

EREF Press Release

EU Energy Union – The European Commission needs to stick to its word “to make the EU the world number one in renewable energies”

Brussels, 13 February 2015

Unfortunately, the latest discussions during the Energy Union Conference of the EU Energy Ministers’ in Riga on the 6th of February 2015 demonstrated that the European Commission fails to stick to its ambition announced by President Juncker in July 2014 to “become the world number one in renewable energies”.

EREF’s President Savvas Seimanidis urges the European Commission to use the Juncker Plan to **utilize renewables as a solution to the current challenges**. He emphasizes that **“renewables are a means for a stable, secure, affordable and democratic energy system for the European Union which generates jobs and wealth”**.

The enhanced development of renewables would significantly contribute to job creation and economic growth. In 2012, there were 1.2 million direct and indirect jobs in the renewable energy sector throughout the European Union¹. This figure is likely to increase up to 1.7 million jobs in 2030 in Europe² and 6.9 million jobs worldwide³.

In sharp contrast to these positive aspects of renewables, envisioned new investments in imported fossil energy and especially in fossil gas are irrational and irresponsible as they would only move Europe’s dependency from one crisis region to another. In addition, the EU should be consequent and stop concluding new expensive fossil fuel import and transport infrastructure contracts with countries in the Middle East (and elsewhere) which are hotbeds for financing terrorist activities against the European Union, its values and its citizens. Renewables on the contrary pacify access to energy.

¹ [European Renewable Energies Federation \(EREF\), Overview concerning the contribution of renewable energies towards employment and growth within the EU, February 2015.](#)

² Mario Ragwitz et. al., Employment and growth effects of sustainable energies in the European Union, August 2014.

³ Jay Rutowitz, Alison Atherton, Energy Sector Jobs to 2030: A Global Analysis, Greenpeace International, 2009.

EREF is a federation of national renewable energy associations from EU Member States, such as wind, solar, small hydro, bio-energy, tidal, wave, and geothermal sources. EREF is striving to defend the interests of independent power, fuel and heat production from renewable sources and to promote non discriminatory access to the energy market.

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Moreover, new investments in fossil fuels would make no sense from an economic point of view. The declared political aim to decarbonize the European Union by 2050 implies that many new investments in low carbon energy infrastructure under the current Commission's energy security vision - such as gas pipelines - could well end up as stranded projects as many of them would only be feasible in the medium and long-term.

EREF highlights that the current situation is not an electricity crisis but a heating crisis. EREF points out that the dependency of many Central and Eastern European EU member states on Russian gas exports could be quickly overcome by using efficiency and renewable sources such as biogas and biomass in district-heating and long-distance heating facilities.

An example of such a quick transformation is the Hungarian town of Pécs, the fifth largest city of Hungary, which demonstrated the feasibility to switch from fossil fuels to renewables within just three years with a very positive job creation value and a roll-out of advanced EU technology from Denmark. Pécs became Europe's biggest "green" cogeneration district heating network using biomass as fuel.

According to Dr. Dörte Fouquet, the Director of EREF, the current undervaluation of renewables as the chance for the Energy Union leads in consequence to the situation that Europe cannot overcome its huge energy import dependency: "It rather looks as if Europe behaves like a drug addict who instead of getting rid of his addiction changes the drug dealer".

If the European Union wanted to meet its climate, social, and economic objectives and to become "the world number one", the European Commission would need to develop three dimensions:

1. A vivid domestic market, condition sine qua non for a world leadership; this includes an energy market design respectful of the high share renewables in the EU energy mix. It also implies the full implementation of the legislation to meet the EU 2020 objectives.
2. An innovation strategy coupled with a robust industrial policy to maintain or regain our position.
3. Stronger support to export opportunities and providing solutions for developing countries using the international 2015 momentum.

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