

EN
P-001982/2016
Answer given by Mr Arias Cañete
on behalf of the Commission
(13.4.2016)

Small-hydro power plants contribute to renewable energy generation: they currently represent around 13% of all hydropower generation, a share which is to remain relatively stable according to the National Renewable Energy Action Plans.

The Commission supports investment in renewable energies to achieve the EU goal of obtaining 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. The Commission also recognizes that small hydropower could provide grid stability integrating higher shares of variable renewables, local and regional development and good opportunities for technologies export. Financing of small-scale hydropower plants can therefore be provided in the framework of the Operational Programmes under the European Structural Investment Funds, if Member States include such possibility in their Partnership Agreements. The Commission also supports hydropower through the Horizon 2020 Work Programme for 2016-2017. Under this programme, environmentally friendly hydropower solutions and enhanced flexibility of hydropower are eligible for support¹.

However, the development of such plants, if not properly environmentally integrated, could entail a deterioration of the status of water bodies. Financing of small hydropower plants can only be done if a number of conditions are met (Article 4(7) of the Water Framework Directive²), including, in case of significant adverse effects, the overriding public interest of the project, the lack of better environmental options and putting in place all necessary mitigation measures. Member States are responsible for ensuring that projects comply with EU legislation.

¹ More information can be found on Horizon 2020 webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/>.

² Directive 2000/60/EC, OJ L 327, 22/12/2000