

## Press Release

# Study on more ambitious 2030 targets for renewables and energy efficiency

TU Wien and EREF study lays out why higher energy and climate ambition is required, feasible AND beneficial

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Climate change is progressing at a faster pace than projected in the past. Latest available data indicate that temperature rise is likely to hit 1.5° by no later than 2026, with devastating consequences for the livelihood of humankind and biodiversity.

In parallel, the current cost-of-living crisis that is driven by inflation, Russia's invasion in Ukraine and skyrocketing price levels of fossil fuels (gas in particular), is threatening the functioning of our economies and the sheer livelihood of many citizens. It has become common sense across party lines and EU borders that we need to urgently reduce Europe's resource dependency and stop importing and consuming fossil fuels as soon as possible.

Thus, the only sustainable solution is the fast transformation to a renewable-based energy system that is combined with a substantially more efficient use of energy. United under EREF since 1999, Europe's independent renewable producers have been advocating since its beginning about the many great benefits that a substantial increase in renewable energy deployment levels can deliver: reduced costs for consumers and the industry (with renewable largely being the cheapest source); mitigation for our planet's climate emergency; industry leadership in innovation and technology and future proof labour markets.

With its long-standing experience in advising EU institutions and national governments on designing and implementing decarbonisation policies, EREF has welcomed Europe's increasingly energy and climate ambition – such as the 45% renewables and binding 13% energy efficiency target by 2030 (as compared to the previously proposed 40% and 9%). Yet, even upwards revised target levels and their supportive measures are likely to not deliver the policy instruments that are required to tackle today's economic, political and social crisis.

This is why **the Technical University of Vienna and EREF are issuing the "Study on 2030 Renewable and Energy Efficiency Targets in the European Union"**, providing meaningful support to decision-makers in Brussels and across European capitals who are in the process of negotiating legal and policy reform under the Green Deal and the Fit-for-55 package, with emphasis on the revision of the Renewable Energy and the

Energy Efficiency Directives, as well as the measures to guarantee Europe's energy security and competitiveness through the REPowerEU initiative.

Commissioned by the Austrian Ministry for Climate Action (BMK), the study issues robust scenarios and presents alternative and more ambitious EU 2030 renewables and energy efficiency targets, demonstrating their feasibility and realistic decarbonisation potentials, including efforts that are required at national level. For instance, the consequent removal of barriers that prevent deploying RES technologies across Europe - even when combined with "only" moderate energy efficiency pathways – can make us reach renewable shares above 50% by 2030 (and close to 60% in combination with a strong energy efficiency implementation).

The study further showcases the impact higher target levels would have on security of supply and related economic factors, including the investments needed in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency. As such, the burden is low if adequate instruments are provided in form of tailored support to respective technologies and site-specific needs.

On the benefit side, significant GHG emission reduction goes alongside fossil fuel avoidance, which in return can substantially improve Europe's security of supply. For instance, costs for fossil fuels, especially in high energy price scenarios, largely outweigh investments to be directed in renewable energy expansion.

In conclusion, the authors of the study recommend what decision-makers should do in the short and medium term to boost large-scale development of renewable energy projects and effective implementation of energy efficiency measures. First and foremost, we strongly advise to adopt more ambitious 2030 targets levels. In a nutshell, EU leaders should be guided by the principles and take actions as follows:

- Legally recognise renewable energy development including infrastructure and storage projects as overriding public interest and responding to the need of public safety, allowing among other faster permitting procedures. This principle should apply when revising rules on state aid, emission trading, energy taxation. It should also be included into National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). It should be further respected when renovating public and private buildings, or equipping them with e.g. solar panels, heat pumps, storage solutions, e-mobility charging points etc.
- National decision-makers should go beyond the Commission's guidance to fast-track and simplify permitting procedures for renewable projects. The study advises to get permitting procedures done in less than one year, abolish any form of permitting for rooftop PV on private real estate, and simplify grid access and connection. Also, existing projects should be automatically extended, with simplified procedures in case of non-substantial modifications. To shoulder and

make such reform bear results, competent authorities need to reinforce staff and resources.

- A more ambitious renewable energy development requires more skilled labour, such as installers and experts in energy management services. Therefore, it is key to offer education and training programs, including through broad public support and the use of available European funding (such as the Just Transition Mechanism). This includes re- and upskilling the workforce that has so far been active in the oil, gas and coal industries, as well as streamlined and digitalised administrative processes to free capacities among available human resources.
- Among the study's recommendations (see chapter 5 for details), further measures include making full use of the broad range of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies that are available today, energy market designs that are fit for renewables, support to facilitate the market uptake of green hydrogen, as well as enhanced cross-border cooperation on renewable development and the promotion of individual and collective self-consumption in form of active energy citizens and local energy communities.

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