

EREF Press Release

Europe - A continent is changing towards Zero Emission

Brussels, 11 December 2019

EREF wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the tremendous work plan to decarbonise Europe which the new Commission under President Ursula von der Leyen puts forward today with its communication on the *European Green Deal* and the proposal for a *Just Transition Fund*.

Dr. Dörte Fouquet, Director of EREF, hopes: "This can turn out to be a great moment for humanity and democracy. If the Union gets kick-started, we can come good for the climate and can get rid of all hesitation, encrusted yesterdays and *no-change-for-me-please* attitude. We can present clarity and feasibility towards a climate neutral, industrial and citizen driven Union soon."

EREF President António Sá da Costa underlines the necessity for a clear no-regret-decision to start a fast and steep uptake of renewables within the first half of the 2020s. Parallel to that, the phase out of conventional energy must be accelerated. Public investments in fossil fuel infrastructure have to stop immediately, taking into consideration that prices for renewables are already competitive and continue to decline. Renewables represent the only viable and economic option to provide sustainable and secure energy for EU citizens.

What the EU needs to reach full climate neutrality is a process to roll out the available renewable energy solutions, combined with energy storage, intelligent energy management and grid amendments. European citizens and businesses must be enabled to play an important role within this process. The EU needs to couple this pathway with measures to reach a very high energy efficiency as well as reduction strategies for Greenhouse Gas emissions from all sectors.

EREF Secretary General Dirk Hendricks highlights: "The next months will reveal how serious and determined decision-makers will be when defining concrete and detailed measures and strategies. The European Commission needs to stick to its word that "Europe must lead the transition to a healthy planet ..." as proclaimed by President von der Leyen in her *Political Guidelines* (summer 2019)."

EREF a federation of national renewable energy associations from EU Member States represents all renewable energy sectors at EU institutions. Its objective is to promote the interests of independent power, fuel and heat production from renewable sources and to establish non-discriminatory access to the European energy market. EREF strives to create, maintain and further develop stable and reliable framework conditions for renewable energy sources.

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Notes to editors:

EREF regards the following major issues of the communication on the *European Green Deal* as crucial for a fast and steep development of renewable energy in the EU:

- The proposed *European Climate Law* must enshrine the 2050 climate neutrality objective in legislation by March 2020. EREF would regard this as a necessary measure to implement the EU's commitments.
- A comprehensive plan to **increase the EU's target for 2030 to at least 50 % and towards 55 % in Greenhouse Gas emissions reduction**. Though EREF welcomes the plan to raise this target, EREF points to the findings of the UNEP [Emissions Gap Report](#), published at the end of November 2019, whereby emissions must be cut globally by 7.6% per year to stay below 1.5°C. For the EU Member States, this would translate into a cut of 67% by 2030.
- In this respect, EREF supports decision-makers in their plan to **revise all relevant energy and climate legislative measures to reflect significantly higher climate ambition, including the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Directives**. EREF calls on decisions-makers to finalise this process as soon as possible; latest by mid-2021.
- Assess the ambition of the final **National Energy and Climate Plans**. EREF and its members, national renewable energy associations, are again assessing the updated and final national plans and will provide an overview of their finding in the first quarter of 2020. EREF's current interim assessments reveals however that several plans remain unambitious without political will to truly endorse the energy system transformation.

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- An **EU Industrial Strategy** that promotes European renewable energy manufacturers and project developers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises to maintain (e.g. small hydropower) or rebuild (e.g. PV industry) a strong domestic industry base in the EU. A strong domestic market will also serve as basis to export European goods and services to other continents. EREF calls for the creation of new quality employment as part of a decarbonisation strategy.
- To enable a **Just Transition**, EREF welcomes the provided funds and calls on the European Commission to support EU Member States in the development of detailed green development strategies on how to counter impacts of decarbonisation.
- EREF welcomes the planned **financial support and investments for renewable energy** through the new role of the European Investment bank (EIB) as climate bank, the development of a green financing action plan, and EU funding tools such as Horizon Europe for research and development as well as climate activities. EREF calls on decision-makers to enable new funding schemes for small and medium-sized renewable energy projects to allow energy citizens and energy cooperatives to become the centre of the new European energy system.
- **Revision of State Aid Guidelines** for environment and energy, as well as other climate and energy-related guidelines, to bring them in line with the *European Green Deal*. EREF has already developed its recommendations and supports European and national decision-makers in this revision process. EREF calls for a strong taxation of conventional energy including nuclear to provide clear incentives for investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. The planned revision of the Energy Taxation Directive can be a step in this direction.

EREF is in the process of discussing with industry stakeholders and decision-makers in order to develop the right settings. Following **EREF's last Climate Atelier** on Carbon-pricing in November 2019, a second one is planned for **mid-February 2020**. **It will focus on the concerns and commitments of the various industries in the European Union.**