

The Renewables Grid Initiative

- Description:** The Renewables Grid Initiative is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe. We promote transparent, environmentally sensitive grid development to enable the further steady growth of renewable energy and the energy transition. RGI was launched in July 2009.
- Partners:** **TSOs:** Elia (Belgium), RTE (France), 50Hertz (Germany), Red Eléctrica (Spain), Statnett (Norway), Swissgrid (Switzerland), TenneT (Germany and the Netherlands), Terna (Italy)
NGOs: BirdLife Europe, Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, Fundación Renovables (Spain), Germanwatch (Germany), Legambiente (Italy), Natuur&Milieu (Netherlands), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (UK), and WWF International.
- Legal entity:** RGI is a non-profit association registered under the German law. All partners have equal voting rights, the Members' Assembly is the highest decision body of the association. 6 members compose the Management Board: 3 TSOs and 3 NGOs. The Management Board is the decision making body in between the Members' Assemblies. The RGI Secretariat represents the Association out of court.
- Activities:** **The European Grid Declaration:** The "European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe" (EGD) was published in November 2011. It clearly states that a renewables grid for Europe can and must be built in line with nature conservation objectives respecting existing relevant legislation. More than 30 signatories commit to a set of principles on how to achieve this. Throughout 2012, the initial document was further developed, adding a part that focuses on transparency and public participation. It covers principles on how to design grid expansion plans and projects to embrace peoples' concerns. The extension was signed in 2012.
- Best practice work/"Good Practice of the Year" award:** Launched in 2012, the objective of RGI's best practice work is to promote the sharing of and learning from innovative and laudable projects in the realm of grid planning and permitting processes across different stakeholder groups. It also provides the basis for further RGI work, e.g. the implementation of the principles outlined in the European Grid Declaration.
- After a series of interviews and workshops, the "European Grid Report", a report reflecting challenges, good examples and lessons learned in grid development was published in December 2012. Given the constantly refined processes in grid projects, the work on best practices is updated regularly. In 2014, RGI created the "Good Practice of the Year" award, which is given out annually by RGI upon recommendation of a jury of experts and is honouring outstanding practices in grid development. The winning practice should be innovative and an improvement to the existing practices in its category (categories are "Technology & Design", "Communication & Participation" and "Environmental Protection"). The intention of the "Good Practice of the Year" is not only to further disseminate the many good practices out there, but also to inspire future action and innovative thinking.
- PCI selection/TYNDP process:** RGI leads intensive discussions on how to improve the procedures to increase legitimacy and acceptability of the PCIs. RGI has facilitated and stimulated discussion and cooperation between BirdLife/the European Environmental Bureau, WWF and DGEner/Env. Discussions have so far led to the decision of the Commission to open some of the EC Regional Group meetings to NGO participation. RGI is also a part of the ENTSO-E working group on the TYNDP and their expert group on scenarios. A dedicated ENTSO-E/NGO discussion to improve the transparency of the TYNDP, which is the basis of the PCI selection, has been initiated.
- Events:** RGI's events bring together stakeholders from different sectors, including civil society, industry, academia and politics to promote the dialogue and exchange of knowledge between these groups. Every year RGI, organises approx. three workshops on different current topics, such as social acceptance, PCIs, underground cables, offshore grids or environmental protection, as well as the annual European Grid Conference and a Senior Executive Dinner.

BESTGRID: With nine partners, comprised of European NGOs and TSOs and a research institute, the EU-funded BESTGRID project is coordinated by RGI and works towards modernising and expanding the current European electricity grid for the integration of a growing share of electricity from renewable sources. Launched in April 2013, BESTGRID was made up of five pilot projects located in Belgium, Germany and the UK. During the project, TSOs and NGOs worked together to enhance transparency and public participation, to speed up permitting procedures by proactively addressing or even surpassing environmental protection standards, and to encourage the implementation of constructive public engagement in permitting procedures for European energy infrastructure “projects of common interest.” BESTGRID has come to a close in October 2015. Partners are currently discussing how to continue their joint work. For more information, please visit <http://www.bestgrid.eu>

INSPIRE-Grid: INSPIRE-Grid is an EU-funded research project that stands for “Improved and eNhanced Stakeholders Participation In Reinforcement of Electricity Grid”. With ten partners from six different countries, INSPIRE-Grid aims to increase stakeholder engagement in grid expansion projects, better manage conflicts, and speed up the permitting process. By way of an interdisciplinary approach, INSPIRE-Grid will develop stakeholder-led processes and design an expert-led European good practice guide. Methods to facilitate decision-making will be newly combined with engagement tools and tested with stakeholders from existing or concluded grid development project case studies. More information: <http://www.inspire-grid.eu>

New projects:

Energy Regions in Transition: RGI arranged a high-level field trip to California for a delegation of European energy leaders in October 2015. The series of meetings, high level discussions, educational tours and knowledge exchange took place under the banner of “Energy Regions in Transition.” As part of the trip, participants had the opportunity to join the California Independent System Operator’s (CAISO) Annual Stakeholder Symposium. The symposium is the premier West Coast event for all energy and grid operator executives. The trip was organised with the support of the Californian Renewables 100 Policy Institute.

Offshore grids: The challenges to assess and understand the effects of subsea cables on the marine environment as well as the possible cumulative effects are real for permitting bodies, and thus for developers and investors. RGI seeks to facilitate the work that fills knowledge gaps, e.g. collecting relevant environmental data and making them available to authorities and practitioners across borders.

Compensation: RGI has been working to gain consensus on a good practice guidance for high quality community compensation practices. With the assent of TSOs, NGOs and authorities to a set of principles, community compensation could start to be seen as an effective, just and transparent way to spread the benefits of electricity grid development projects, whilst improving both the public acceptability of individual projects and, over the long term, the reputation of the TSO involved.

Selected Publications:

[The Power of Collaboration - A short introduction to the work of RGI:](#) A flyer introducing RGI’s guiding principles and its main pillars of work

[European Grid Report:](#) Detailed description of findings from best practice project

[Brochure Empowered=Connected:](#) Presents the story of the renewables-grid in a nutshell: Why do we need a rapid extension of the electricity grid? What is the link with renewable energy? What is our vision of the future European grid?

[Animation:](#) Explains why a SuperSmart grid is needed for integrating 100% of electricity produced from renewable energy sources while maintaining system security.

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www.renewables-grid.eu

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