

RGI urges Commission to prioritise renewables and smart grid technology

The Renewables-Grid-Initiative (RGI) welcomes today's release of the Commission's communication on "Energy Infrastructure Priorities for 2020 and 2030". It is an essential framework document to ensure Europe's commitment and compliance to the European targets for renewables and the long-term agreed objective of cutting climate pollution by up to 95% by 2050 and to do so without damaging Europe's wildlife and natural environment. Simplified and speedy approval processes and a stable financial framework are vital prerequisites for the construction of the energy infrastructure Europe needs.

However, RGI is concerned that this Communication prevents from setting binding priorities which would enable the creation of a predictable investment and policy framework in the EU and allow for enhanced and speedy expansion of renewables and energy conservation. "Unfortunately, the document does not provide clear directions for investors, no indications of the desired infrastructure, nor a path for achieving the 2020 targets." summarised Antonella Battaglini, Executive Director of RGI. The fundamental concerns of the joint industrial and NGO group is that this Communication "misses a differentiated approach and does not sufficiently stress the need for an urgent legal follow-up", Battaglini added. RGI is also concerned that insufficient attention has been given to building public support for infrastructure development, in terms of communication strategies, participatory planning and avoiding unnecessary environmental impacts.

RGI calls on Commission to prioritise necessary electricity infrastructure development for new renewable energy generation, particularly for variable energy sources such as wind and solar. RGI is concerned that the potential large investment flow into new renewables, such as large-scale offshore wind and required transmission gridlines, is stalled due to a lack of a predictable political frameworks. RGI considers an appropriate legal instrument a key prerequisite for renewable grid integration and expansion, which will allow for unmitigated trade and most economic use of renewables. Such an instrument should stress the need for the speedy development of smart grid technologies, a precondition for expanded use of decentralised renewable energy and energy conservation in the sector. It should ideally also contain a policy and investment framework for the electrification of passenger road and rail transport.

Whilst RGI understands the need for a broad and inclusive concept, it believes that each energy technology requires a different and tailor-made approach. New oil and gas pipelines as well as infrastructure for future CO2 storage from coal power have to be dealt with separately. Otherwise those issues could undermine the acceptance for the grid restructuring and expansion. The growing importance of renewable energy and its role in helping to achieve ambitious energy security and climate protection goals of the European Union should be reflected as a priority in upcoming proposals.

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About RGI

The mission of the Renewables-Grid-Initiative (RGI) is to promote effective integration of 100% electricity produced from renewable energy sources. RGI was launched in July 2009 by a coalition of Transmission System Operators (TSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). RGI's members originate from a variety of European countries, as it consists of TSOs from Belgium (Elia), UK (National Grid), France (RTE), Germany (50Hertz), Germany and the Netherlands (TenneT) and Switzerland (Swissgrid), and NGOs such as WWF, Germanwatch and the Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (UK partner of Birdlife International). RGI activities are in support of national and EU authorities' efforts to realise an efficient, sustainable, clean and socially accepted development of the European network infrastructure for both decentralised and large-scale renewable energies.

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