INSIDE THE CITIES

CASCAIS

SOCIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD AS AN ACTIVE ENERGY COMMUNITY

What does it take to make the energy transition work for everyone? In Cascais, climate action is seen not only as a response to environmental challenges, but also as a driver of development and social progress. We spoke with **Luís Almeida Capão**, Deputy Mayor of Cascais, about how the municipality is combining renewable energy, citizen participation, and innovation to build a fairer and more sustainable society.



Luís Almeida Capão, Deputy Mayor of Cascais

MAKING THE ENERGY TRANSITION FOR EVERYONE

For Cascais, climate action is an opportunity to improve quality of life while building a fairer and more sustainable society. Since 2009, the municipality has been developing a climate action strategy focused on achieving carbon neutrality and reducing inequalities.

"*We understand that the energy transition must be for everyone. It cannot be a process accessible only to those who have more resources or information, but must involve the whole community, reaching families and more vulnerable groups,*" Luís Almeida Capão explains.

WeGenerate supports this ambition by allowing Cascais to test new approaches to renewable energy through more decentralised models that are closer to local communities. The project also offers an opportunity to strengthen the municipality's capacity for local experimentation, positioning Cascais as a living laboratory for innovative solutions that improve people's lives and protect the environment.

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PARTICIPATION STRATS WITH KNOWLEDGE

For Cascais, ensuring that vulnerable communities benefit from the energy transition also means giving people the knowledge and skills to participate actively in it. This approach is particularly relevant in 2026, when Cascais is European Capital of Democracy, reflecting the municipality's work towards a more participatory and inclusive society.

One example is the *Energy Cafés*, energy literacy sessions that have involved more than 300 families across different age groups. These sessions explain energy, consumption, and energy efficiency in simple terms, while also giving residents an opportunity to ask questions, share their concerns, and communicate their needs.

"*This experience shows us that participation starts with knowledge. We want the energy transition to be understood and experienced by the whole community, regardless of people's age or circumstances. Only in this way can we ensure that it truly involves everyone and that no one is left behind,*" says the Deputy Mayor.

INNOVATION FOR A SMARTER, MORE ENGAGED CITY

Cascais has established itself as a reference in smart territories, combining technological innovation, sustainability, and citizen participation. Initiatives such as Cascais Synergy and the C2 Operations Centre integrate information from different sources to help the municipality monitor the territory, identify needs, manage resources, and improve public services.

WeGenerate's Digital Twins add a dimension of simulation and experimentation, allowing the municipality to test scenarios and solutions before implementing them in the real world. This includes exploring the potential for photovoltaic installations and assessing different options for energy production and consumption.

Gamification is another way of making complex topics more accessible and engaging. With more than 20,000 citizens involved, it has demonstrated its potential as a tool for awareness-raising, learning, and citizen participation.

"*This is the approach that the municipality of Cascais wants to develop: using innovation to better understand the territory, test new solutions, and involve citizens in building the future,*" Luís Almeida Capão says.

FROM ALCABIDECHE TO A WIDER MODEL

The Energy Community in Alcabideche provides a practical example of this approach. Created through WeGenerate, it demonstrates how public buildings can become not only consumers, but also producers of energy.

Photovoltaic systems have been installed in six public buildings, involving more than 2,000 students and more than 2,000 users of the Alcabideche Swimming Pool and Sports Pavilion. Surplus energy can also be directed to around 20 families in Bairro Alto da Peça, in Alcabideche.

"*One of the main lessons from this project is precisely the role that municipalities can play in accelerating the energy transition, not only through policymaking, but also by using their own assets and their proximity to local communities,*" the Deputy Mayor explains.

The model tested in Alcabideche is now being replicated in other locations across the municipality. This expansion builds on the initial experience with 20 families and involves more than 100 additional families and different organisations. Cascais hopes that the experience will also contribute to wider reflection on the role municipalities can play in advancing the energy transition at national level.

A LEGACY OF CLIMATE ACTION WITH SOCIAL IMPACT

For Cascais, the long-term legacy of WeGenerate lies in demonstrating that climate action and social objectives can be addressed together. Carbon neutrality and the mitigation of energy poverty are already established goals for the municipality, and the project is showing how the energy transition can deliver concrete benefits for people and the territory.

The project also highlights the importance of bringing together different stakeholders, including the municipality, municipal companies, local organisations, and families, demonstrating that everyone can play an active role in the energy transition.

"*The main legacy we want to leave is precisely this: to demonstrate that it is possible to connect the climate response with the social dimension, produce renewable energy, involve communities, and benefit the most vulnerable families,*" Luís Almeida Capão says.

If this model continues to be replicated across Cascais, the experience developed through WeGenerate could help establish a new approach to delivering the energy transition across the municipality.

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