

Request to include small hydropower in “go-to” / “acceleration” areas– respecting EU Commission’s proposal

Brussels, 14 November 2022

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

The EREF Small Hydropower Chapter and its members, national hydropower associations from EU Member States, urge you to refuse the tabled amendment to exclude small hydropower (SHP) from access to on “go-to” areas which are object under Article 2 (9a) of the amended Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2018/2001.

As instrument to ensure the REPowerEU objectives to increase Europe’s energy independence and to speed up its decarbonisation, **all forms of renewable energy, including small hydropower, must be used both under considerations for an increased renewable energy production and for a better energy system integration.**

It is for this reason that EREF thinks it is important that “go-to” areas should better be renamed as “acceleration” areas, conveying a more positive term, and not excluding other areas from the development of renewables.

The exclusion of hydropower plants below 10 MW adopted by the Environment Committee in the European Parliament contradicts the principle of technology neutrality and lacks any scientific justification.

Due to latest innovative technical solutions, small hydropower and good ecological status of a river can go hand in hand harmoniously. Hydropower is not a threat to the ecological status of rivers if basic ecological requirements are met, e.g., sufficient environmental flows (minimum water flows) and fish migration aids. Ecological monitoring of watercourses very often reveals stretches of water used for power generation where there is not only a minimal difference to the unused stretches but a specific biodiversity resilient to draught.

The European small hydropower industry is regarded as world leader, offering the complete range of technical solutions which comply with even the strictest environmental laws and regulations.

Over the last decades, owners of European hydropower plants have invested billions of Euros in upgrading existing plants with environmental mitigation measures, showing their commitment and support to the ecological requirements of the Water Framework Directive, and demonstrating that small hydropower and environment go hand in hand.

In the 27 EU Member states, around 25,000 small hydropower plants provide annually 13 million households with electricity and contribute already to the EU's decarbonization by saving CO2 emissions from energy production.

[A recent assessment on the residual and hidden potential of small and micro hydropower in the EU](#) estimates an additional yearly production of 79 TWh of green electricity under the strictest environmental constraints. This would be an additional substantial contribution from the small hydropower sector to the REPowerEU objectives to increase Europe's energy independence and to speed up its decarbonisation. It would also help against soaring energy prices and potential energy shortages during upcoming winters.

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