



#### **Imprint**

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#### **About RGI**

RGI is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe engaging in an 'energy transition ecosystem-of-actors'. We promote fair, transparent, sustainable grid development to enable the growth of renewables to achieve full decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement.

#### **More information:**

<https://renewables-grid.eu/>

**September 2021**

RGI

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020

Renewables   
Grid Initiative

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# FOREWORD



Dear readers,

it will come as no surprise that I believe that climate and ecological crises are among the most urgent issues facing us today. To stand a chance of mitigating the worst of the effects and adapting to the changes it will bring, we must put in place practices, actions and investments needed to halve our emissions within the current decade. We must also take the right steps to sustain peace and order, democratic values and the well-being of communities and citizens across the globe

Often, the energy transition and decarbonisation of the energy system are described as a technical, economic and a regulatory challenge. Instead, we need to recognise a cross-cutting revolution that must be fully embedded into the natural environment and the societal structure of every single country, while being coordinated across borders and at continental scale.

What can we expect to take place in this decade? The speed and scale of the transition will increase vastly.

Massive investments will be mobilised and channelled into renewable energy sources and innovative technologies, digitalisation will penetrate many economic and societal activities, transforming the everyday. We must, however, be conscient that such an acceleration will also lead to an increase in conflicts, public opposition and competition for resources; old vested interests will do their best to delay the transformation – bringing pain but little success. Meanwhile, climate change impacts will further increase the divide between rich and poor and there is also a risk that short-sighted responses by governments will increase costs and exacerbate the problem.

Still, we have never had a better opportunity to act than today. Awareness is high and readiness to act is mounting. At RGI, we see answers to the challenges of the future in the innovative approaches of today. We already have the processes, technologies, and approaches which can turn challenges into opportunities at all levels including for local communities. By bringing together diverse stakeholders together in meaningful exchange and, ensuring joint planning throughout developments, we can find solutions that are acceptable environmentally, societally, technically, and economically. By optimising resources and cooperating across sectors, we can create synergies and efficiencies to overcome scarcity. By favouring nature-based, co-use approaches, we can save time, cut costs and avoid conflicts. Such an energy transition becomes a common



project, driven forward by joint efforts on the ground and carrying benefits for nature, communities, and general prosperity.

We can no longer afford to waste time on this pathway to a renewables-based energy system. In this regard, the work of RGI in bringing together grid operators and NGOs in an energy transition ecosystem-of-actors is more important than ever.

**To support this process, in 2020, RGI has...**

- Continued to bring together actors from across the energy transition ecosystem-of-actors through partnerships, projects and events. Through these, we facilitate meaningful exchange of perspectives and expertise and help to identify synergies for the better of ecosystems protection, grid development and the participation of civil society. Read more about our project 'Shaping the Grid Debate' on page 15 and events on pages 18-19,
- Furthered the promotion and dissemination of good practices in grid development which take an innovative approach to realising an energy transition which goes hand in hand with nature and people. Read more about best practice exchange on page 14 and our 'Need for Grids' videos on pages 10-11.
- Created opportunities for capacity building and cooperation between stakeholders from the world of energy system modelling, to tackle the constraints

of limited material and spatial resources, optimise the energy system and integrate all sectors in efficient solutions. Read more about the PAC Project on pages 8-9 and Horizon 2020 projects, SENTINEL & WHY on pages 12-13.

- Convened the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN), a broad alliance of actors from environmental and climate NGOs, grid operators and wind developers, with a view to reconciling the development of offshore wind energy and grid connections with the protection of nature and healthy ecosystems. Read more about OCEaN on pages 6-7.

The year 2020 was challenging and unprecedented in many ways, but so will every year be as we continue down this uncertain path towards decarbonisation. I am convinced that with cooperation, trust and hope, we move ever closer to the sustainable future of which we dream – and I am proud of the work that RGI is doing in this regard. I hope you enjoy reading about it in this Annual Report.



**Antonella Battaglini,**  
CEO Renewables Grid Initiative

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

emPOWER Energy Transition Summit in Brussels – with an input from Kadri Simson in one of her first appearances as Commissioner for Energy on the European stage

TransnetBW, becomes a Member – now all four German TSOs have joined the RGI family

## February



As the pandemic hits, the RGI Secretariat adapts quickly and successfully begins working and organising events from home

## March



First collaborative webinars held with Fridays for Future Germany – with technical and political perspectives on the energy transition from Germany and Europe

RGI calls for the EU Recovery & Reconstruction Package to be based on the Green Deal

## April



## May

The first two Need for Grids videos released on 'Electrification and Flexibility' and 'Grids and the Environment'



**October**

Winners of the 'Good Practice of the Year' award 2020 announced - Eir-Grid for Communication, RSCN for Environmental Protection and ERIGrid for Technological Innovation & System Integration



**November**

Flexibility discussion paper released, developed in close collaboration with Members



Launch of the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) – 18 European organisations sign Memorandum of Understanding

**September**

French NGO, France Nature Environnement joins RGI

RGI responds to EC consultation on Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy (ORES) – advocating energy system & ecosystem-based approaches which foster collaboration and participation



**June**

Signed by 40 organisations, the 'Request to Adapt European Energy Planning Scenarios' demands that the TYNDP should be Paris compatible

Launch of the PAC Scenario - a civil society-led future energy scenario for Europe which is compatible with the Paris Agreement

# OFFSHORE ACTIVITIES

## RGI forms a new Coalition for offshore renewables and nature

By Johanna Meier

In 2020, RGI forged new alliances towards implementing the principles already inscribed in the Marine Grid Declaration. In February, a group of environmental and climate NGOs, wind developers and transmission system operators met for the first time to discuss how they could work together to reconcile the development of offshore wind energy and its necessary grid connections with the protection of nature and healthy marine ecosystems.

Achieving the target set out in the Paris Agreement of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C requires significant new amounts of renewable energy capacity, including onshore distributed resources and offshore capacity. However, our oceans' space is limited, ecosystems are under severe stress and marine conservation targets are far from being achieved.

Nature protection and climate mitigation go hand in hand. Only strong and resilient ecosystems can withstand the negative effects induced by climate change and one of the crucial measures to mitigate climate

change is the removal of fossil fuels from the entire energy sector. It is thus essential that the development of offshore wind farms is planned with nature conservation at its core.

With the aim of finding innovative solutions and a common understanding for achieving this goal, the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature was officially founded in November 2020, with 18 founding member organisations from across Europe. These include TSOs 50Hertz, Amprion, Elia, RTE and TenneT, NGOs BirdLife International, Climate Action Network Europe, Naturschutzbund (NABU), Natuur&Milieu, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), The North Sea Foundation (Stichting De Noordzee), The Wildlife Trusts and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) European Policy Office as well wind industry actors Ørsted, Siemens Gamesa, Vattenfall and WindEurope.

The work of the Coalition contributes to the elaboration and implementation of the European climate, energy and environmental objectives and is divided into





three topical working groups, which explore the intersection of energy and nature from all of its different angles and draw on members' diverse set of expertise. These working groups look at Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), data for MSP as well as impacts of infrastructure on the environment and engagement of broad stakeholder groups.

In the coming years, the Coalition hopes to find solutions that deliver:

- Voluntary, integrated planning – that combines generation, transmission and nature protection – to optimise solutions across the three dimensions and engagement with all marine stakeholders
- Planning for energy infrastructure and nature protection, including compensatory measures across borders for the entire sea basin
- Mapping of ecosystem sensitivities that inform better planning
- Understanding the impacts of human activities, including their cumulative impacts
- New and innovative solutions in design and engineering
- Forward looking planning all the way to full decarbonisation and with a lifecycle perspective

While the work currently focusses on the North and Baltic Sea, we hope that we can expand our conversations in the future to span across Europe and beyond.



# NEED FOR GRIDS

## PAC project and the Request to Adapt European Energy Planning Scenarios

By Antina Sander

"Paris Agreement Compatible Scenarios for Energy Infrastructure" (PAC) is a joint project of Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), REN21 and RGI. In 2020, PAC delivered a range of highlights.

On 30 June, CAN Europe and the EEB launched the PAC Scenario, a quantified dataset reflecting what a range of NGOs from the CAN's and EEB's networks propose as a plausible and desirable vision for a decarbonised European energy system by 2040. Developing this scenario has for the first time given a broad NGO community the opportunity to systematically discuss and agree on options for decarbonisation. It has also allowed them to contribute in a fundamental way to the Ten Year Network Development Plan (TYNDP) scenario process.

The PAC scenario has thus opened a new door to engaging in a much-needed conversation about opportunities and challenges related to the implementation of highly ambitious decarbonisation scenarios while main-

taining high levels of energy security, and about roles that different actors need to take in the future.

A main group of actors in this regard are of course the European transmission system operators (TSOs). In order to start a conversation with them about what is needed to actually implement very ambitious scenarios, such as the PAC scenario, RGI organised an exchange with TSOs and NGOs asking '100% RES in all sectors by 2040?'

Another clearly relevant group of actors, who need to take an active role in ambitious scenarios being seriously considered, are policymakers. Addressing them, CAN Europe and the EEB launched a policy brief extracting key recommendations for lawmakers from the PAC scenario to serve as guideposts in the negotiations relating to the Green Deal and Recovery Fund.

### RGI Spotlight



Upon the occasion of the PAC Scenario launch, RGI separately launched the 'Request to Adapt European Energy Planning Scenarios'. This demand was signed by 51 parties from NGOs, industry, international collaborations and research institutes to date, and gives additional emphasis to the need for EU grid planning institutions to consider much more ambitious scenarios than they do today.



Providing a platform for exchange has been a core element of PAC activities also on other levels:

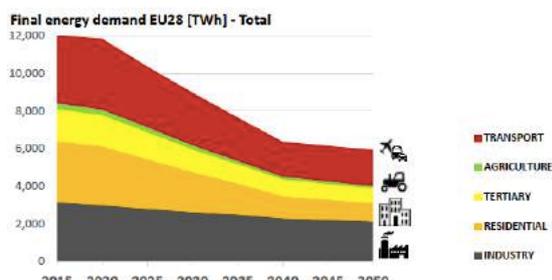
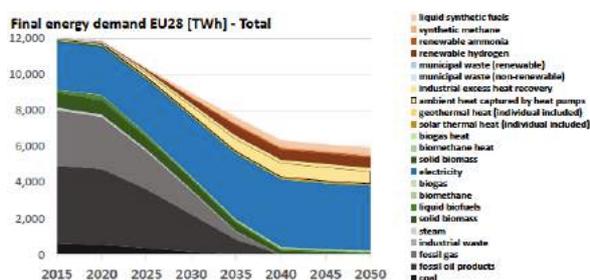
Modellers' Exchange Workshops in January and October gave the modelling community a platform to discuss concrete problems of modelling cross-sectoral energy scenarios and how to depict the far-reaching changes in the future energy supply in models.

And last, but certainly not least, the PAC project also aimed to share its approaches with civil society beyond Europe. In November, REN21 organised an international online workshop 'Engaging Civil Society in the Energy Transition: The Role of Grids'. The event reached around 80 civil society participants from around the globe. Experts contributed case studies from Australia, Chile, Europe, Japan and Vietnam, which have been published in the report 'Citizen Power for Grids'.

Overall, the publication output of PAC has been tremendous this year. On the [PAC website](#) you can find these materials:

- The PAC Scenario and dataset
- Policy briefs from CAN-E and the EEB, with key recommendations for lawmakers and from RGI, reflecting main discussion points of the TSO/NGO exchange
- An outlook and next steps document reflecting upon necessary future analytical work

- The report 'Citizen Power for Grids' showcasing scenario and grid planning case studies from around the world
- A co-creation report, describing how the PAC process allowed for new types of collaboration on a multitude of new levels
- Open source and open data in energy modelling, making the case for an open source culture in energy modelling



The 'Request to Adapt European Energy Planning Scenarios' can be found on the RGI webpage.

# VIDEOS

## New techniques to communicate the need for grids

By Liam Innis

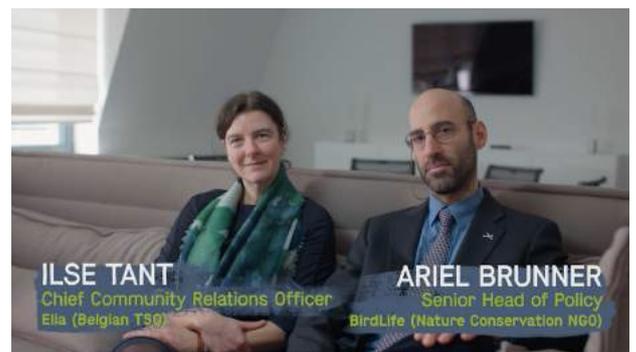
'How can we best share our knowledge on the need for grids with the world?'. That's a question we're constantly asking ourselves at RGI. For sure, there are many ways of reaching and expanding our audience, from publications to events, from social media, to advocacy work. But grid topics are nothing if not complex, and not everyone has the time to read discussion papers to get an overview of the state of affairs.



With this in mind, we launched a video series in 2020, in which each video provides a comprehensive and accessible overview of the main aspects of a particular grid-related topic. The hope is that through these videos, which include expert-interviews with RGI Members, animation and real footage, we can break down the vast range of complex topics under the energy-

transition-umbrella into bite-sized chunks for specialists and non-specialists alike.

We started with two topics: 'Grids and the Environment' and 'Electrification and Flexibility'. The first tackled the questions of mitigating the effects of grid infrastructure on biodiversity and introduced some innovative approaches taken by European TSOs.



Experts from Elia and Bird Life Europe and Central Asia – RGI Board Members Ilse Tant and Ariel Brunner - gave their input in short interviews.



The second video delved into what it means to 'electrify' sectors which have previously been reliant on fossil fuels, such as transport, and the system flexibility which these transformations enable. For this video, we interviewed colleagues from Amprion, Tennet and Transport & Environment - Angela Hahlbrock, Philip Thies and Geert de Cock.

Stay tuned for more videos coming soon!



# SENTINEL & WHY

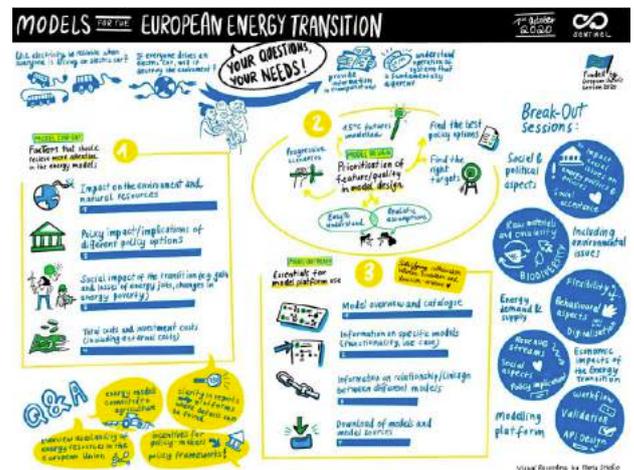
## Opening the “black box” of the energy modelling world

By Andrzej Ceglaz



Energy models serve as helpful tools to advise policy-makers on the implications of different energy futures. However, the comprehensive actions outlined in the European Green Deal have created an additional challenge: today’s energy models need to reflect even more aspects of the complex energy systems than their predecessors.

RGI contributes to this process as a partner in two Horizon 2020 projects: SENTINEL<sup>1</sup> and WHY<sup>2</sup>. The former seeks to develop a new energy system modelling suite to capture different technological, geographic, societal and environmental dimensions related to energy systems. The latter focusses on designing a modelling toolkit which is able to better describe the underlying layer of causality and motivation behind residential energy consumption.



1 **SENTINEL** stands for “Sustainable Energy Transitions Laboratory” and has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 837089.  
2 **WHY** stands for “Climbing the causality ladder to understand and project the energy demand of the residential sector” and has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 891943.



<b>1</b> <b>Strive for a holistic and systemic perspective</b> Modelers should consider all goals, dimensions, sectors, and technologies of the energy system, its transition, and the interlinkages between elements.		<b>2</b> <b>Integrate environmental sustainability beyond GHGs</b> Think beyond the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in your model. Environmental sustainability is more than climate change. And climate change goes beyond CO <sub>2</sub> .	
<b>3</b> <b>Put social factors and human behavior at the center</b> Systems do not change, but humans change systems – by altering lifestyles, investment decisions, and political action. Shift your focus to socio-technical change!		<b>4</b> <b>Design models to support policy decisions</b> Policymakers need models that support decisions about policy options and can assess policy impacts, including trade-offs between options.	
<b>5</b> <b>Specify your target group to deal with design trade-offs</b> User groups have different preferences. Listen closely to your target group's needs to make the best choices. There's no one-size-fits-all.		<b>6</b> <b>Manage and communicate uncertainties proactively</b> Be open about limitations and uncertainties. Stay one step ahead of criticism with analysis of scenarios and input, but also about what your model does and does not do.	
<b>7</b> <b>Use the power of transparency to build trust</b> "Transparency, transparency, transparency." Trust in models cannot be built without it. And most stakeholders favor transparency over intellectual property.		<b>8</b> <b>Involve stakeholders as often as possible</b> Leave your 'ivory tower' to interact with and learn about your target groups. Many stakeholders want to be involved in the model development, improvement, and application.	
<b>9</b> <b>Communicate your results thinking about your audience</b> In the information age, attention is a rare resource. What does the user – the target audience – of your model need to know, and how can you communicate that answer?		<b>10</b> <b>Tailor your model platform for your user groups</b> Next to using common standards, focus on 'Unique Selling Points' like an easy-to-use, front-end oriented modular platform design to grow the users' network.	

2020 was an important year for both projects. WHY started in September and RGI contributed to a first series of interviews with stakeholders from the energy efficiency field to understand their expectations regarding features of the WHY Toolkit, the project's final product. For SENTINEL, we advanced the stakeholder engagement work by understanding what the needs of model users are. We deepened this knowledge in three case studies: national (Greek), regional (Nordic)

and continental (European) by investigating what kind of questions energy model users would like to see answered to make adequate decisions about energy systems and policies needed for decarbonisation by 2050.

The year ahead will bring even more opportunities for both projects to make the energy modelling process more transparent and the gap between energy modelling and decision-makers even smaller.



# BEST PRACTICE EXCHANGE

## Reinventing our best practice dissemination

By Stephanie Bätjer



2020 was a year that demanded reinvention in many areas – including the proliferation of best practices.



For the first time, RGI's 'Good Practice of the Year' award was held on a digital format, however still at its classic home of the 'European Energy Infrastructure Forum'. The prizes were taken home by EirGrid, for their impressive engagement process around the Celtic Interconnector project; the ERIGrid consortium, an innovative smart grid research project funded by Horizon 2020; and the Jordanian Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), for their comprehensive soaring bird protection programme around energy infrastructure. As every year, we were very proud to receive a high number of inventive and inspiring practices and we hope that everyone working on the renewables-based energy system of the future takes notice of the amazing solutions being developed every day.

To make sure that this is the case, we not only celebrate our award winners, but talk about best practices whenever we can – for example during our 'Deep Dive Webinars'. In 2020, we discussed "Nature inclusive design of offshore infrastructure – How can we design offshore systems to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems?" and "Elering's e-Gridmap – How can digitalisation optimise investment planning of new RES generation & grid integration?"

We rounded off the year by showcasing some of our favourite submissions for the 2020 award on our social media advent calendar. Every day another practice was revealed from behind the virtual calendar door, along with information about the practice and a link to more information - our twist on a socially distanced best practice fair. Irrespective of social distancing rules, we hope to continue this new tradition for many years to come!



# SHAPING THE GRID DEBATE



## Dialogue as a force for change

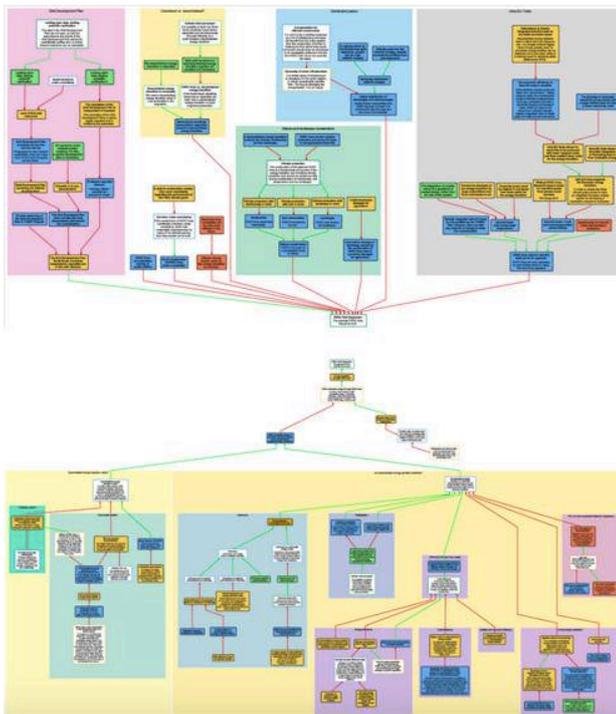
By Antina Sander

Shaping the Grid Debate (SGD) aims to promote a socially just and environmentally sound transformation of the energy system. The project was initiated to provide a neutral platform for interested, potentially sceptical actors to engage in a dialogue, thereby deepening a culture of constructive communication.

Under the RGI umbrella, the German NGO Germanwatch has been in contact primarily with local but also federal stakeholders since 2017. On the basis of these conversations, they have developed an argumentation map detailing different perspectives on the question of whether/why HVDCs should be built or not. Political, as well as scientific and civil society arguments are presented, without being evaluated. This allows for existing content-related connections between arguments to become visible.

A further central element of SGD is the perspective-change workshops: these enable an exchange between a wide range of actors to jointly sound out the requirements and obstacles of the future energy system. In 2020, this format was realised virtually for the first time and dealt with the future role of power-to-gas. The workshop identified many areas of agreement, points which need further discussion, open questions and recommendations to policymakers, which were aggregated in the form of mind-maps.

Four years into the project, Germanwatch observes that the debate on the need for transmission grid expansion is much more constructive than widely perceived. There are more people involved in the conversation and people show a deep understanding of what different solutions imply. This has meant a really positive change for the current debate dynamic.



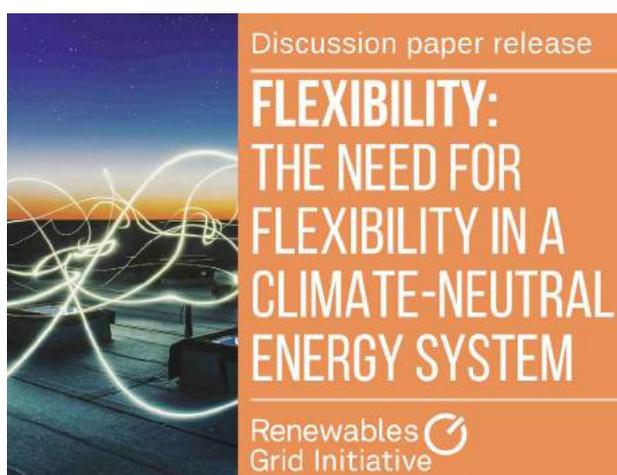
# ADVOCACY

## Advocating a holistic approach towards climate neutrality by 2050

By Cristina Simioli

On the road to climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest, it is essential to support direct electrification based on renewable energy sources and the development of the needed electricity grid. The first will bring innovation, resilience, gains in terms of system and cost efficiency and job opportunities. The second is both the backbone and enabler of a renewable-based system.

In 2020 RGI has worked with Members to formulate positions on various European legislative packages to ensure that these two aspects were taken into consideration, and to advocate for a more holistic approach for the design of the future energy system, encompassing technical, environmental, economic and societal aspects. Recognising this to be the most effective way of reducing emissions and identifying optimisation opportunities, we have asked policy makers to adopt an 'energy system approach', including for the spatial dimension, through a variety of pathways and technologies across different sectors and for existing energy infrastructure. We have advocated for more attention to be paid to nature and environment as these are the basis for all human livelihood and economic activities. We exist in an inseparable symbiosis with the natural environment: avoiding and minimising impacts on biodiversity and embedding nature conservation and restoration measures in all infrastructure projects is key to preserving this. Finally, we have underlined that the energy transition is first and foremost a deep societal transformation and, therefore, benefits for communi-



### RGI Spotlight



Have you read our Discussion Paper of the role of Flexibility in a Carbon-Neutral Energy System yet? Written in close collaboration with our members, we discuss the large variety of flexibility options that will be necessary for decarbonisation - to keep the system stable with high levels of variable renewables - as well as their challenges and how to unlock their potential. Find it on our website under 'Publications'!



ties impacted by developments must be systematically created and integrated into the deployment of infrastructure projects.

We have had fruitful discussions with representatives of the European Commission, European Parliament, ACER, ENTSO-E and many other European Institutions, where the added value of our joint positions coming from industry and civil society is held in high regard.

You can find our responses to the European Commission consultations (e.g. Energy System Integration, Hydrogen and Offshore Renewables strategies, Revision of the TEN-E Regulation) on our website.



### Signatories



# EVENTS

## Conquering the unfamiliar world of virtual events

By Stephanie Bätjer



RGI's workshops and conferences have always been a trademark of the organisation. We define ourselves as a driving force that brings people and organisations together, across sectors and across borders. Part of how we do this is by having them meet at our events. Just like everyone else, we had to rethink this strategy in 2020 and move our events to an online world.

Adapting to the pandemic did not keep us from shaking up traditional event formulas though, instead we used the virtual platform to our advantage, gathered bigger crowds and invited many new faces to join the RGI stage.



Arguably our biggest virtual event of 2020 was the launch of the PAC Scenario and our related 'Request to Adapt European Energy Planning Scenarios' (read more on both on page 8) in June. The event featured keynotes from Laszlo Varro, Chief Economist at the IEA, and Claude Turmes, Luxemburg Minister for Energy and

Spatial Planning, attracted almost 300 participants and made a big splash on social media. Having been our first attempt at a big online event, we are quite proud of its success.

In autumn, our public workshop '**Europe in Transition**' asked '**How can we accelerate the shift to an integrated renewables-based energy system?**', with over 150 participants joining the event. The workshop built upon 50Hertz's commitment to cover 100 percent of electricity demand with renewables by 2032 and explored other solutions being developed in all sectors at European level to enable an energy system based on variable RES. Speakers included CEOs and working level experts, which enabled discussions on the strategic direction forward but also on detailed questions of implementation and exchanges between those leading the construction of our future energy system and young activists from Fridays for Future.

These big events and a plethora of small expert workshops not only allowed us to substantially move our work and positions as an organisation forward, but also to view event organisation through a completely new lens. We have never had as many events as in 2020. So, as difficult as it was to work from home for most of the year and not see many people in person, the new closeness afforded by everyone being just a video call away



allowed a much more active exchange with many stakeholders than ever before. The new normal for events also demanded that all of us learn new skills and get acquainted with platforms and tools that we didn't even know existed before – an important learning curve for the RGI event team. Now, we are excited to apply these skills back to the real world once we are fully able to get back to it.

Speaking of the real world, we were fortunate enough to have organised our first big event of 2020, before

the pandemic really hit. 'emPOWER - The Energy Transition Summit' was a conference in collaboration with WindEurope, Solar Power Europe and SmartEN that took place on the 18th of February in Brussels. It was a successful, half-day event with political appeal that involved high-level political speakers (including Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson) and attracted around 250 participants. This allowed us to personally draw the attention of the incoming Commissioner to Europe's future energy system and the role of grids for decarbonisation.

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

## Engaging with climate activists and the younger generation

By Liam Innis



Since Summer 2018, youth climate groups, such as Fridays for Future (FFF) and Extinction Rebellion (XR) have drawn unprecedented attention to climate issues within civil society, for example through (online) campaigns, policy actions and international 'climate strikes' - whose participation reaches several million. They have undoubtedly played a role in raising the profile of climate issues on the political agenda and are therefore clearly relevant stakeholder in RGI's activities.

After the Secretariat established contact with FFF Germany and XR in 2019, we began to investigate if, and how, we could work together. In a first meeting between RGI, Members (50Hertz, Germanwatch and TenneT) and representatives from the youth organisations, we identified potential actions, such as expertise sharing and knowledge exchange, social media campaigns and mutual involvement in events.

Discussions were ongoing when the pandemic broke out, and thus we decided to first pilot collaborative webinars between RGI Members and FFF Germany. In April and May 2020, two public webinars were held between German RGI members and FFF Germany (available in the 'Learning Corner' of our webpage). These were followed by further virtual knowledge exchange and feedback, such as cooperation on FFF Germany's 'Climate Crisis Encyclopedia'. In September, FFF Germany joined our 'Europe in Transition' event, reacting to TSO initiatives to maximise RES penetration, joining Q&A sessions and presenting their meta-study on reaching climate neutrality in Germany.

### Follow us:

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 Instagram: renewables\_grid\_initiative

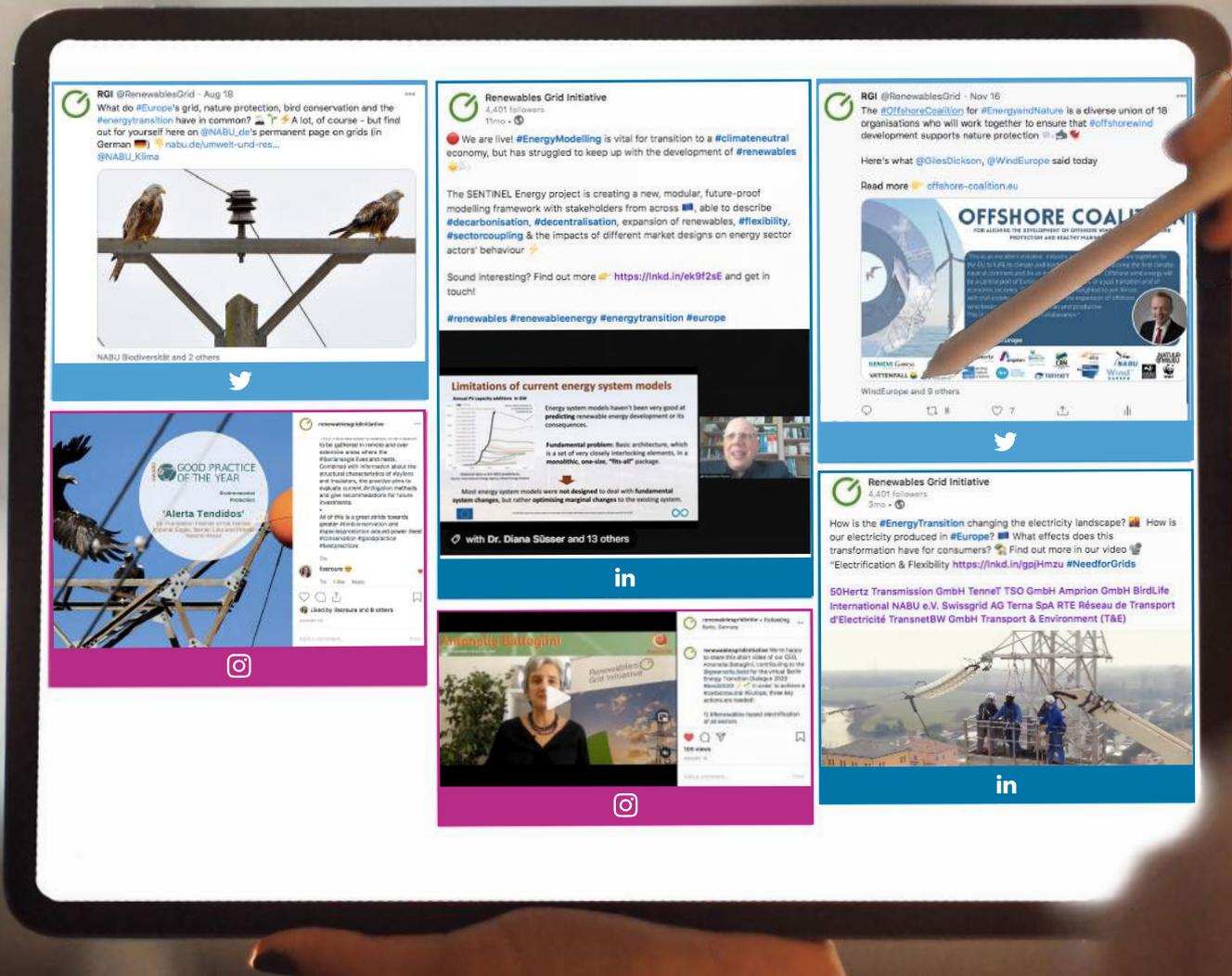
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# SOCIAL MEDIA



## A year of challenges and rewards

By Liam Innis



Social media remains one of RGI's most important channels for disseminating our work and 2020 brought unique challenges, lessons and opportunities for our online engagement. As Europe moved online, we were faced with the task of responding adequately to the socio-political challenges in a purely virtual format, as well as captivating an audience who could potentially become disenchanted with online engagement.

Thus, throughout 2020, we sought to diversify our content, whilst staying true to our 'best practice' mandate. This took the form of 'good news', best practice sharing, graphic summaries, more videocontent, and increased interaction around online events of our own and our partners.

Contrary to our concerns that our social media engagement would suffer over the 2020 period, the shift to an online working-environment has actually coincided with an unprecedented boost in follower and engagement numbers. Namely, between January-December 2020, our Twitter following increased by 28%, Instagram by 41% and LinkedIn by a whopping 101%! See some highlights above, and don't forget to follow us online!

# OUR MEMBERS



Supporting Member





At the end of 2020, Europacable became RGI's first Supporting Member. Europacable is the voice of all leading European wire and cable producers and their members include the largest cable makers in the world providing global technology leadership, as well as highly specialised small- and medium sized businesses from across Europe. The product scope of their members covers the full range of energy, communication, industrial and special application cables.



France Nature Environnement (FNE) was founded in 1968 and now gathers more than 3,500 associations working for environment protection, in mainland France and overseas. FNE calls for an end to fossil and nuclear energies, for sobriety and for the development of renewable energies. At the moment, French national objectives make it necessary to develop renewables, and then to adapt the power grid: these issues brought together FNE and Réseau de Transport d'Electricité (RTE), and are a basis of their historical partnership.

**Dr. Volker Wendt, Secretary-General of Europacable**

“ RGI is a key voice in developing a holistic approach to renewable integration in Europe. We need a sound strategy for how we connect the centres of generation and consumption: Electricity grids should not become a bottleneck for scaling up renewable energy sources. Overhead, submarine and underground cables are key to empowering Europe's renewable-based electrification. After many years of working closely with RGI, we're proud that our partnership is now formalised. We're fully committed to contribute with our technical expertise to connect Europe in a sustainable manner. ”

**Jérôme Partos, Board Member of FNE**

“ The ecological transition must accelerate, which requires in particular an ambitious energy transition. The power grid has an important role to play: by being efficient, having little impact, and by allowing the development of renewable energies as well as solidarity to guarantee stable supply. Each country must implement a transition in line with its realities, but it is important to align the strategies between countries that are now interdependent, and to build dynamics among key European players. Joining RGI means extending our work and in particular what we are achieving through our historical collaboration with RTE, by sharing knowledge both on the evolution of energy mixes, the adaptation of the power grid, and on how to reduce environmental impacts, and by acting together to push concrete solutions and lobbying. Collective dynamics are necessary to accelerate change in Europe which makes RGI's work very important. We are glad to join and participate to its action. ”

# SECRETARIAT



**Antonella Battaglini, CEO.**  
is the founder and creative mind of RGI.



**Stephanie Bätjer, Senior Manager – Communication**  
is responsible for leading the successful coordination of RGI's communication activities, including the implementation of the 'Good Practice of the Year' award, events and policy matters.



**Dení Bellamy, Manager – Fundraising**  
is responsible for RGI's fundraising strategies, as well as project reporting and development.



**Sophie Cassel, Assistant to the CEO**  
supports Antonella in her everyday business and works closely with other colleagues, assisting in our fundraising, events and online activities.



**Andrzej Ceglarz, Manager - Socio-Energy Systems**  
works on issues combining aspects of social and political realities with the functioning of the energy systems, including two Horizon Europe projects: WHY and SENTINEL



**Alexandros Fakas Kakouris, Student Assistant**  
is our in-house legal brain and works on legal and policy topics.



**Himakshi Gurnani, Manager – Finance**  
joined RGI in June 2020 and takes care of our annual budget and the financial reporting to funders.



**Liam Innis, Manager – Energy Ecosystems**  
works between the communication team and RGI's projects on the ground in Germany and on topics related to birds and biodiversity.



**Sylvia Kessler, Office Administrator**  
supports the team in all administrative matters – most importantly, she is the good soul of the office.



## Thank you!

RGI's work would be impossible without the commitment, strength and good spirit of its Secretariat – and we are grateful to have worked with some fantastic colleagues over the years. At the end of 2020, we said goodbye to three colleagues, who each brought special expertise and characters to the team: **Matilde Doni**, was with RGI for 3 years as Personal Assistant to Antonella and worked on diverse endeavours throughout her time at RGI, full of fun and laughter - thank you Matilde! **Holger Loew**, enriched the RGI Secretariat with his deep knowledge of the European energy system. Including and beyond his work on the PAC project, he taught us all a lot. We will miss you, Holger! **Matthew Keehan**, was RGI's Finance Manager from 2018 and brought with him a unique and brilliant character, which we will greatly miss! Aside from this, he is also an Excel Wizard.



### **Johanna Meier, Manager – Energy Ecosystems**

joined RGI in 2018. After working in the communication team, she has lead projects on grid development in Germany and the establishment of the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature.



### **Cristian Passarello, Project Manager – Offshore Energy & Nature**

works on the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature and on its development in the Mediterranean region.



### **Mara Radulescu, Manager – Communication**

is part of the communication team and her work encompasses external communications, media work and event management.



### **Antina Sander, Deputy CEO**

supervises a number of processes including RGI's strategic and organisational planning and is directly responsible for national TSO-NGO collaboration projects.



### **Amanda Schibline, Junior Manager – Socio-Energy Systems**

joined RGI in October 2020 and collaborates in the stakeholder engagement of two EU-funded Horizon Europe projects: SENTINEL and WHY, looking at energy modelling optimisation.



### **Cristina Simioli, Senior Manager – Energy and Policy Systems**

works on advocacy at the EU level and manages collaborations between TSOs, NGOs and other stakeholders to improve their mutual understanding and find innovative solutions.



### **Heidi Stand, Project Assistant – Offshore Coalition**

is part of the RGI OCEaN project management team, leading and coordinating research projects as well as lending administrative support.



### **Roland Lleshi, Junior Project Manager – Offshore Energy & Nature**

has a background in nature conservation and works within RGI on the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature.

# MEET OUR BOARD

## Steering RGI forward



**Jasón Besga - Red Eléctrica de España - Head of the Institutional Relations and European Affairs Dep.**

Jasón currently heads the EU and International Affairs Department of Red Eléctrica where he started as head of the Brussels Office. Before joining Red Eléctrica, Jasón held different positions at Kreab Gavin Anderson, a strategic management and public affairs consultancy, where he advised clients on EU affairs including on implementation and compliance matters concerning EU legislation in policy areas such as environment, energy and climate. He studied Economics and Business Administration at the Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, Spain).



**Ariel Brunner – BirdLife Europe and Central Asia . Acting Interim Director and Senior Head of Policy**

Based in Brussels, Ariel Brunner is Acting Interim Director & Senior Head of Policy with the environmental NGO BirdLife Europe & Central Asia. He coordinates work on a wide range of policies ranging from nature and biodiversity conservation, to budget, energy, fisheries and agriculture. Over the last decade he has been very active in debates over the sustainability of renewable energy and in particular of bioenergy where he has been one of the pioneers in criticising EU support to biofuels. He has been involved in numerous studies, policy developments and political processes linked to the EU Renewable Energy Directives, the sustainability criteria for biofuels, the Indirect Land Use Change controversy etc.



**Alan Croes – TenneT – Corporate Asset Owner**

Alan currently heads the Corporate Asset Owner Department of TenneT after several roles in System Operation, Interconnectors, Asset Management, onshore and offshore. Before joining TenneT, Alan has been active in different roles in local and regional distribution companies. Energy scenario studies, sector coupling, grid planning, spatial planning, system operation, and multi criteria asset related investment decisions are main areas of expertise. He studied electrical engineering at the Technical University of Eindhoven (Netherlands) and Master of Business in Energy System at Delft (Netherlands).



## Thank you!

At the end of 2020, two members left the RGI Board after many years of valuable collaboration – **Olivier Feix** (50Hertz) and **Stephan Singer** (Climate Action Network International). We would like to thank them for the important impulses which they brought over the years, as well as their good humour and spirit.



### **Eva Schmid – Germanwatch – Team Leader German and European Climate Policy**

Eva Schmid works on bringing forward the fact-based discourse on how to achieve a systemic energy transition in Germany and Europe with a particular focus on the needed power grid architecture. Eva Schmid joined Germanwatch in 2017 as a Senior Advisor for Power Grids and Low Carbon Policy. She has been a member of the ENTSO-E Advisory council since 2017. Eva Schmid completed her PhD thesis on the exploration of German mitigation scenarios.



### **Ilse Tant – Elia Group – Chief Community Relations Officer**

Ilse Tant is Chief Community Relations Officer at Elia Group. She began her career in 1997, as a lawyer at Stibbe, a Benelux practice specialising in international trade law. In 2002, she joined Elia as Senior Legal Advisor. She then went on to serve as Senior Regulatory Business Analyst (2007-2009), before being appointed a Senior Manager responsible for Permits, Environment and Property (2009-2013) where she managed several large infrastructure projects. In January 2014 Ilse Tant was appointed Chief Corporate Officer, responsible for several corporate departments.



### **Edoardo Zanchini – Legambiente – Vice-President**

Edoardo is the Vice President of Legambiente. His work on issues related to energy and sustainability has been published in many books and journals and he has taught urban planning and urban ecology at the Universities of Rome and Pescara. He holds a PhD in Urban Planning, a postgraduate specialisation and a master's degree in Architecture from La Sapienza, University of Rome. Edoardo Zanchini leads the energy, transport and urban planning national office for the Italian environmental NGO Legambiente.



