

The local and regional dimension must be fully taken into account in the massive rollout of renewable energies in the EU



PUBLISHED MAY 31, 2022
BY [EUROPA](#)

In this interview, Andries Gryffroy (BE/EA), Member of the Flemish Parliament, and the European Committee of the Regions rapporteur of the opinion ' Amending the Renewable Energy Directive to meet the new 2030 climate target ', adopted during the 27-29 April plenary session, answers four questions on the role of local and regional authorities in the revision of the Directive and their contribution to the EU's energy independence. The opinion called on the European Commission to assess the feasibility of further raising the Directive's targets, based on a detailed impact assessment that takes into account its asymmetric impact on regions across the EU.

To what extent does the Renewable Energy Directive contribute to the EU's aim of independence from external energy supplies?

The war in Ukraine has placed energy security on top of the political agenda, and showed the price of the EU's dependence on fossil-fuel imports. The recently adopted REPowerEU plan is a step in the right direction to rapidly reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels and accelerate the energy transition.

Diversifying energy sources and increasing the share of renewable energies in the EU's energy mix is crucial to addressing energy-security threats and to tackling high-energy prices, which are putting vulnerable citizens at risk. We

We therefore need to ramp up our investments in renewables and adapt the Renewable Energy Directive to the EU's climate ambition to reduce 55% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030.

We need more support at the local and regional level to develop energy communities, power our public buildings with renewable-

energy sources, and to offer the transport, building and industrial sectors alternative energy sources that are secure, affordable and sustainable.

Why is amending the Renewable Energy Directive so important to meeting the EU's new 2030 climate targets?

In order for the EU to achieve global climate goals and to become climate-neutral by 2050, an ambitious and stable regulatory framework is required. Such a framework should take due account of the role of local and regional authorities and it is therefore important that the Member States fully involve local and regional authorities in the planning and implementation of national climate measures.

From a local and regional perspective, we believe that further incentives for the setting up of renewable-energy communities are necessary. We must keep facilitating the permitting process, while reducing administrative barriers and factors that prevent grid access. The key issue is to incentivise collective self-generation and self-consumption of sources of renewable energy. We need to ramp up investments through public funding, EU support programmes and private-public partnerships, including cross-border renewable energy projects that strategically contribute to a truly integrated, decarbonised and decentralised EU energy system.

What is the role of regions and cities in the Directive and how can they benefit from it?

Renewable-energy production has a strong local dimension and the Directive recognises the role of local energy communities and the benefits that they can bring to the citizens and territories involved.

Nonetheless, the potential for renewable-energy production is different in urban and rural areas, islands and mountain regions. Natural conditions for the production of solar, wind or hydrogen vary – but the presence of specific industries and the dependency on fossil fuels, also differ across the EU.

Solutions that are ideal in Sweden may not be ideal solutions in, for example, France or Poland. The measures and priority investments we are currently deploying in Flanders may not be applicable in other regions in the EU.

The EU legislation on renewable energies should therefore mirror such specificities and take into account the asymmetric territorial impact of the proposed measures across regions, and within Member States, favouring a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach.

What should be the three main priorities of the revised Renewable Energy Directive?

First, I would say we should respect the principle of technological neutrality, for the EU to decarbonise its economy in a cost-efficient manner and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, at the lowest social and economic costs. We should therefore not exclude technologies that can generate more than 70% of GHG savings, or that enable material recovery and moving forward circular-economy models, including but not only the transport sector.

Second, we have to strengthen the integration of the energy market and I very much welcome the proposal of the revised Directive to further encourage cross border cooperation on renewable energy projects. This is crucial in order to achieve an integrated, decarbonised and decentralised energy system. However, for regions to unlock their full potential in the new energy landscape, the EU must deploy further support to boost renewable energy projects involving local and regional authorities across borders beyond those planned under the TEN-E framework.

Third, we must become the world leaders in green hydrogen and incentivise the development of the clean-hydrogen market. Together with other sustainable carriers – hydrogen is to play a key role in the energy transition. While green hydrogen should be the priority, low-carbon hydrogen could be used for decarbonisation purposes, as a transitional solution until green hydrogen is sufficiently available at affordable costs.

The CoR opinion " Amending the Renewable Energy Directive to meet the new 2030 climate target " was adopted during the April plenary Session and is a priority dossier of the CoR's Green Deal Going Local (GDGL) working group. Launched in June 2020 and composed of 13 local and regional elected representatives , the GDGL working group has the objective to guarantee that EU cities and regions are directly involved in the definition, implementation and assessment of the

numerous initiatives that fall under the European Green Deal, the EU's sustainable growth strategy to reach climate-neutrality by 2050.

The main points of the opinion include:

- supports the raising of the 2030 renewable energy target and the fact that all sectors should contribute to it, and stresses that a massive and rapid expansion of renewables is crucial to achieving the EU's climate targets and strengthening the affordability and security of supply of the EU energy system;
- advocates a flexible and balanced approach to renewable energy targets that promotes the continued development of technologies and provides certainty for investors, while maintaining EU competitiveness and ensuring a sustainable and equitable transition;
- stresses the importance of ensuring coherence between legislative texts under the 'Fit for 55' package and maintaining the 'energy efficiency first' principle and technology neutrality in order to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 in the most sustainable and cost-effective way;
- points out that the competences of local and regional authorities in the European Union are not uniform and decisions should be taken at the level of governance that offers the most efficient solution.

Press release distributed by Wire Association on behalf of Europa, on May 31, 2022. For more information subscribe and [follow](#) us.

Media Assets

Embedded Media

Visit the [online press release](#) to interact with the embedded media.

<https://wireassociation.eu/newsroom/europa/releases/en/the-local-and-regional-dimension-must-be-fully-taken-into-account-in-the-massive-rollout-of-renewable-energies-in-the-eu-336>

Europa

Newsroom: <https://wireassociation.eu/newsroom/europa>

Website: <https://europa.eu/>

Primary Email: press@europa.eu

Social Media

Twitter - https://twitter.com/EU_commission

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanCommission>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/europeancommission/>

Linkedin - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-commission>
