

Grid operators and environmental organisations team up to promote sustainable modernisation of electricity grids

Innovation and expansion of European power grids to unlock full potential of renewables

Brussels, 10 November 2011

The unlocking of Europe's full potential for renewable energy via the modernisation and expansion of its power grids should go hand-in-hand with nature conservation efforts, said a coalition [1] of Europe's largest grid operators and environmental organisations. The "European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe" was handed to European Commissioner for Energy Günther H. Oettinger today at the European Grid Conference in Brussels.

In October, the European Commission put forward a draft law making it easier to build and finance cross-border power lines, which are essential to making Europe's energy system greener. The coalition of grid operators and civil society organisations supports Europe's ambition to **boost renewable electricity and cut carbon emissions**.

A pledge to work together

The joint declaration aims to strengthen the coalition of stakeholders supporting grid expansion to integrate renewables and raise public awareness of this need. It also lays the ground for cooperation on specific pilot projects to develop best practice and improve the implementation of grid development in line with nature conservation objectives. The coalition also pledges to encourage transparency and address public acceptance.

Grid operators commit to helping meet Europe's objectives to protect nature, for example by ensuring that risks to birds from power lines are minimised. At the same time, the NGOs commit to supporting crucial grid development for the integration of renewables from larger centralised and smaller localised generation sources.

Renewables-Grid-Initiative Executive Director Antonella Battaglini: *"This declaration shows that Europe's energy and environmental commitments don't need to be in conflict - we can build grids fast for renewables and also protect nature. We need new alliances across society to acknowledge the challenges and to find acceptable solutions. We invite the Commission to use this declaration as a first building block for European guidelines on grid expansion and nature protection."*

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Additional material:

[1] The list of signatories will be updated online as further organisations are invited to sign up in an open-ended process. List of **inaugural signatories**:

- TSOs: Elia (Belgium), National Grid (UK), REE (Spain), RTE (France), Statnett (Norway), Swissgrid (Switzerland), TenneT (Netherlands), Terna (Italy), 50Hertz (Germany)
- NGOs: BirdLife Europe, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Friends of the Earth Europe, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Germanwatch, Global Nature Fund, Greenpeace Europe, Natuur en Milieu, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), WWF
- Supporters: Bellona Foundation, European Climate Foundation (ECF), Friends of the Supergrid, SEFEP, Zero

[2] **Quotes** on following pages

[3] Full text of the **European Grid Declaration** attached (separate pdf)

[4] A **photograph** of the Declaration being handed over to EU Commissioner for Energy Günther H. Oettinger will be available online on the Renewables-Grid-Initiative website at 16:30 on 10 November 2011.

www.renewables-grid.eu



Quotes

Günther H. Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, European Commission

"We need to strengthen the European electricity grid to achieve Europe's ambitious energy and climate policy objectives. This needs to be done in agreement with society, while respecting nature conservation standards. Cooperation between stakeholders and project developers from the very start of the project is necessary to get the projects built quickly, and this initiative is one of the ways to ensure that. We at the European Commission therefore welcome the Renewables-Grid-Initiative as an excellent platform for TSOs and NGOs to work together to find and implement joint solutions."

Harry Huyton, Head of Climate Change Policy and Campaigns, RSPB

"The declaration establishes a clear and common direction for grid developers and NGOs across Europe, helping pave the way towards rapid deployment of low carbon infrastructure that is not at the expense of our environment."

Ben Voorhorst, COO, TenneT

"Since grid development is indispensable for greening Europe's electricity production cooperation of environmental organisations and grid operators should truly be a natural thing. We want to exchange knowledge and learn from each other – that's the spirit of our endeavour and this declaration."

Daniel Dobbeni, CEO, Elia Group and Chairman of the Board, 50Hertz

"We share a common engagement in favour of a greener Europe. By sharing our thoughts and bundling our efforts we will be able to integrate renewable energy while preserving nature for future generations."

Christoph Bals, Policy Director, Germanwatch

"A rapid increase of renewable energies necessarily means new electric grids. For building acceptance, two main goals need to be at the centre: climate protection and renewable energies. In addition, the public needs to be engaged at an early planning stage in a meaningful way."

Steve Holliday, Chief Executive, National Grid

"Investment in power grids is an essential part of connecting people to new renewable energy sources. The declaration is an important statement that we will ensure a focus on nature conservation goes hand in hand with this vital investment. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in the Renewables-Grid-Initiative on the wider issues surrounding how we can reduce the impacts of grid expansion."

Luis Atienza, Chairman and CEO, REE

"To use renewable energy to the maximum in the electric system is an exigency to which we must dedicate all our effort. Renewable energies, which are intermittent, require a more robust and meshed electrical network, but they also require a more intelligent network that is respectful towards the environment. This we can only build with the commitment of all and the conviction of society."

Dominique Maillard, CEO, RTE

"This declaration reflects that grid expansion is not in conflict with nature protection. More than that: it is a key requisite for climate change mitigation."

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Pierre-Alain Graf, CEO, Swissgrid

“Swissgrid, the independent TSO for Switzerland, considers sustainable electricity supply as its most important objective. This includes also preserve handling of natural resources and the reconstruction of the transmission grid enabling large scale integration of renewables. This will assure that coming generations will be able to create their future in a world worth living in.”

Auke Lont, CEO, Statnett

“The expansion of the European grid is crucial for the development of renewables, for the security of supply and for the revitalisation of European industry.”

Frauke Thies, EU Energy Policy Advisor, Greenpeace Europe

“Europe needs to kick its coal and nuclear habit. To do so means rolling out an intelligent and efficient power grid that will unlock the full potential of renewable energy. This technological switch to a modern energy system needs to happen quickly, but also tread lightly on Europe’s environment.”

Kristina Steenbock, Executive Director, SEFEP

“Unusual coalitions across the society are necessary to meet the challenge of climate change. The strength of the European Grid Declaration is that NGOs and TSOs team up, groups who have often found themselves on opposite sides of public campaigns. We need more of these cross over initiatives.”

Frederic Hauge, President, The Bellona Foundation

“This initiative is a strong signal for decision makers to address two important issues; namely the need to switch to renewable energy sources and enable their distribution, while at the same time taking into consideration how to best protect our environment. A European smart grid will unlock the potential in sustainable growth for future generations, and enable Europe to move away from its reliance on fossil and nuclear energy sources.”

Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy, BirdLife Europe

“Europe has to upgrade its electricity grids to accommodate the big surge in renewable energy needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but this can, and must, happen in a way that safeguards birds, biodiversity and our most precious nature sites.”

Dr. Peter Ahmels, Head Renewable Energies, Deutsche Umwelthilfe

“Without a social debate on the transformation of our energy system towards renewable energies and without a dialogue with citizens about the energy turnaround and adequate transmission technologies, the extension of the grid will be stuck. Thereby, the protection of neighbouring habitats and nature protection are key issues.”

Dr. Johannes Meier, CEO, European Climate Foundation

“Conflicts over new power lines are a bad excuse for inaction on switching Europe's power supply to renewables as quickly as possible. These conflicts need to be addressed head-on – and the European Grid Declaration is setting a constructive tone on that way.”

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Stan Blackley, Chief Executive, Friends of the Earth Scotland

"Friends of the Earth Scotland is delighted to be involved in this groundbreaking and extremely worthwhile project. Scotland has world-leading carbon reduction targets to meet and a key role to play in the European renewables revolution. We may be a small country, but we are well placed to help lead activity to increase the amount of electricity produced from renewable sources and reduce carbon emissions to help tackle climate change."

Ana Aguado Cornago, CEO, Friends of the Supergrid

"Decarbonising the European economy requires exploiting all the renewable potential of the EU. Therefore, we must seriously invest in the necessary infrastructure. But opting for a transformed energy system would make no sense if other environmental concerns are not taken into account when building the Supergrid."

Marion Hammerl, President, Global Nature Fund

"The Renewables-Grid-Initiative is an important step for a better cooperation of TSOs and NGOs for nature protection – in doing so, it is in line with the goals of the European Business & Biodiversity Campaign. We are happy to support this initiative."

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