

Implementing RGI Declarations Memorandum of Understanding

English translation of German original text

Our objective: a successful implementation of the energy transition

The overarching ambition of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is for the continuous and ecologically sound development of the grid infrastructure which is needed for a successful energy transition and to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The MoU provides the framework through which 50Hertz, Amprion and TenneT (Transmission System Operators) and Germanwatch and NABU Deutschland (NGOs), together with the Renewables Grid Initiative, intend to collaborate on concrete projects at the national level to achieve this objective.

This MoU encompasses agreements for collaborative efforts that complement the work undertaken by the Renewables Grid Initiative. It refers in particular to the RGI Statutes, the “European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation” and its extension dealing with matters of transparency and participation, as well as the RGI Strategic Objectives.¹ The MoU aims to implement these common ambitions through a collaboration coordinated by RGI, which targets planned grid development projects and existing infrastructure.

The role of the NGOs

The NGO signatories, as active environmental, development and nature conservation organisations, will bring their specific knowledge to the grid development projects. By doing so, ‘better’ projects can be realised. ‘Better’ encompasses here aspects of nature protection, ecological soundness and aspects of health, as well as more transparent and more participatory processes. It encompasses the weighing of scientific arguments that support or contradict the necessity of grid infrastructure from the perspective of the energy system to implement the energy transition, while maintaining high standards of environmental protection. Ultimately, the cooperation will be an important contribution in promoting socially compatible and ecologically sound design, increased legitimacy and increased societal acceptance of the necessary grid development projects.

All issues that due to expertise and objectives are inherently relevant for NGOs (e.g. bird protection, biodiversity, protection of marine space, health aspects, effective public and stakeholder participation, relation of grid infrastructure development and energy transition/climate protection, landscaping aspects) can be addressed. Projects should always address general challenges, so that over a longer term, the lessons learned from specific projects contribute to an increasing comprehensive understanding.

The NGOs’ contribution to the work of RGI is limited to the defined work packages that directly contribute to achieving the respective NGOs’ primary organisational goals oriented towards the common good. This MoU therefore explicitly does not limit signatory NGOs in expressing critical opinions or in producing position statements regarding planning processes or legal proceedings in the context of grid development projects of the TSOs.

¹ <http://renewables-grid.eu/publications/european-grid-declaration.html>; http://renewables-grid.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Files_RGI/RGI_Publications/RGI_Strategic_Plan_final.pdf

The role of the TSOs

Transmission System Operator signatories receive helpful expertise in designing grid development projects, thus potentially avoiding delays at a later project stage that may, in certain cases, be associated with higher costs. This is also economically sensible, as bottleneck costs arising from the missing infrastructure may be avoided. It is also reasonable to consider the significance of individual projects in the context of the European grid development, as they have implications both for the European energy transition and for the macroeconomic efficiency of the German grid system.

The feasibility and benefits of such cooperation have been shown in the past via the BESTGRID² project which was coordinated by RGI and financed through the “EU Intelligent Energy Europe Programme“. The collaborative effort of the BESTGRID project was considered by all participants as positive without exception and worth to be pursued in the future.

The role of the Renewables Grid Initiative

The Renewables Grid Initiative will be granted a far-reaching role in the practical implementation of the MoU. RGI will be the TSOs' service user and conclude a contract with the NGOs for the independent and content-related part of the work, which can only be carried out by the NGO. RGI develops project concepts, details out project Terms of Reference, provides comprehensive project management and will be responsible for the projects' documentation and the dissemination of results. Independent of this, signing NGOs have the right to use and publish intermediate and final results of projects they are involved in at their own discretion.

The ambition is project running times of a minimum of two years. This shall support the development of expert capacity at NGOs which can accompany projects efficiently and at a high quality level.

² Project duration: April 2013 - October 2015, www.bestgrid.eu