

JOINT STATEMENT BY EURELECTRIC, SOLARPOWER EUROPE & WINDEUROPE

EU legislators must deliver meaningful acceleration of renewables permitting at next week's Renewables Directive trilogue

Europe's new energy security strategy REPowerEU entails massive investments in renewables by 2030, amounting to the equivalent of 80% of the total generation capacity we have today. Just seven years remain to deliver on this objective.

Permitting remains the single biggest bottleneck to renewables deployment and to Europe's long-term competitiveness in the global race for renewable energy investments. For instance today the EU has 80 GW of wind energy projects stuck in permitting; it can take up to 10 years to get all the permits for a wind farm.

The revised Renewable Energy Directive is critical for maintaining investments in scalable, home-grown renewable technologies necessary for Europe's 2050 electrification agenda, and for delivering the economic benefits of cost competitive renewables to citizens and businesses alike.

The industry welcomes the co-legislators common understanding of the need to speed up renewables permitting, and the active steps taken in the past 18 months to deliver on this. We now call on them to uphold their ambition and go the extra mile on renewables permitting at the 6 March trilogue. The optimal renewables permitting framework must factor in the outstanding 5 elements:

1. **Retain the original proposal on Overriding Public Interest:** In line with the EU Parliament and Commission's position, Overriding Public Interest must apply to all renewable power technologies across the EU and should be kept until climate neutrality is reached. This principle is paramount to accelerate the deployment of ongoing and new renewable energy projects while reinforcing our fight against biodiversity loss. It ensures a good working balance between these twin public policy prerogatives.
2. **Unblock existing procedures:** Mature projects under permit granting procedure could be built very fast and contribute immediately to increase Europe's energy security. So, the proposal by the EU Parliament and Council to declare existing dedicated renewable areas as acceleration areas is positive when such areas have already undergone a strategic environmental assessment.
3. **Renewables permitting in- and outside of acceleration areas must be simultaneous and go hand-in-hand:** Member States' mapping of renewable deployment areas should already be aligned with the EU's 2050 Climate & Energy goals. The identification of renewable acceleration areas should be based on specific and transparent criteria and should in no instance prevent the development of renewable energy projects in any area available for renewables deployment, even outside of acceleration areas. Streamlining renewables permitting both in and outside acceleration areas is key to Europe unlocking the renewables volumes required for decarbonisation.
4. **Revise land use designation to ensure nature-positive renewables deployment:** The EU Parliament notes that renewable projects shall be compatible with pre-existing uses of land. Nevertheless, depending on Member States' regulation, a modification of land-use designation might still be required. For example, an AgriPV project can upgrade land use from intensive cropland to extensive, permanent green land. In this case, the upgrade of the pre-existing use in favour of a more nature-positive use would be forbidden. Same goes for projects converting wasteland to utility-scale PV, where there is an obligation to convert the land to "industrial" to allow utility-scale PV. Thus, a rigorous interpretation of this provision will hamper the deployment of utility-scale PV solutions and thus, the EU legislation must avoid any potential strict interpretation of this wording that may exclude a change in land use.
5. **Ensure a future-proofed acceleration of permitting:** By 2050 Europe's energy system will be dominated by variable renewables which will increase our need for flexibility. We welcome the EU Parliament and Council's efforts to expedite further permitting processes and deadlines for all renewables, repowering, grids and storage, while considering the system security. In view of the urgency to triple our renewable fleet in less than seven years and given the accumulating body of best practices on permitting simplification, we call for the permitting deadlines in the Renewables Directive to be as short as possible. The digitalisation of permitting processes will speed things up and make deadlines much easier to meet.