Renewable Energy, Energy Performance of Buildings and Energy Efficiency Directives: amendments (REPowerEU)

2022/0160(COD) - 14/12/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 407 votes to 34, with 181 abstentions, amendments to the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive (EU) 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings and Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency.

The matter was referred back to the committee responsible for inter-institutional negotiations.

The overall aim of this proposal is to accelerate the procedure to grant permits for new renewable energy power plants, such as solar panels or windmills, or to adapt existing ones.

The main amendments adopted in plenary concern the following issues:

Integrated multilevel mapping and planning of areas necessary for national contributions towards the 2030 renewable energy target and the climate-neutrality objective

By one year after the entry into force, Member States should perform an integrated multilevel mapping and planning for the deployment of renewable energy resources on their entire territory in coordination with all relevant national, regional and local authorities to identify the domestic potential and the available land, surface, subsurface and sea areas for their deployment. Member States should also **identify the installed capacity as well as the land, surface, subsurface and sea areas** needed for the production of energy from renewable sources and their related infrastructure, such as grid and storage facilities, including thermal storage, that are required in order to meet their national contributions towards the 2030 renewable energy target and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Renewables acceleration areas

No later than two years after entry into force, Member States should adopt, in coordination with their local and regional authorities, a plan or plans designating, in the areas covered by the Directive, renewable acceleration areas for one or more types of renewable energy sources, i.e. areas particularly suitable for the deployment of renewable energy projects, for which the timeframe of administrative permit-granting procedures can be particularly shortened.

Member States should (i) designate sufficiently homogeneous land and sea areas in which the deployment of a specific type or types of renewable energy should not have significant environmental effects, taking into account the particularities of the selected territory, and (ii) establish rules for the designated renewable energy accelerations areas, including on mitigation measures to be adopted for the hosting of renewable energy installations, in order to avoid or significantly reduce any negative environmental impacts that may result.

Areas that have already been designated for the installation of wind or solar power plants could be declared ‘renewables acceleration areas’ by Member States.

Members also added provisions to ensure public participation prior to the identification of the areas needed for projects to be installed and prior to the designation of so-called renewables acceleration areas.

Permit-granting process in renewable acceleration areas

To speed up the permitting process and thus the deployment of renewable energy projects, Member States should ensure that the permit-granting process does not exceed nine months for projects in renewable acceleration areas, including their related energy network elements and grid connection.

- The permit-granting process for the **repowering of plants**, including those that increase capacity and increase the need for the development of the related energy network without increasing the occupied area, and for new installations with an electrical output of less than 150 kW, energy storage facilities, including power and thermal storage facilities, and their grid connection, located in renewable acceleration areas should not exceed **six months**.

- Where the repowering does not result in an increase in the **capacity of the renewable energy power plant** beyond 15 %, and without prejudice to the need to assess any potential environmental impacts, grid connections to the transmission or distribution grid should be permitted within one month following application to the relevant entity unless there are justified safety concerns or there is technical incompatibility of the system components.

- Where the **repowering of solar installations** does not entail the use of additional space and complies with the applicable environmental mitigation measures established for the original installation, the project should be exempted from the requirement, if applicable, to be subject to a determination whether the project requires an environmental impact assessment.

In the permit-granting process, in the absence of a timely response from the relevant administrative bodies, the permit or application would be **deemed approved**.

Permit-granting process outside renewables acceleration areas

The permit-granting process should not exceed **18 months**. This period should apply to renewable hybrid power plants, and their related energy networks concerning projects outside renewables acceleration areas. Where duly justified on the grounds of extraordinary circumstances, that 18-month period may be extended by up to three months.

The amendments also stipulate that:

- the permit-granting process for the installation of **solar energy equipment**, including on rooftop, and co- located energy storage assets, including building-integrated solar installations, in existing or future artificial structures, with the exclusion of artificial water surfaces, should not exceed one month, provided that the primary aim of such structures is not solar energy production;

- the permitting procedure for the installation of **heat pumps** should not exceed one month.