatives to traditional fossil sources. Research and development for the Energy Union and progress thereof is also closely linked to research performed by ISES' scientists who publish in their Solar Energy journal, as well as ISES' advocacy for young professionals taking part in the ongoing development of solar energy. ISES, therefore, has a substantial interest in taking part in the development of the EU Energy Union.

## 5. The Role of NGOs in the Energy Union

Jean Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk presented their idea of an energy union in the wake of a perceived energy monopoly in the EU energy market, and thus aimed at increasing competition as well as security for European energy consumers (Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 552). The EU Energy Union is extensive and covers five primary dimensions designed to reach its objective of "secure, sustainable, competitive, and affordable energy" (European Commission, 2015; Szulecki, et al., 2016, p. 552). Whether or not the EU Energy Union provides a framework for International NGOs and their members to operate within is the subject of this discussion, alongside the NGOs CAN Europe and ISES' ability to affect the EU decarbonization agenda. Decarbonization has been on the EU agenda for many years and is a crucial step towards climate neutrality for the EU, which is illustrated by their 2050 long-term strategy, REPower EU, and the Energy Union, as well as their signature on the Paris Agreement. Consequently, implementation of renewable energy sources is quite high on their list of priorities, so the assumption can be made that interest groups and NGOs working specifically with renewable energy sources are included in the design of comprehensive frameworks such as the EU Energy Union for feasible implementation of the framework.

Decarbonization is an important aspect of the work performed by CAN Europe in their activities toward the decision-makers in the EU. As shown in the analysis of CAN Europe's lobbying channels, CAN Europe utilizes campaigns, publications, and existing networks to promote its agenda, which are channels that allow for a large audience to be reached. For instance, their campaigns on renewable energy implementation, and acceleration of climate action in light of the Paris Agreement, not only show the focal points of CAN Europe's ongoing agenda, but also accentuate the matters that are pressing. As stated in Peters' chapter on agenda-setting, matters are easier to promote on the agenda if the perceived effects are pressing to society (Peters, 2021, p. 74), and climate change is arguably a pressing issue that affects the entirety of the population of the world. Working on these matters exclusively as a climate action network allows CAN Europe to take part in leading the solution to such a contemporary issue. It is also important for organizations with certain interests within the field of decarbonization to take part in the process at an early stage. As seen in the study performed by Cook (2018), individuals reported they retrieved a better understanding of the direction of the regulations when included in the process at an earlier stage, and consequently were able to tailor their contributions to the regulatory frameworks more efficiently (p. 483). On the one side, CAN Europe is in a position in which they can set the agenda for decarbonization in terms of creating public engagement on the topic. Further, their access to national arenas by the means of members based in different EU and EU-related countries initiates a large number of contact points to decision-makers of which CAN Europe can utilize to accentuate further their position on matters, such as increased climate action through implementing more renewable sources in the energy mix. From here, these positions will end up on the table of the officials that make decisions on decarbonization, and further to the forums in which regulations and frameworks are produced.

However, as shown in Hassel (2010), the organizational structure of this type of NGO, with members based in different countries, may create issues regarding coordination because the members adapt to the national structure of the decision-making process, and



consequently become more limited in terms of collective action (Hassel, 2010, p. 155). Still, this allows for flexibility within the organization (Hassel, 2010, p. 155), and members using their channels to affect the decarbonization agenda within national borders may therefore adjust to the national circumstances to promote their proposition on the issue at hand (Bunea, 2022, p. 721), to some extent coordinated with other members of CAN Europe. The five working areas within CAN Europe are all closely linked, because they all correlate in the sense that the solutions globally must be coordinated. The solutions that CAN Europe presents in its objectives include decarbonization at a lower cost than the continued use of traditional energy sources. However, decarbonization relates to a large extent to industries and the overall economic circumstances in the EU, and since CAN Europe represents NGOs such as Greenpeace, their primary actions do not necessarily directly contribute to decarbonization. On the other hand, one of the actions they do contribute to is protesting actions made by the bigger enterprises, for instance, major oil companies boring in untapped reservoirs and building dams in indigenous land. This way, the organizations. This is an example of CAN Europe being present where decarbonization should be emphasized, which subsequently sends a message to decision-makers.

Additionally, depending on the amount of publicity and contribution these actions get from the public, the decarbonization message may reach a wider audience and thus promote decarbonization on behalf of CAN Europe. The primary limitations of CAN Europe in terms of affecting the decarbonization agenda, therefore, regard their relatively flexible structure and potential issues on coordination (Bunea, 2022, p. 726), which simultaneously allows the organization to reach multiple levels of decision-makers. In this sense, this limitation may therefore be considered ambiguous, as it also benefits CAN Europe. Nevertheless, as a prominent advocate for climate action, CAN Europe portrays itself as a highly relevant actor, with the channels available for influence, and as shown so far, are able to affect the decarbonization agenda in the EU by the means of exclusive focus on the topic, having members with access to regional levels of decision-making (Bunea, 2022, p. 721), as well as having members with close connections to the areas of industries in which decarbonization is of major importance to the industrial progress.

For ISES, we see they promote solar energy as a renewable energy source as a part of their decarbonization strategy for the EU. Although, as mentioned in the analysis, ISES provides little to no documentation on their work directly toward EU decision-makers, some lines can be drawn between the work they promote to the public and to the work exerted on the decarbonization agenda. ISES promotes the implementation of solar energy through their official journal, *Solar Energy*, hosting regional conferences and a solar congress, and including young professionals in their network (ISES, 2022c). Prominent researchers in the field provide the publications in the *Solar Energy* journal and allow interested individuals, as well as officials, to retrieve information and up-to-date research on solar energy, implications, and development, which is at the base of the implementation of renewable technologies (Sinha & Chaturvedi, 2019, p. 11). By having its own journal, which is usually published bi-weekly, ISES can lean on updated scientific data in its promotion of solar energy as a solution to energy crises and the development of energy security, which has been shown in Cook (2018) to be an essential step towards being granted regulations and frameworks in their favor (p. 470). Also, because their focus area is primarily solar energy, it benefits the organization to have its own publication in which renowned researchers support their position by publishing through the ISES channels. These are highly contemporary issues, and with branches within a multitude of European countries, ISES, therefore, has access to decision-makers at lower levels than the EU as well, in which members can promote the benefits of solar energy. Both the external network, with

regards to researchers, scientists, and branches located on all continents, and the internal network of members in ISES, the NGO reaches a large audience and is able to promote its agenda in multiple arenas. Similar to CAN Europe's access, ISES can adjust its position depending on national structures, retrieving flexibility from its organizational structure (Hassel, 2010, p. 155). One of the front-running positions found in ISES is their role as advisors to governments. By also including young professionals in their conferences, they have the opportunity to shape future officials, as well as extend their network to other arenas than merely their member base and governments in which they already work, but also reach other fields as the future positions of the young professionals may not have been decided yet.

It is also pointed out in Peters (2021) that a political issue, such as renewables and security of supply, is "sold" to younger citizens (p. 75), and in this case, it points to ISES practices of reaching out to young professionals. Although ISES is not alone in promoting solar energy as a solution to climate change, they are actively taking part in the debate, so by using an issue that is politicized in this sense they actively infiltrate the political arena as well as younger voters potentially could promote their objective in national elections, EU elections, and possibly shaping their opinions. However, the objective of increasing the utilization of solar energy limits the room for action for ISES. By solely focusing on solar energy, ISES misses out on other sections of the market, leaving only room for influence to a specific field of policy (Schoenefeld, et al., 2021, p. 27). On the one side, they are able to work solely on this specific issue and implementation of solar energy, however, in most regulatory frameworks and policies renewable energy is referred to as a unit, making solar energy merely a part of the broader solution. Affecting the decarbonization agenda is thus primarily by the means of promoting solar energy as part of the solution for the EU, but as an international organization, ISES must coordinate its efforts to be applicable to the remaining branches of the organization as well (Bunea, 2021, p. 724). Still, with their access to officials as advisory agents, ISES possess a critical access point in which they are able to promote their research in relation to the journal and organizational experts. This way, it is evident that ISES is able to effectively influence the decarbonization agenda through its lobbying channels, despite the limitations of singularity regarding solar energy as the sole field of interest.

The aim of the EU Energy Union is to provide security, sustainability, competitiveness, and affordability to the energy market in the EU (European Commission, 2015, p. 2). Still, whether or not the Energy Union is able to provide this for all affected parties is discussable. The European Commission is naturally very dedicated to the Energy Union, but as stated by Fischer and Geden (2015), no other actor in the EU arena has committed itself to the Energy Union to their extent (p. 2). The proposal of the Energy Union was presented in 2014, and thus initiated discussions in diverse forums, allowing actors from different fields of interest to think about their future within an energy union. In the case of CAN Europe, their presence is prominent regarding the Energy Union in terms of their meetings with representatives from the Commission (Lobbyfacts, 2023a), in which the Energy Union explicitly was the topic of discussion already in 2014, following the announcement of the Energy Union. The framework provided in the communication from the European Commission in 2015, outlining the objectives of the Energy Union, aims at appeasing all consumers, thereof households and businesses, and providing security and sustainability. For CAN Europe as an NGO coalition, and its members, the most important aspect of the Energy Union is indeed security and sustainability. This is because their overall objective is climate action, and with diversified energy sources, more focus on renewable energy sources, and decarbonization of the economy, comes security and sustainability. One of

the issues, however, is naturally the conservation of national preferences, as the idea of an overarching European Energy Union may disrupt the established national policies within energy.

Still, harmonizing national preferences and creating a more united and secure market for energy on behalf of consumers and businesses is a major task for the EU (Fischer & Geden, 2015, p. 3; Szulecki, 2016, p. 549). On the sustainability aspect, naturally, renewable energy plays a rather significant part, yet it also needs fossil energy sources to be phased out (Sinha & Chaturvedi, 2019, p. 11). This issue is highly relevant for CAN Europe's members, such as Greenpeace and all their branches within the European countries. However, this also implies that the Energy Union provides a base for CAN Europe's members to navigate their campaigns and publications, events, and engagement on issues such as climate action, because reaching out to the public to promote climate action and renewable energy in their everyday lives will contribute to the decarbonization of the EU. Similarly, and perhaps especially on the industrial level, to which large portions of GHG emissions may be attributed (European Commission, 2015; Sinha & Chaturvedi, 2019), the Energy Union provides a base to argue for renewable fuels in transportation, low-carbon infrastructure, and conservation of the infrastructure already in place. So, in some cases, with regards to members and room of action for CAN Europe, the EU Energy Union implies there are some areas in which there is room for the members of CAN Europe to operate, but this is arguably not in a sense that the CAN Europe members are more special than other businesses operating in the same field. With the foundation of specified meetings with EU officials, and the diversified base of members that are taking part in the organization of CAN Europe, it is therefore prominent that the EU Energy Union is highly relevant for CAN Europe, notably. Their campaigns and events also regard issues that are compatible with the contents and aim of the EU Energy Union. The Energy Union does provide a framework that is relevant for CAN Europe's members, in the sense that it emphasizes decarbonization and climate action, which is precisely what CAN Europe works on within their five working areas, and therefore the inclusion of these key phrases and consequently the associated packages insinuate that there has been evident action from CAN Europe in the production of the Energy Union in order for the completed product to be applicable and suitable for CAN Europe's members to operate within.

As for ISES, similar arguments can be drawn regarding the room of action for members within the EU Energy Union framework as for CAN Europe. However, what is different for ISES is that they operate with national branches within their regional branches. Compared to CAN Europe, which represents interest groups that have roots in other European countries, ISES has national divisions that are operational within member countries. For instance, Svensk Solenergi, the Swedish Solar Energy Association, is a member of ISES, but poses as the overarching organization for other solar energy companies at lower levels within Sweden (Svensk Solenergi, 2023). Further, the structure of ISES with lower-level organizations included within national branches and the European Region allows for vertical coordination in terms of the implementation of solutions that come with the packages presented in continuation of the EU Energy Union (Bunea, 2021, p. 719-720). The Energy Union implies increased implementation of renewable energy sources, which is the industrial field in which ISES has an interest. Thus, not only is the Energy Union of major relevance for ISES to affect, but also since one of the dimensions implies a more structured and secure internal energy market in Europe, ISES may serve the Energy Union with its established networks that in a way can pose as an example for other interest organizations for different branches of renewable energy sources.

Since ISES provides rather limited data on direct lobbying of the EU Energy Union, likewise any assumptions will also be very limited in this thesis. There is only so much one can assume with mere access to generalized information from the ISES website and books on ISES lobbying from the early 2000s. Still, the thesis argues that of the channels highlighted such as the young professional networks and scientific research in the *Solar Energy* journal, and perhaps especially in the sense of the organizational structure that allows for national and regional levels of influence, the ISES would have used these examples to influence the EU Energy Union on their behalf. This assumption is rooted in the fact that their interests are preserved, notably in the second, fourth, and fifth dimensions of the Energy Union, regarding a fully integrated energy market, decarbonizing the economy, and research, innovation, and competitiveness, respectively. Based on the channels highlighted in this chapter on behalf of ISES, with consideration of the EU Energy Union, and consequently the contents of the Energy Union which includes a framework that is applicable to the ISES' members, it is, therefore, safe to assume the Energy Union does, in fact, provide a framework for the ISES members to operate within and their interest being intact during the implementation of the EU Energy Union.

Overall, there are multiple actors interested in affecting the decarbonization agenda. Since decarbonization is also a vital aspect of the EU Energy Union, there are consequently a plethora of actors directly affected by its implementation, and thus involved in the creation of the strategy (Szulecki, 2016, p. 550). The EU Energy Union is meant to be all-encompassing with households and businesses, meaning there are many actors, both private and industrial actors, affected by the performance of the Energy Union. The Energy Union has been amended by several packages and regulations since 2015, each aiming at improving the state of the Energy Union (European Commission, 2022b). Perhaps the most important package regarding the Energy Union is still the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package from 2009, which was not created in light of the Energy Union, yet still served as an important cornerstone for the Energy Union and its objective. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package initiated an independent agency for energy regulators, free of responsibility on behalf of national and EU governments, while providing guidelines for regulators in terms of prices and implementation of development plans. This is of importance to the members of both CAN Europe and ISES. For ISES, their members are, as mentioned before, national and regional associations for the implementation of solar energy, thus the regulations that come with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package initiated by ACER directly affect the rate of implementation of solar energy in the energy mix nationally, as well as influencing whether or not solar energy is a priority at any time, considering other renewable resources, or even development and implementation of renewable resources at all (Jevnaker, et al., 2019; European Commission, 2022e). Lastly, the emphasis on renewable energy, which is a topic of reoccurrence throughout the EU Energy Union Strategy, maintains the relevance of both CAN Europe and ISES as organizations of great importance. Both organizations continuously work for their organized interest with attention to the necessity of increased renewable energy in the energy mix, with respect to all levels of governance, and thus also uphold the link between decarbonization and renewable energy as part of the solution for the EU as a whole.

So, in effect, the EU Energy Union, considering all its aims to adhere to the needs of both households and businesses, provides a framework for all affected parties to operate within. The comprehensive strategy and its amendments in the form of packages and regulations by the ACER further promote its relevance and allow the Energy Union to stay contemporary in light of, for instance, energy crises as well as minor changes. In the case

of CAN Europe and ISES, the Energy Union thus does provide a framework that is, not only applicable and relevant for CAN Europe and ISES, but also a framework that allows for influence by the affected parties, which should be self-evident in such an impactful strategy in this significant field of policy.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

This thesis set out to investigate the ways in which CAN Europe and the International Solar Energy Association were able to affect the EU decarbonization policy agenda, as well as the extent to which the EU Energy Union provided a framework for both CAN Europe and ISES members to operate within. To begin with, chapter 2 established the shape and structure of CAN Europe and ISES, looking into their possible channels to set the agenda, as well as their utilization of agency and network in the EU political arena. After this, the EU Energy Union was accounted for, in quite some detail, to accentuate its contents and purpose, as it would serve as a base for the analysis in terms of both putting decarbonization on the agenda and whether or not there is room for action by CAN Europe and ISES' members. Lastly, the findings of this analysis were discussed, emphasizing the components of the research questions and thus the ability of CAN Europe and ISES to affect the decarbonization agenda on behalf of their members in light of the EU Energy Union.

Although the conceptual framework for the thesis, in which CAN Europe, ISES, and the EU Energy Union could be considered quite descriptive, the purpose was to account for the organizational structures and content, which was further the base for the subsequent analysis and discussion. Organizational structure is quite important in this case because it directly affects the room for action by the selected NGOs in terms of available resources and lobbyists, while also referring to the extent to which their networks may reach the intended decision-making officials the organizations aim to interact with. With regards to the Energy Union, the chapter went into detail to describe the content with the purpose of highlighting all significant aspects that may be relevant to influence on behalf of CAN Europe and ISES, which was then the topic for discussion in chapter 5.

To conclude, with respect to the research questions of which ways CAN Europe and ISES affect the decarbonization agenda of the EU, and to what extent the EU Energy Union provides a framework for CAN Europe and ISES' members to operate within, this thesis finds a close relationship between the two questions. The analysis focused on decarbonization and the EU Energy Union. In terms of decarbonization, CAN Europe reiterate its focus on this field by taking part in the discussion on the topic, such as in meetings with EU officials, emphasizing the Energy Union and Paris Agreement in their annual report, and initiating campaigns for increased public attention to the necessity of a decarbonized Europe. CAN Europe is an active actor in meeting with officials of the Commission vice-presidents, and are, as stated in their annual report of 2015, an actor present at discussion forums in which decarbonization is on the agenda. This way, CAN Europe is actively taking part in the promotion of decarbonization, while also emphasizing the importance of their work to their members so this is further brought to their respective levels of governance. As stated prior in this thesis, it is important in terms of setting the agenda to promote topics perceived as urgent in order to engage the public, which is evidently what CAN Europe is doing through its work on climate action. As for ISES, they promote solar energy as part of the solution to the decarbonization of the EU by the means of their Solar Energy journal and provide an arena for researchers and scientists to engage with younger professionals to increase their network and thus the reach of their lobbying practices. Additionally, the established network of ISES reaches multiple countries, in which ISES members also serve as advisory agents to government officials. This way, ISES

is able to promote its objective directly to decision-makers, and consequently is a key player in putting decarbonization on the political agenda.

In terms of the EU Energy Union, and whether it provides an applicable framework for CAN Europe and ISES' members to operate within, the discussion found that the overall aims of the Energy Union correspond with the objectives of the two NGOs, creating the assumption that the Energy Union would also provide the appropriate framework for the NGOs to employ their agenda. For CAN Europe, the Energy Union provides a framework in the sense that it endorses public engagement in climate action, which is a large part of the operations for the CAN Europe members. Additionally, the Energy Union emphasizes the importance of the overall decarbonization of the EU, which is highly compatible with the actions of CAN Europe, exemplified by campaigns, networking, and direct lobbying of the EU officials. For ISES, which provided little documentation into their direct lobbying of the EU Energy Union, the analysis and discussion found a close link between the working areas of ISES and a number of the key dimensions of the Energy Union, namely decarbonizing the economy, an internal energy market, and research and innovation. In the case of ISES, and the fact that they have not registered any meetings with EU officials in the transparency register, it is hard to conclude whether they had direct contact with the EU Commission during the production of the Energy Union strategy, however, it is possible to assume the organizational structure of ISES, meaning their regional, national, and overarching organizations, utilize the network access and thus have had a certain influence of the creation of the Energy Union. For its members, therefore, the thesis finds that all accompanying packages, and especially the 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Energy Market Package is of high relevance to the operations of ISES, meaning the Energy Union and its reoccurring updates create a framework for ISES to operate within.

There are multiple limitations to this thesis. Firstly, the time frame should be mentioned, as it naturally limits the amount of research that can be made in order to produce a complete study into the topic at hand. Second, due to the limited time in writing this thesis, certain methods for analysis were also disregarded, such as interviews, which would enrich the thesis to a large extent with more specified information to the research questions, which is why the document study that is presented would be regarded somewhat limited. Third, when selecting the cases for the thesis, the justification relied on familiarity with the topic and relevance in terms of the planned analysis. However, upon doing the research certain issues arose, which is notably the limited access to ISES' documentation on direct lobbying of the EU Energy Union, thus creating a more diffuse and generalized analysis. Although the total of mentioned limitations could have been avoided, this is not the case for this thesis, however, it does provide a base for future research. Continued work on the topic, with the help of interviews with the actors at hand could highlight the areas that have been neglected in this thesis, such as the direct lobbying performed by both CAN Europe and ISES with respect to influencing the EU Energy Union, as well as highlight in more depth the ways in which the two NGOs affect the decarbonization agenda in the EU.

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