

Press Release

Fast development of renewable energy projects as best defence against resource dependency and financing war

Brussels, 9 March 2022

Yesterday's European Communication "*Joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy*" - demonstrates a drastic course of action, on the bloc's decarbonisation policies and for guaranteeing the EU's, in response to Putin's unjustifiable and horrific war on Ukraine. EREF welcomes the ambition to implement swift change and reduce fossil imports from Russia by two thirds until the end of the year, and fully phase-out by 2030. Substantially increasing the deployment of renewables across the EU, in combination with strong measures to boost energy efficiency, represent one of the best defences against resource dependency (and the financing of war).

While slashing Russia's revenue streams have become imminent priority for the EU, our continent's independent renewable power producers have been advising since decades about the many great benefits a profound system transformation to 100% renewables would deliver – in terms of climate emergency prevention, sustainable development, future proof labour markets and leadership in innovation and technology.

Therefore, EREF now reiterates its full support to decision-makers, for rapid policy reform and implementation, recommending to exploit available opportunities and establish framework conditions that can provide for a rapid and substantial increase in renewable energy development:

All sources of renewable energy are needed

Accelerating the transition to renewable energy sources is absolutely the solution – but increasing just the quantity alone is not enough. Diversifying supply has always been a core principle of energy system security. And Europe is blessed with a wealth of different renewable energy sources.

Together with wind and solar PV, Europe can rely on a range of sustainable sources, incl. geothermal, solar heat, wave, hydro, concentrated solar power, bioenergy and tidal energy. EREF's [RESTOR Hydro database](#) for example lists more than 50,000 abandoned and potential small hydropower sites in EU Member States, out of an estimated number of 280,000. Collectively these renewable sources can provide decarbonised energy at any point in the day, season or year, and keep our systems in balance.

Allow EU citizens to produce their own energy

Latest EU legislation recognises renewable energy communities, energy citizens, smaller projects and the right for self-consumption. However, many governments of Member states still treat them as „nice to have“.

Especially in this situation, it is irresponsible to refuse citizens the right to produce their own energy but to leave them vulnerable to increasing energy prices and the fragility of a centralized grid and energy system, in particular in times of war.

EREF Board Member Morten Petersen highlights: “We have the chance to have **Yearly Net-metering** reintroduced in all Member states and empower citizens and communities to take action and make private investments in their own renewable installations of the kind they prefer and are able to afford. This is a decentralized solution which provides flexibility and smart solutions for networks, produces energy on the spot, and makes us less dependent from “transported” energy.”

EREF Director Dr. Dörte Fouquet adds: „European utilities need to start behaving accordingly, and stop being the number one barrier to citizens who want to self-consume and share their own renewable energy! Administrations need to wake up and leave their „nay-saying“ and comfort zones behind. These attitudes are neglecting and frustrating - in the eye of this storm.“

EREF is glad that the Commission followed EREF’s position to consider renewable energy projects as “overriding public interest and in the interest of public safety”. This implies that faster permitting and planning for renewable energy projects and their connection to the grid. EREF calls on the Commission to make changes in EU secondary legislation regarding renewable energy and species protection. This means an explicit exemption clause for renewable energy plants in the Renewable Energy Directive and/or Habitats, Water and Birds Directives. It also must be included in the upcoming nature restoration law proposal as well the recommendation on fast permitting for renewable energy projects.

The Dutch Association for Renewable Energy (NVDE) just published a list of measures for the Netherlands to save up to five billion cubic metres in one year. The [report](#) is available in English and might be an inspiration for other countries.

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