Energy policy: renewable sources, biomass action plan

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This Renewable Energy Progress Report from the Commission is in accordance with Article 3 of Directive 2001/77/EC, Article 4(2) of Directive 2003/30/EC and on the implementation of the EU Biomass Action Plan.

In 1997 the Commission published a White Paper on renewable energy which announced a target to double the European Union's renewable energy share to 12% by 2010. Two key pieces of legislation (Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC) set indicative 2010 targets for all Member States and required actions to improve the growth, development and access of renewable energy. In addition, a Biomass Action Plan was adopted in 2005 to focus attention on the specific need for Member States to develop Europe's biomass resources.

Regular assessments and reports have been prepared on the EU's progress towards its 2010 targets and on its efforts in general to develop renewable energy. The reports issued in 2007 as well as the Renewable Energy Roadmap highlighted the slow progress Member States were making and the likelihood that the EU as a whole would fail to reach its 2010 target. The Commission therefore proposed a new, more rigorous framework to drive forward the development of renewable energy and more solid, legally binding targets for 2020. It proposed new legislation covering **all renewable energy** and set new targets for 2020 to ensure a stable regulatory framework for the decade ahead. This new Renewable Energy Directive has now been agreed.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on progress since the 2007 reports, as required under the two current Directives (2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC), focusing on data from 2004 to 2006 or 2007. The report also sets the scene for the future by describing the state of progress in developing renewable energy today and explaining how the new framework will drive forward the growth of renewable energy, including biomass, in the immediate years ahead.

Conclusions: the report concludes that **Europe is still likely to fail to meet its 2010 renewable energy targets**, despite the legislation, the recommendations, the exhortations and even legal proceedings against some Member States. However, there has been **limited recent progress**. In the **electricity sector** new policy measures have resulted in substantial growth in some Member States, six of whom achieved an increase in their share of at least two percentage points since 2004. At the same time, seven Member States' renewable electricity shares have actually stagnated or shrunk since 2004. In the **transport sector**, quite a widespread change to the use of obligation measures rather than just taxation measures has contributed to an increase in the EU share of 1.6 percentage points since 2004, driven by growth in shares of over 2% in seven Member States.

Whilst some recent progress has been achieved, the rate of growth remains slow and the barriers to growth, across all sectors, remain high in most Member States. Europe is unlikely to reach either the target for the share of electricity from renewable energy sources or the target for the share of renewable energy in transport. The European Commission will continue to take **legal action** to ensure compliance with the existing Directives and so improve progress towards the 2010 targets.

Given the major potential contribution of renewable energy to the EU's climate and energy goals, the new European Directive on renewable energy which will enter into force in early 2009, will provide a welcome strengthening of the legal framework.

The **National Action Plans** that Member States will have to prepare by 2010 will mean that all Member States, including those which so far have made very limited progress towards agreed EU objectives, will have to establish a clear plan as to how they intend to achieve their targets for renewable energy and for renewable energy in transport. They will have to explain how they intend to reform building codes and planning regimes to increase the use of renewable energy and to improve access conditions to the electricity grid. They will have to set out national sectoral targets, the measures and support schemes to be used to reach the targets, the specific measures for the **promotion of the use of energy from biomass**, the intended use of (statistical) transfers of renewable energy from other Member States and their assessment of the role different technologies will play in reaching the targets. Lastly, they will have to implement and monitor biofuel sustainability criteria to ensure biofuels clearly contribute to environmental objectives.

With all of these elements, the Directive will provide a stable policy regime for the rapid development of renewable energy in the EU for the next 12 years.