Energy crisis: MEPs back plans to boost the deployment of renewables

- Faster procedures to issue permits for renewable energy installations
- A boost for the EU’s domestic production amid energy crisis
- The scheme will reduce dependence on fossil fuels imported from Russia

Renewables like windmills can be deployed rapidly in order to increase domestic energy production© Tamero / Adobe Stock
The proposed law will accelerate the procedure to grant permits for new renewable energy power plants, such as solar panels or windmills, or to adapt existing ones.

In their amendments to the Commission proposal, MEPs shortened the maximum period to approve new installations from twelve to nine months, if located in so-called "renewables acceleration areas". These will be marked out by each member state depending on whether they are able to install renewables at a faster pace. If the competent authority does not respond by the deadline, the permit or request is deemed to be approved - following the so-called “positive silence” principle.

Outside such areas, the process should not exceed 18 months, MEPs say, - and not two years as originally proposed. On repowering existing renewable energy plants, MEPs want the permit-granting process to not exceed six months.

When establishing the rules for the designated renewable acceleration areas, EU countries must avoid or, if not possible, significantly reduce the negative environmental impact that may arise for such areas. Natura 2000 sites, nature parks and reserves as well as the identified bird and marine mammal migratory routes shall be excluded, except for artificial and built surfaces such as rooftops, parking lots or transport infrastructure. MEPs also added provisions to ensure the public is involved before an area is chosen to install a plant and before renewable areas are designated.

**Boost solar panels equipment on buildings, heat pumps**

The proposal also includes an obligation for EU countries to ensure that permits to install solar energy equipment on buildings are delivered within one month. For smaller installations below 50kW, a simple notification procedure would be enough. Installing solar equipment would be exempt from the requirement to conduct an environmental impact assessment, MEPs decided. The process to issue a permit to install heat pumps shall not exceed one month.

In order to bring more renewable energy to the grid without delay, MEPs also incorporated elements of a recent Commission proposal tabled under the so-called “emergency procedure”, so that most of the provisions would already come into force in 2023.

**Quote**

“Today, we laid the foundations for permanently faster processes to issue permits, to be able to use renewable energies more quickly and thus boost the energy transition. We introduced new measures giving member states and their authorising authorities more leeway, such as the principle of ‘Positive silence’ within renewables acceleration areas on the understanding that renewable energy projects are of overriding public interest and can benefit from simplified assessment for specific derogations in EU environmental legislation”, said lead MEP Markus Pieper (EPP, DE).
Next steps

The draft report was adopted with 407 votes to 34, with 181 abstentions. MEPs also voted to refer the file back to committee in order to enter into talks with Council for a first reading agreement.

Background

The draft legislation was tabled by the Commission as part of the REpowerEU package, which aims to cut European dependence on fossil fuel imports from Russia, following its aggression of Ukraine. It will amend the Renewable Energy, the Energy Efficiency and the Energy Performance of Buildings directives, on which separate revisions are ongoing as part of the "Fit for 55" package.

Further information

Adopted text (14.12.2022)

Video recording of the debate (13.12.2022)

Committee of Industry, Research and Energy
Procedure file

Contacts

Baptiste CHATAIN
Press Officer
📞 (+32) 2 28 40992 (BXL)
📞 (+33) 3 881 74151 (STR)
✉️ (+32) 498 98 13 37
✉️ baptiste.chatain@europarl.europa.eu
✉️ indu-press@europarl.europa.eu
🐦 @EP_Industry