

EREF Press Statement

European Commission “Barroso II” fails to propose an ambitious climate and energy policy for the European citizens and industry

While in its 2050 Energy Roadmap, the European Commission recognized the deployment of renewable energy sources (RES) as a non-regret option, today it contradicted itself by proposing a less than ambitious 2030 climate and energy White paper with a meager EU-wide binding RES target of 27% by 2030.

EREF is relieved that joint efforts of many stakeholders, committed Member States and European Parliament convinced the European Commission to propose a binding RES target.

However, EREF strongly criticizes the low ambition level of the new White Paper. “It is really hard to understand the weak Commission’s proposal”, regrets EREF Director Dörte Fouquet “as in its own leaked Impact Assessment to the White paper, the Commission assessed that a 35% binding RES target would bring 358€ billion more fossil fuel import savings and lower energy costs for energy intensive industries by 2030, and all that for the same cost than a CO2 only target, and even cheaper if health cost savings are taken into account.”

We need courage from the Commission to also recognize the game-change attitude of decentralised RES on the overall energy market to which all further system change needs alignment. RES are, with efficiency, the backbone of the system. EREF, together with the RES industry, is calling for three mutually reinforcing targets for greenhouse gases, RES and energy efficiency with at least 45% for RES by 2030.

“With such a weak ambition, it seems that times when the Commission was clearly in the driving seat to show the world a progressive approach to renewable energy system change are gone”, added the Director. “By not proposing binding targets at national level, the European Commission gives up on its vision of an ambitious European energy policy. Member States would not be obliged to deploy RES and it would in effect provoke a situation where some Member States do a lot and others continue their lock-in into polluting fossil fuels.”

EREF is a federation of national renewable energy associations from EU Member States, such as wind, solar, small hydro, bio-energy, tidal, wave, and geothermal sources. EREF is striving to defend the interests of independent power, fuel and heat production from renewable sources and to promote non discriminatory access to the energy market. EREF is a member of EREC, the European Renewable Energy Council.

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EREF regrets this approach and is the more astonished since the accompanying Commission report on energy prices and costs clearly shows that it is not the renewable energy uptake which increases the costs of energy prices in the Union. We regret that the Commission does not evaluate energy costs for industry with their productivity index. Even if one may pay more for energy in Europe –which is not undisputed- than in the United States, the efficiency of production by far outweighs the energy costs difference.

Overall, the commitment on energy efficiency in this new White Paper seems to be on the lowest common denominator possible and the outlook for a stronger, amended Directive for Energy Efficiency is grim.

EREF supports the announcement of the Commission today for an iterative platform with the Member States promoting a coherent approach on information clarity and exchange concerning the National Energy programming under a good-governance approach. But EREF worries that this may turn out to be a Trojan horse aiming at dictating and further cementing the neo-liberal approach e.g. for a very restricted set of support mechanisms for future RES policies, destroying the essence of distributive and participatory RE development in the Member States, endangering the sovereignty of the Member States over their energy mix, violating the principle of subsidiarity and trying to re-model the EU Energy world back into the sole ownership of oligopolies.

“The renewable energy industry now calls on the Council to take its responsibilities and to propose a more ambitious target with national binding targets, to support the European Parliament and to show more political courage than the Commission and President Barroso”, she concluded.