



Since 2014, Cayetana Crespo works as a Technical Energy expert in OCU, mainly conducting comparative tests of renewable energy systems for the domestic sector and small appliances. She participates in the CLEAR project (enabling Consumers to Learn about, Engage with and Adopt Renewable energy technologies) cofinanced by the European Union, and shortlisted for the Award for Sustainable Energy 2016 (EUSEW16). The aim of CLEAR is to bring renewable energy to consumers.

Technical Engineering in Industrial Design, Master in Renewable Energy and Master in Management and Project Management, her career has developed mainly in the field of energy and energy efficiency.



OCU (Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios) is the oldest consumers organisation in Spain. First established in 1975, it has currently more than 300,000 members who have access to a range of general publications and specific magazines on health, personal finances and more. OCU also provides advice services and advocates for consumers' rights and information at the national, European and global levels.



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### **What is the knowledge of the Spanish consumers on alternative energies for cooling and heating at home?**

Within the European project CLEAR (enabling Consumers to Learn about, Engage with and Adopt Renewable energy technologies), we carried out two surveys showing an increasing knowledge of the population regarding renewable energies. However, the youngest part of the population (between 18 and 25 years old) appears to be the least informed. Besides, there is still a bit of confusion regarding the different technologies.

For example, it is quite common to talk about solar energy, without specifying whether it is photovoltaic, solar thermal, or solar thermal electricity which risks to increase the confusion of the small consumer.

### **What are the other lessons learnt from the CLEAR project?**

Undoubtedly, the greatest lesson learnt for Spain is that there is a much greater interest than expected for renewables. And if the development is quite slow for now, it is mainly because of the perceived higher costs and complexity of operation and maintenance compared to conventional energy.



### **What is the role of projects such as FROnT and CLEAR to promote renewable energies?**

A mis-informed consumer is lost in an overflowing world of products and services, in which thousands of companies, businesses and professionals dispute their choice. Therefore, projects such as FROnT and CLEAR, which provide users with information and tools, allow them to compare technologies and lose their fear of changing from traditional to renewable heating appliances.

At the end, they can choose what they prefer, or better suits their circumstances, but based on complete and reliable information, from independent and external sources.

### **Besides information, what are the other priorities to make renewables mainstream for households and businesses?**

Providing information is very important, but must be complemented by tools that enable that decision making. In energy generation systems, there is no one single solution: each installation is unique and should be treated as such. Depending on the resources, and the particular needs, we may find more interesting to install a biomass boiler, a solar thermal collector system, or even a geothermal installation. In addition, it is important to specialise professionals and markets, which ensure not only the correct installation of the equipment, but also its correct maintenance and operation to maximize efficiency. As a matter of fact, the best advertising of any product or technology is a satisfied user.

### **What role do support schemes have?**

The complex economic situation where we are now, makes us assessing any investment that we want to make, and in many cases the savings that we are going to get over time will not be enough incentive to embark on a project that requires a large initial investment.

Support schemes are important to overcome this barrier and encourage the adoption of renewable heating and cooling.