

United for renewable energies and a sustainable and secure future of the European Union.

Joint Communiqué by the Friends of Renewables

The acceleration of the ongoing energy transition requires a profound change in the way we produce and consume energy. Renewable energies are a cornerstone of this transition and indispensable for the EU's security of supply and sustained competitiveness. Together, we are committed to accelerate the deployment of renewables and are determined to take a wide range of policy measures to achieve this goal. Our mission as 'Friends of Renewables' is to shape a dynamic, sustainable, affordable and equitable energy future for all citizens and our economies. We propose a set of measures alongside our renewables target, which should be at the cornerstone of our energy policy priorities and that of the next European Commission. We invite all Member States that share those goals to join us in collectively advancing the rollout of renewable energy in Europe.

On the road to climate neutrality – boosting the European framework for renewable energy

We are facing multiple crises. The past eight years were the warmest on record globally and the number of heatwaves and natural disasters (wildfires, droughts, floods, etc.) are increasing every year. According to the latest UNFCCC synthesis report of the global stock take, a reduction of global GHG emissions by 43 per cent by 2030 and a further reduction of 60 per cent by 2035 compared with 2019 levels must be achieved to stay on track with the objective.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine also shows Europe's vulnerability due to its dependency on non-renewable energy and critical raw material imports. This dependency is a security risk and fuels inflation with negative effects on social cohesion and competitiveness.

The transformative power of renewable energy will play a crucial role in changing these developments. As set out in the European Green Deal and REPowerEU, renewable energy and its accelerated deployment is key for Europe's green transition. It is scalable, decentralised, quickly and infinitely available, reliable, safe, environmentally sound, socially accepted as well as cost efficient with a drastic cost decrease during the last decade. Renewable energy in combination with energy efficiency enhances our independence from external energy sources and reduces our vulnerability to geopolitical disruptions and external price shocks. At the same time, renewables contribute to the EU's sustained technological and industrial leadership and the creation of jobs.

The EU has jointly recognized the potential of renewable energies by setting out a common target in the Renewable Energy Directive (RED). This common European framework and its recent revision unites us on a pathway towards climate neutrality. In order to benefit from the fast scale deployment of renewable energy, and to deliver on our joint ambition, we propose a set of measures alongside our

renewables target, which should be at the cornerstone of our energy policy priorities and that of the next European Commission.

A European approach – renewables without borders

Better interconnection of the electricity markets is key to achieving climate neutrality and overall welfare, and to efficiently integrate large volumes of renewable energies. Common European action is the core strength of the EU. We must become faster in coordinating, planning and building the needed energy infrastructure to maximize the uptake of renewables and to ensure an efficient energy system integration and flexibility. This includes the targeted and accelerated roll-out of flexible transmission and distribution grids, the detection and bridging of missing infrastructure links throughout the EU. Solutions as well as support will be required to maximise the contribution of Member States on the geographical fringes of the EU, including island Member States, or otherwise isolated from the existing grid. Flexibility solutions, interconnectors and storage in sufficient capacity are indispensable to allow for an energy system with high shares of intermittent renewable electricity generation. This is vital for delivering on the needed electrification of our economy as well as enhanced energy sector integration, and for the development of a European hydrogen backbone for both domestic production and imports of renewable hydrogen.

A well-functioning European internal market

A fully functioning and connected internal energy market including renewable hydrogen is necessary for integrating as much renewable energy as possible into our energy systems, and will thus also help to increase Europe's competitiveness and bring stable and lower energy prices to all Europeans. Our focus should be a European level-playing field that is competitive with other countries and regions of the world. In this regard, we must also support our neighbouring regions, enabling them to tap into their massive renewable deployment potential. Infrastructure projects connecting the EU to these regions can turn our sea basins into hubs of green energy corridors

Good governance and better implementation – need for speed

We welcome the final adoption of the revised renewable energy directive, which represents a significant increase in European ambitions for the roll-out of renewables and should be implemented as fast as possible. As mandatory targets have to be fulfilled by 2030, there is no time to lose. In addition, the level playing field should be maintained regarding the achievement of the binding 2020 target as we acknowledge that some Member States dedicated significant resources to statistical transfers to comply with their obligations. To facilitate the quick implementation, coordination and knowledge-sharing through initiatives like the Concerted Action on renewable energy sources directive (CA-RES) and further technical assistance should be strengthened. Furthermore, the governance regulation needs to be revised in view of the fit for 55 package. We are committed to working together to achieve the target of 42,5% and endeavour to increase the share of renewable energy in the EU's overall energy consumption by 2030 up to 45 %, according to the revision of the renewable energy directive. A potential top up of 2,5% could be achieved with Union measures as well as through joint projects between the Member States, following article 8 and 9 of the RED, which could play a major role for those Member States wishing to pursue them.

To deliver on the necessary deployment offshore, we need to ensure the right regulatory and economic framework for Member States to launch large-scale joint projects, including strong incentives for both hosting and receiving Member States to participate through a fair distribution of the costs and benefits.

Beyond 2030, the Union will need investment certainty on the deployment of renewables by means of a 2040 energy and climate framework. The Commission's impact assessment for a 2040 climate target should indicate the bandwidth of the corresponding contribution to such a target from the energy sector.

Cutting red tape and boosting skills

The Council's emergency regulation and the revision of the RED to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy were important milestones in mitigating the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on the energy market and will substantially speed up the permitting process by defining acceleration areas for renewables and cutting red tape. In order to keep that momentum, we call for a prolongation of the Council's permitting emergency regulation (EU 2022/2577) based on Article 122 TFEU beyond 2024 and as long as necessary to further reduce barriers for permitting for renewable energies. Beyond the newly agreed regulation, we also call on the Commission to continue working on how to speed up permitting procedures, including further examination and removals of barriers and obstacles in relevant EU legislation. This is needed in order to ensure a faster deployment of renewable energy and also new hydrogen and heating infrastructure, which is of joint European interest.

Accelerating renewables at speed and scale is vital, but involving consumers and communities is also crucial to ensure social acceptance and facilitate the uptake of renewables across society.

We are aware of the need to dedicate appropriate human resources to relevant public bodies (e.g. permit granting authorities, ministries, etc.) in order to translate the RED's objectives into a concrete reduction of permitting time by the relevant authorizations. Staff should be available in sufficient number and well trained. As the energy transition needs the proper skilled workforce to cope with the high demand for the installation of renewable energy solutions (e.g. heat pumps or solar panels) we are committed to focus on vocational training, and also on reskilling and training opportunities. This will give people relevant job experience and simultaneously provide the necessary workforce for boosting the renewable revolution.

Research and Innovation

To fully unlock the benefits of renewables, the deployment of innovative energy solutions has to be increased (i.e. new storage technologies, building integrated PV panels, floating offshore wind, etc.), particularly for hard to abate sectors and applications. Additional research on recycling, standardisation, the materials used for storage, system integration and renewable energy technologies including the interoperability of such energy appliances and technology will lead to improved efficiency and material savings, which have been an important contributor to declining costs. Sustainable storage technologies combined with smart grids could become a gamechanger when combined with the benefits of renewables. This could not only boost further renewable energy production but also enhance our resilience and energy independence.

Promoting an EU industry for renewable energy

To strengthen our strategic autonomy, we are committed to promoting the deployment of an EU industry on the strategic value chains related to renewable energy sources such as wind farms, circular PV panels, heat pumps, next generation batteries, renewable energy equipment and electrolyzers without harming costs or the deployment speed of renewable energies. We also need to diversify our sourcing of critical technologies and raw materials to make better use of locally available resources and to minimise our dependence on any single supplier, while at the same time guaranteeing the swift deployment of renewable energy across the Union.

We should avoid substituting dependency from Russia by creating a new dependency from another single supplier source or country. We should do this through a mixture of targeted policy aimed at strengthening the EU's leadership position in the critical technologies needed for the production of renewable energies.

A common strategy needs to be put forward to develop crucial value chains for critical raw materials, batteries, battery re-use and disposal, and renewable hydrogen; using the bargaining might of the EU as whole could lead to potential savings for MS. The Critical Raw Materials Act could also be of great importance in achieving these goals.

The wind in our sails – accelerating renewable energies

We jointly support the announcement of the European Commission to propose a European Wind Power Package. The package should address some of the issues above, such as further enhancing the framework for permitting procedures, providing guidance for joint RES projects including enhanced joint planning and cooperation, a fair distribution of cost and benefits, and tackling current challenges as regards supply chains etc. A sound framework for the wind energy sector is crucial in the roll-out of renewable energy in Europe, to ensure that we will stay competitive front-runners in this sector. Moreover, the Wind Power Package should accelerate renewable energy deployment by limiting the burdens, without prejudice to the level playing field, of State Aid procedures for renewable energy support schemes. For example, where support schemes for renewable energies are well-established and proven, we ask the European Commission to pass guidelines for Member States for public consultations to decrease their administrative burden.

In addition to the Wind Power Package, we need an accelerator for other forms of renewable energy and the infrastructure necessary to integrate renewable energy into the energy system. Given the multiple benefits of renewable energy as well as related key infrastructure and the need to accelerate its deployment, the Commission should also look into whether EU-funding opportunities, such as the Renewable Energy Financing Mechanism or the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) with its window for cross-border renewable energy projects, are sufficient to match ambitions, and if they are properly designed. Without prejudice to ongoing negotiations on European financial frameworks, we believe that funding should focus on those technologies where common targets exist. The EIB should also look into developing actions for de-risking for offshore industry and the creation of de-risking mechanisms for power purchase agreements and heat purchase agreements.

Global targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency

We stand behind the European Commission in securing support for setting a global renewable energy target to triple the newly installed capacity towards 11 TW by 2030, to not only combat the climate crisis but also unleash a wave of economic opportunities. More than 90% of new power production capacity installed across the world should be based on renewable energy sources, as was stated in reports by the IEA, IRENA, and the European Commission. Together with a global energy efficiency target, this could foster international collaboration and innovation, drive investments in renewable technologies, create jobs, and enhance energy security. It would also underscore the collective commitment of nations by providing a clear and actionable roadmap for the global roll-out of renewable energy technologies.

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