

## Lunch Debate in the European Parliament on “100% Renewable Energy: Opportunities for the European Union”

### Political context of this meeting

The European Union aims at making its economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable and is committed to cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80-95% by 2050, compared to 1990. In October 2014, the European Council agreed on a 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework to follow the 2020 climate and energy package. This foresees a domestic greenhouse gas reduction target of at least 40% compared to 1990 and sets a non-binding target of at least 27% for renewable energy and energy savings by 2030. In the meantime, Europe faces a number of complex and interrelated challenges to its energy policy:

- vulnerability due to high dependency on energy imports from a few suppliers;
- insufficient attention given to energy efficiency measures;
- and technical barriers to greater energy integration across the continent.

In order to overcome this, European legislators committed to building an Energy Union with a “forward-looking climate policy”. The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker made this to one of the priority areas of the next 5 years and wants Europe to become the world number one in renewable energies.

Meanwhile, looking at Europe as a player in the upraising global market of renewable energy, it is falling behind, being overtaken particularly by countries in Asia and South America ([IRENA](#) and [REN21](#)). Leading countries for investments in renewable energy are primarily non-EU countries, with Germany and UK being the exception. Renewable energy employment declined in the EU from 1,25 million (in 2013) to 1.2 million (in 2014), mainly due to sharp decrease in overall investment as well as adverse policy conditions. Further, more ambition is needed with regards to GHG emission reduction targets to align the EU’s policy framework to the below 2° C trajectory. If all governments moved to the least ambitious end of the range as Europe is currently doing it, the aggregate of all the proposals would result in emissions well above what is required to keep global warming below 2° C. The lack of strong leadership on behalf of the European institutions on the one hand and the unwillingness of some EU member states to commit to a meaningful action on the other, are therefore worrying for the fight against climate change.

This analysis shows that there is a gap between official claims and reality. In fact, it indicates that there is an urgent need for a robust and reliable legislative and regulatory framework that lives up to the full potential of renewables and efficiency measures as well as enable the European Union to deliver on its fair share of efforts to tackle climate change.

Members of the European Parliament as well as the European Commission play a crucial role in this process. While the Parliamentarians together with the European Council are the law-making body, the Commission is the executive body. They are responsible for facilitating long-term development goals and have the authority to pass, enforce and monitor implementation of laws and policies. Collaboration between the Parliament and the Commission as well as across parties and member state boarders is key, in order to build the necessary policy framework.

### Purpose of the event

Therefore, the World Future Council facilitates a policy dialogue that seeks to inform and engage Members of the European Parliament (MEP) to develop and implement an ambitious roadmap for upscaling renewable energy in the European Union. The program includes in depths policy research, study tours as well as a series of workshops and outreach activities such as the latest lunch debate. MEPs from ENVI and ITRE Committees as well as the EU Commissioner for Energy and Climate Action Miguel Arias Cañete. The objective for this meeting was to enhance the dialogue on the role of renewable energy in the current European policy framework and to strengthen collaboration among MEPs as well as with the Commissioner for Energy and Climate Action. The two guiding questions for the discussion were: (1) How to build a strong and reliable framework to upscale the share of renewable energy between 2020 and 2030 and (2) how to strengthen renewable energy and energy efficiency in the Energy Union.

This lunch debate was a direct follow up of a [Parliamentary Hearing on Building Political Will](#) for 100% RE and a [Study Tour for MEPs to the Canary Island El Hierro](#).

## Key discussion points

The lunch debate followed Chatham House rules<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, this report outlines the key discussion points and highlights the open questions that need to be addressed in the follow up process. However, neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker may be revealed.

- **Renewable resources deliver!** Already 15% of Europe's energy supply is coming from renewable sources and they will play a central role in Europe's energy system. Investments in renewable energy help to cut Europe's carbon emissions but also improve European security of supply, reduce Europe's energy import bill and boost job creation. A 100% RE strategy must include all available renewable sources, including biofuels.
- **100% Renewable Energy is feasible!** Across the world, local, regional and national governments prove that 100% Renewable Energy is technically and economically feasible and reality today. This is one of the key messages that Members of the European Parliament took away from the study tour to the Canary Island El Hierro, Spain. The island proves that political support is the determining factor to enable the necessary transformation. Further, it shows that 100% RE is possible and easy when you include energy efficiency and demand management. Additional back-up options are not necessary in this particular case, as it builds on a reliable wind-hydro pumped storage system. It proves that there are available cost-effective solutions to integrate RE in the grids. Even though other jurisdictions might not be able to follow the same scheme as the island El Hierro, it provides valuable lessons, suggests successful technical, economic and political approaches, and it inspires change by leading by example. Beyond that, El Hierro is an important role model for European member states with large territories on islands (e.g. Croatia).
- At the **June G7 Summit**, leading governments have put the world on the **decarbonisation pathway**: **Decarbonization can be done without nuclear!** Nuclear power has proved to be very risky and expensive, as examples like the one from the UK proves. Even though it might be an opportunity to bring in CCS, the technology is still expensive and still not mature, whereas renewables are much more competitive. In addition, the danger remains that CCS does not keep the CO<sub>2</sub> underground.
- Existing 2020 targets must be achieved! Especially Members of the European Parliament need to be very attentive that **2020 targets, among them** the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20% **are implemented and fully achieved**. Even though many member states are on track, when it comes to their indicative trajectories for 2013 and 2014, recent policy changes, some of them even retroactive and retrospective, are endangering the necessary faster progress in the coming 5 years.
- Strong governance frameworks are needed! So far the European renewable energy success story has been driven by the translation of the above mentioned EU targets into binding national targets. Given the current **absence of national binding targets for 2030**, the EU needs a strong governance framework, including not allowing member states to introduce a hierarchy between the GHG emissions, energy efficiency and renewable energy targets. There is an urgent need to develop mechanisms that hold member states accountable for potential inaction. The European Commission must take on the challenge and push the boundaries whenever possible.
- The EU faces 5 major challenges for RE upscaling in the near future
  1. **Lack of interconnection** among member states and within member states
  2. **Need to develop more intelligent grids** to integrate renewables.
  3. The EU needs to come along with **changes in the RE directive** to:
    - Develop an understanding of RE enabling the EU to be leader in RE innovation. The EU needs to support research and innovation at Horizon 2020 to reduce sustainable energy costs;
    - Establish solid and reliable frameworks for **RE delivery beyond 2030**;
    - Achieve much shorter and more predictable **timelines**;
    - Look at the cost of **financing renewables**.

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<sup>1</sup> Chatham House Rules: "participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

4. **Targets on RE and EE need to be much more ambitious**, “at least 30%” instead of 27%, or rather more than that. In addition, actions need to be combined with energy efficiency strategies in order to achieve 40% emissions reduction.
  5. Consistent package for the EU policy on energy and climate change, but **difficulties reaching agreements** between Council and Parliament and in the European Parliament.
- **The Energy Union must make Europe future proof!** The Energy Union should facilitate the transition to a flexible and robust market design for 100% renewable energy. It should enable Europe to become a global leader on renewable energy. It must use clear language for renewable energy and prioritize renewable sources and efficiency opportunities throughout the energy system. The Energy Union concept must be centred around the targets of a 100% renewable, efficient energy future and an end to fossil fuel use by 2050. Hereby, it can also send a clear message to the Energy Community members for the need to work towards long-term decarbonisation goals.
  - **EU to take the lead at COP21 in Paris!** The EU needs to raise the level of ambition in Paris and should lead by example. For this, the EU needs to be more ambitious on its Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency targets. In order to achieve a meaningful success in Paris, the EU needs a revision of the 5-yr INDCs and track the evolution. The UNFCCC provides a variety of tools of climate finance to help growing the RE sector in developing countries, which should be supported by the EU.
  - **Empower the people in the EU!** The element that determines the pace of progress is the level of participation of the people. The German Energiewende shows that a **people-centred approach** is the enabling factor behind the successful story. Every policy that the EU designs, no matter if it's small or large-scale, should place people at the centre of it.
  - **New technologies and new alliances favouring renewable energy should be embraced!** The renewable energy internet (to build a global network distributing RE through high transmission), will be important for scaling up renewable energy. It's just as important as [the Solar consortium](#), which is about countries reaching to solar resources, to share costs, resources, and try to ensure that solar power will be available as much as 24-hr as possible.
  - More renewable energy means more secure Europe! Higher renewable energy targets are not only needed for climate reasons. It is a prerequisite to ensure **security of supply** and reduce the dependency on energy imports from potential conflict areas.
  - **The uptake of renewable energy must be socially inclusive!** The IMF revealed in May 2015 that fossil fuel companies are benefitting from **global subsidies** of \$5.3tn a year. The EU must address the imbalances created through the sponsoring of fossil fuels and nuclear energy. The recent IEA report stresses that 8% of what is spent on fossil fuels reaches 20% of the poorest part of the population. There is a need to support the poorest sector of the population. The EU has decided that the phase-out of subsidies for fossil fuels won't be binding and needs to be done gradually because of its manifold consequences. There is a great opportunity to accelerate the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies as oil prices are lower.
  - **Avoid further environmental degradation!** Decisions for the use of shale gas are up to Member States. The Commission has issued specific recommendations to respect the environment. So if member states include shale gas as an option, there is a need to do environmental impact assessment. There are countries that prove that 100% Renewable Energy is possible without shale gas and there are member states that build on gas.

## Conclusion

This lunch debate shows that the importance of the renewable energy agenda in Europe is well understood. Legislators showed a vital interest in the subject and there was a great agreement for the need to strengthen renewables in EU climate and energy policies among participants. These efforts must now be backed with public support and continuous inclusive policy dialogue. The following summary concludes some findings with regards to the two guiding questions of this discussion.

## **How to build a strong and reliable framework to upscale the share of renewable energy between 2020 and 2030**

So far the European renewable energy success story has been driven by the binding national 2020 targets. In view of the European Union's climate and energy goals and given the urgency to tackle climate change, the EU's 2030 targets are insufficient in several ways: They are too weak in numbers, non-binding and not broken down for each member state. In order to build a strong and reliable framework, the EU has to maintain a strong post-2020 policy framework that will secure current and future investments in renewable energy. This framework must be designed to deliver and surpass the EU's agreed 2030 renewable energy target. It should also help to meet the EU's long-term emission reduction objective by, among others, addressing the ongoing market and non-market barriers to the development of renewables in Europe.

## **How to strengthen renewable energy and energy efficiency in the Energy Union?**

The Energy Union must be a manifesto of EU's long-term vision to decarbonize and become the world's renewable energy leader. It must be centred around the targets of a 100% renewable, efficient energy future and an end to fossil fuel use by 2050. Hereby, it can send a clear message to the Energy Community members for the need to work towards long-term decarbonisation goals. The current Commission's energy diplomacy paper which outlines the idea of the Energy Union heavily focuses on gas, builds on nuclear energy and overlooks the potential of renewable energy and energy efficiency. In fact, the document uses language like 'wide spectrum of technologies', 'indigenous resources' and 'low-carbon technologies' instead of renewable energy and efficiency. Further, it does not reflect the 'efficiency first' principle. Therefore, ministers of all member states must raise their voices to prioritize renewable sources and efficiency opportunities throughout the energy system. Members of the European Parliament must liaise with their respective country delegations to outline opportunities to put renewables and efficiency higher on the agenda.

## **Attendees**

- Peter Liese (ENVI, Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats - Germany)
- Claude Turmes (ITRE, ENVI, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance – Luxembourg)
- Assistant to Claude Turmes
- Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (ITRE, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament – Finland)
- Norbert Lins (ENVI, Christian Democrats, Germany)
- Anna Záborská (ITRE, Christian Democrats, Slovakia)
- Marijana Petir (ENVI, Christian Democrats, Croatia)
- Taylor Keith (ENVI, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, UK)
- Margarethe Auken (ENVI Greens, Denmark)
- Assistant to Margarethe Auken
- Jose Ignacio Faria (ENVI, Earth Party - Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe - Portugal)
- Cornelia Ernst (ITRE, Left Party, Germany)
- Roger Helmer (ITRE, UKIP, UK)
- Assistant Cornelia Ernst (ITRE, Left Party, Germany)
- Assistant to Elisabetta Gardini (EnVI, Christian Democrat, Italy)
- Assistant von MEP Peterle Alojz (ENVI, Christian Democrat, Slovenia)
- Assistant Valtanen Aino to Pietikäinen Sirpa
- Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes (European Renewable Energies Federation (EREF))
- Wendel Trio – CAN Europe
- Malte Rötzmeier, Assistant to Peter Liese
- Melanie Tönnis, Assistant to Peter Liese
- Anna Leidreiter, World Future Council
- Stefan Schurig, World Future Council
- Irene Garcia, World Future Council
- Angelika Haaser, World Future Council