

EREF Presse Release

EREF- the voice of independent renewable power producers has a new President and Board, calling for much more efforts for renewables in these times of crises

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EREF voted for a new President and Board during its General Assembly in Vienna this week. Former President António Sa da Costa welcomed his successor, Martin Bursik.

With Martin Bursik EREF again has a most experienced new President. Martin represents the interests of the Czech Renewable Energy Chamber (KOZE). He has a longstanding international career in energy system change, climate change and sustainability, including several years of being in office as Czech Minister for the Environment and Vice-Prime Minister. Besides many other academic and consulting work, he is Chairman of the Expert Commission for Sustainable Energy and Climate of the City of Prague.

Martin Bursik highlighted after his election: "I am aware that I took this position in very difficult times. The planet has been facing climate and energy crisis and the situation increased manifold by the aggressive war of Russia against our friends and families in the Ukraine. EU's dependence on gas and oil imports from Russia has shown how short-sighted the EU's hesitation in transforming the energy system into domestic decentralized renewable energy sources has been and how strategic security has been underestimated."

"Today we know renewables are the best bet we have at our hands to overcome this crisis. All other energy sources must be phased out as soon as possible, considering especially also our unsustainable energy dependency on non-democratic countries."

Building a strong renewable industry in the EU must be the priority, so that the transformation of the EU energy system would not rely on technologies imported from other non-democratic countries and long unstable supply chains. EREF supports recent analysis (<https://www.transitionzero.org/blog/fuel-switching-coal-to-clean>) that countries should move from coal to renewable energy without shifting to gas as a "transition" fuel to save money, as high gas prices and market volatility have made the fossil fuel an expensive option. Fossil gas can only be accepted on sufferance - while all joint efforts on all levels need to be done to change Europe to 100 % renewables as soon as possible, 2040 the latest.

Martin Bursik: "The message from Europe and the Member States must be clear, that any new fossil gas infrastructure does not block in effect the rollout of new renewable projects and that stranded costs in the gas infrastructure in the near future is not burdened on the renewable sector or the citizens via energy pricing."

EREF will remain a cooperative, but challenging and demanding sparring partner to the national and European institutions. The Green Deal needs much more force. We welcome the new efforts of the European Commission to evaluate if increased targets under the legislative process of amending the current Renewable Energies Directive are feasible. We learned that the Commission reflects on 45 % as the new target for 2030. EREF is at present working on a project together with the Technical University of Vienna for the Austrian government to evaluate if much more courageous targets for renewables and energy efficiency are feasible.

Member States need to swiftly enable fast track planning and permitting procedures for all renewable energy projects and for all sectors, electricity, transport, heating, and cooling given them the status of public service and energy security provider.

EREF President Martin Bursik urges that “citizens and community projects get the fastest permitting, connection and support possible. Fast track means as a rule accomplishment of all needed to get the projects off the ground within maximum 3 months.”

EREF welcomes recent declarations by the EU Commission that planning and permitting should not exceed more than one year as a rule. But we are convinced it must be done faster: European industry is increasingly asking in all Member States for direct purchase from new renewable installations in their vicinity. They cannot wait for years to have it installed but only for some months.

Moreover, the EU Commission needs to come up with a fast-track interim crisis state aid guidelines for renewable energies. The Commission should come up with “SOS State Aid Guidelines” for fast track permitting of state aid support mechanisms for renewable energies. It is the EU Commission which often hinders for years that Member States can enforce supporting legislation and programmes for renewables.

EREF asks the Council to be more courageous as voice for renewables and to use its own decision power under the Treaty’s state aid rules to directly declare renewable support mechanisms in EU Member States in view of this critical and exceptional situation in Europe as being compatible with EU State Aid rules.

Above all, EREF calls on Member States and the European Union to carefully adjust current excess in energy pricing – on various levels. Again, there is a notion creeping in that it is not the oil majors and inadequate energy taxation regimes but the renewable industry which is the “culprit”. Pure Absurdistan.

EREF is happy to have increased the participation of women in its Board and on the level of Vice-Presidents. The whole new Board can be soon found at our web page.

For more information, please contact

Prof. Dr. Dörte Fouquet
EREF Director
doerte.fouquet@eref-europe.org

Dirk Hendricks
EREF Secretary General
dirk.hendricks@eref-europe.org