

Large European power grid companies support the full integration of expanding renewable electricity generation

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European grid companies from Belgium, France, UK, and Switzerland, Elia, RTE, National Grid, and Swissgrid respectively, have joined the Renewables-Grid-Initiative (RGI) that is pleased to welcome them and looks forward to counting on their support and professional experience to tackle the future challenges.

In their economic analyses on the options for a decarbonised power sector in Europe by 2050, McKinsey and the European Climate Foundation confirm the technical, economic and security based feasibility of 40, 60, 80 as well as 100% renewable electricity scenarios in Europe by 2050. It is seconded by a similar study by PricewaterhouseCoopers showing that the complete shift towards 100% renewable electricity in Europe is economically and technically feasible while keeping the lights on. However, both reports identify the urgent need for a substantive increase in transmission capacity to integrate large amounts of clean renewable energy sources.

The Renewables-Grid-Initiative welcomes the analysis provided by both studies and confirms the technical possibility of building a power system largely relying on renewable sources while maintaining system reliability and stability, provided the necessary grid developments can be performed in due time. The electricity sector has to change rapidly if we want to reach the European renewable energy targets - an almost doubling of renewable electricity to about 35% between now and 2020. This transformation will induce considerable challenges for transmission system operators (TSOs) and investors in the current regulatory situation. RGI strongly encourages the best possible use of the existing grid and recognises the need for a strategic participatory planning effort to win public and political support for critical grid expansion.

The Renewables-Grid-Initiative promotes the expansion of distributed and bulk renewable energy generation and transmission capacity in Europe. Thousands of kilometres of new transmission lines and cables will need to be built in the coming decades. This will only be possible in the presence of supportive regulatory frameworks. To reach this target, the initiative brings together non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including WWF and Germanwatch and TSOs including 50Hertz, Elia, National Grid, RTE, Swissgrid, and TenneT. The grid infrastructure of the participating TSOs in the RGI provides the backbone of the existing power supply to some 240 million people in Europe, about half its population.

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Information to editors:

The NGO Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the UK branch of Birdlife International, became officially an observer and is strongly considering joining the initiative. Among the supporting members are listed the European Climate Forum, The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the universities of Magdeburg and Cottbus (Germany).

Relevant background information documents:

- Mission Statement: http://www.renewables-grid.eu/?page_id=380
- Presentation of the RGI Partners (including statements): http://www.renewables-grid.eu/?page_id=11
- Memorandum of Understanding: http://www.renewables-grid.eu/?page_id=353
- "Roadmap 2050: A practical guide to a prosperous, low-carbon Europe": <http://www.roadmap2050.eu>
- The report "100% renewable electricity. A roadmap to 2050 for Europe and North Africa": http://www.supersmartgrid.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/100-renewable_electricity-roadmap.pdf

<http://www.renewables-grid.eu>