

SMecoMP

WP2 Project dissemination and communication

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FEDERATION OF INDUSTRIES OF GREECE

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THE 5-POINT TEMPLATE OF EUROPEAN UNION TO ACHIEVE WORLD LEADERSHIP IN RENEWABLES

Renewables are a major source of power in the EU, and they are among our best allies for fighting climate change. Renewable energy will play a leading role in any sustainable and cost-effective solution to climate change. In fact, given that energy and transport account for 80% of EU emissions, climate and energy policies must go hand in hand. That is why as part of its Energy Union the EU has put renewable energy at the heart of its future energy system.

In 2008, the EU put together a framework for renewable energy based on political objectives and the development of new technologies. EU have committed to have at least 27% renewables in their member states energy system by 2030. That ambition and those policies renewables are about more than just cutting emissions. They empower the European economy, too. From 2010 till 2015, the renewable energy sector has provided almost half a million new jobs and now generates around 140 billion euro in turnover – which is a perfect illustration of the fact that it is possible to combine growth and jobs creation with the fight against climate change. That makes the EU a major player on the international market and home to successful clean energy companies, such as the world leader in wind turbine manufacturing¹.

In this article the five key areas in which the European Union has pioneered renewables are presented.

It is clearly shown that there is another world-leading renewable source in Europe: Innovators and Researchers.

1. Empowering Citizens is at the Core of the Energy Union

Citizens should be able to participate in renewable energy markets, see reductions in their energy bills, produce and consume their own renewable energy. Local and regional authorities are getting involved in renewable energy production, grid expansion projects and their management, and helping to create flexible energy markets locally.

Empowering consumers

In Europe, consumers are eager to take part in the energy transition. Local energy communities and cooperatives allow consumers to own renewable energy. Almost 50% of the existing renewable energy capacity in Germany is owned by citizens².

Building smart cities

Cities are key enablers of EU sustainable energy policies. The New Integrated Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy gives new climate change-fighting impetus and drive for more renewables to more than 6500 cities representing over 40% of the EU population.

Last year, more than 3000 municipalities committed to sustainable energy action plans. Today 9% of their energy needs are met with locally produced energy, at least 19% of that was renewable³.

Home-producing energy

Most EU citizens active in producing renewable energy use solar Photo-Voltaic (PV). In 2014, the EU was the world leader in residential PV with more than 40 Watts installed per citizen on average - 10 times more than the rest of the world.

2. Boosting Energy Security by Producing Locally

The EU is determined to reinforce its energy security by being more renewable, more efficient and more interconnected. This energy transition can only be possible in an integrated European energy market which is fit for renewables.

A well interconnected European energy grid is a tangible measure of this new market, and is vital for Europe’s energy security and the integration of renewables. The EU has agreed that all Member States should reach a 10% electricity interconnection target of their installed electricity production capacity by 2020. This will reach 15% by 2030.

How will the EU achieve this? By identifying priority interconnections, so called Projects of Common Interest (PCI), and supporting the roll-out of these essential infrastructures with financing from the European Fund for Strategic Investments and the Connecting Europe Facility. The heating and cooling sector has great potential for renewable energy deployment and energy savings.

3. Leading in Renewable Technologies and System Integration

Being the technological leader for the next generation of renewable energy means unleashing new technological breakthroughs. The EU is determined to develop its world-class engineering competencies, industrial production capabilities and technology supply chains across Europe that can compete globally.

This means creating innovative solutions and services that integrate renewable energy into our grids and market, empower consumers and building flexibility into the system, such as smart, responsive-to-demand grid technologies. It also includes decarbonising the transport system with new technologies, such as batteries for electric cars and sustainable fuel alternatives for cars, boats and planes.

The EU has a structured research and innovation approach to energy – within the framework of the SET-Plan (Strategic Energy Technology Plan). Through the identification of strategic priorities and specific actions, supported by collaboration between research institutes, academia and industry, it has been possible to leverage public research funding to deliver dramatic results. Today European companies hold 40% of all patents for renewable technologies and are leading in key sectors, such as Concentrated Solar Power, Offshore Wind, Ocean Energy⁴.

4. Rolling out Renewables inside the EU

A solid renewable deployment means a stronger industry and lower technology costs. Crucially,

low-cost financing for capital intensive renewables hinges on a stable investment environment and a market that reduces red tape and risk.

The Commission is now working on a post-2020 renewables package that will ensure we hit this target in a sustainable and cost-efficient way.

The EU is also adjusting the electricity market to enable the integration of renewable energy and create a level playing field where conventional and renewable energy technologies can compete on an equal footing. The Commission will seek to make effective use of its own funds under the newly-created European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), and in particular through innovative financial instruments.

Finally, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) provide important financial support and key enabling conditions, such as capacity building, technical assistance and cross border cooperation possibilities, for the shift towards a low-carbon economy.

5. Maintaining and Creating Sustainable Jobs and Added Value

Policies that create growth and jobs are at the centre of the policy agenda of the Commission. A strong renewable policy will enable Europe to fully reap all the benefits of the energy transition and contribute to sustainable growth, jobs and exports; not only in the renewables sector, but in the whole economy.

Renewable energy is one of the few sectors where employment has grown in spite of the financial crisis. More renewables mean more jobs, with new types of jobs and skill requirements, especially in the power sector. Solar PV installers, experts in smart home solutions, district heating workers, energy advisors, will be key to the future energy system⁵.

Europe needs to be ready for the transition, through training and education, and in creating jobs in research and engineering.

Europe is equally a leader in the turnover of renewable energy companies. Therefore, the EU continuously supports the adaptation of jobs and skills to sustainable energy needs under the Horizon 2020 programme. The EU aims to improve the skills of middle and senior level professionals and workers throughout the entire value chain of the construction of new buildings and building renovation. This anticipates an ambition, in the view of achieving nearly zero energy levels, including onsite renewable energy generation.

The EU also works alongside its social partners to build together a smarter, more sustainable, and more inclusive working environment which can think ahead the new energy challenges. The European Social Fund also helps by supporting a transition of the labour force to incorporate greener skills and address skill shortages, including those in the energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable transport sectors.

¹ The European Union Leading in Renewables (2015)

² German Renewable Energy Agency, based on trend: research study, 2013, 2012 figure

³ European Commission, JRC, “The Covenant of Mayors in Figures and Performance Indicators”, 2015. Based on BEIs, excluding CHP, DH and not specified.

⁴ European Commission, “Energy Union Communication (COM(2015) 80 final)”

⁵ Under the societal challenge of “Secure, clean and efficient energy”