

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

Renewables-Grid-Initiative (RGI) launches European Grid Report at the 2nd European Grid Conference in Brussels

Brussels, 05 December 2012

To support a successful implementation of the European Grid Declaration, signed by a coalition of Europe's 29 largest environmental NGOs and grid operators in 2011, the Renewables-Grid-Initiative (RGI) launches the European Grid Report. The report publishes over 80 selected practical experiences by different RGI members across Europe. Today at the 2nd European Grid Conference in Brussels, jointly organised by RGI and Smart Energy for Europe Platform (SEFEP), the report and the extended European Grid Declaration on Transparency and Public Participation were presented to European Commissioner for Energy Günther H. Oettinger and to European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik.

Under the guidance of RGI, a coalition of Europe's 29 largest environmental NGOs and grid operators pledged to work in partnership to ensure that the goals of **grid modernisation** and **environmental protection** can be achieved side by side. In November 2011 the 'European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe' was publicly signed in Brussels and handed to EU Energy Commissioner Oettinger. Signed today, the second part of the **European Grid Declaration on Transparency and Public Participation** states the willingness of RGI members to better inform and involve concerned stakeholders and the broader public about grid extension plans and projects.

Building on the principles of the European Grid Declaration, it is absolutely crucial to enhance and to stimulate the use of "better practices" in designing, planning, and communicating grid modernisation projects. To foster a swifter implementation of successfully proven concepts, RGI launches today the European Grid Report "**Beyond Public Opposition – Lessons Learned across Europe.**" The report provides a comprehensive overview of ongoing activities and relevant experiences that have been gathered in seven countries across Europe.

Renewables-Grid-Initiative, Executive Director, Antonella Battaglini:

"Sharing practical experiences on what has been attempted, what has worked and what requires further analysis will encourage the adoption of better practices. The European Grid Report is a substantial contribution to a joint learning exercise."

Günther H. Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, European Commission:

"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."

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for the Environment, European Commission

In today's resource-constrained world, switching to green economy that uses renewable resources to their optimum is an absolute necessity. And having both businesses and civil society on board is a necessary condition for its success. This initiative shows that adopting sustainable consumption and production models makes sense – not only in environmental but also economic terms."

Contact: Guido Axmann, axmann@renewables-grid.eu, +49 172 420 49 69



Sir Graham Watson, MEP and Chairman of the Climate Parliament

"Building a new integrated European grid is a pre-requisite for the sharing of electricity from renewables across Europe and creating a stable green energy supply. What do you build first, the cars, or the roads that cars need to drive on to get around? It's a no-brainer."

António Correia de Campos, MEP, Rapporteur Energy Infrastructure Regulation

"The development of new grid projects that have a cross-border effect is a crucial element for the attainment of the 2020 policy goals and for the European internal energy market. However, these projects, even when connected to renewable sources of supply, are often subject to strong public opposition, as experience has shown. The recently-approved guidelines on energy infrastructure projects acknowledge precisely the need for faster infrastructure permitting and deployment, without failing to consider the adequate measures for assuring public participation and transparency."

Quotes of RGI partners

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."

Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy, BirdLife Europe

"Europe has to upgrade its renewable electricity grids to meet the ever increasing need for power, while safeguarding biodiversity, birds and their habitats."

Klaus Milke, Chairman of the Board, Germanwatch

"A rapid increase of renewable energies necessarily means new electric grids. For getting 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."

Tony Long, Director of WWF's Europe Policy Office

"Networks are fundamental to our future power system and essential to maximise energy savings and a diverse mix of renewable energy sources. WWF is very pleased to be an RGI member and to collaborate with public bodies, with industrial players and with the public at large."

Boris Schucht, CEO, 50Hertz

"This declaration shows our willingness to engage with stakeholders at an early stage. We need to reach a broad consensus on infrastructure development in order to succeed with the energy turnaround in Germany and Europe."

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. Also early engagement and communication to the public is key to improve public acceptance. We experience that early stakeholder involvement and show options to local people is very helpful."

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Jacques Vandermeiren, CEO, Elia Group

“The Elia Group is dedicated to the development of future grids spanning land and sea and massively integrating renewable energy. One of the key conditions to succeed is to dialogue with stakeholders and to conclude partnerships with them. The Renewables Grid Initiative is in this regard a reference of how things should be done and we are proud to be part of it.”

Nick Winsor, Executive Director, National Grid

„Investment in power grids is an essential part of connecting people to new renewable energy sources. The new declaration is an important statement that will ensure a focus on public participation 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“

Dominique Maillard, CEO, RTE

“Grid expansion is a key requisite for climate change mitigation. Public consultation on development plans, early involvement of citizens in the projects and close cooperation between TSOs and NGOs to reduce the impacts of the projects are key conditions for a successful implementation.”

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.”

Bente Hagem, Executive Vice President, Statnett

“The future is uncertain, but electric. The expansion of the European grid is crucial for the development of renewables and decarbonisation. Reinforcement and building of new lines are crucial. In addition we need efficient European market design and a clear commitment to reach the energy efficiency targets.”

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.”

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About RGI

The Renewables-Grid-Initiative promotes the expansion of distributed and bulk renewable energy generation and the modernisation of transmission capacity in Europe. Thousands of kilometres of new transmission lines and cables will need to be built in the coming decades. This will only be possible in the presence of supportive regulatory frameworks. To reach this target, the initiative brings together non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including WWF, BirdLife Europe, RSPB, Natuur en Milieu and Germanwatch and TSOs including 50Hertz, Elia, National Grid, RTE, Statnett, Swissgrid, TenneT and Terna. The grid infrastructure of the participating TSOs in the RGI provides the backbone of the existing power supply to some 350 million people in Europe, more than half of its population.

About SEFEP

SEFEP is committed to the goal of a fully (>95%) de-carbonized, reliable, secure and predominantly renewable power supply in Europe before 2050. SEFEP's founding principle stipulates that a 70% share of all electricity supply coming from renewable sources by 2035 is not only achievable, but, moreover, it is the most certain pathway to reaching Europe's 2050 climate and energy security objectives.

The power sector is critical to the decarbonisation of the EU economy and a prerequisite for de-carbonizing transportation and industry. Today's investment decisions on how to replace the current European power infrastructure will decide whether the long-term decarbonisation goals are achievable, and how the energy systems will cater for other goals such as social cohesion, global competitiveness, power structures, and conservation of resources and nature.

Among the concert of actors driving the low-carbon transition of Europe, SEFEP specifically focuses on stakeholder-driven solutions. SEFEP offers platforms to stimulate cooperation and to harvest synergies between a wide range of actors. It will support the formulation, advocacy and implementation of policy that enables a fast transition towards a low-carbon economy.

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