



## Questions and Answers on emergency measures to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy

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### 1. What is the Commission proposing today?

The Commission is putting forward new, temporary and targeted measures to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy sources, complementing its ongoing work under the European Green Deal and its actions to tackle the energy crisis. The worsening over the summer of the energy supply and price shocks spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine have made the need to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy across the EU even more urgent. On the one hand, a larger share of renewable energy will immediately and structurally reduce the EU's demand for fossil fuels in the power, heating and cooling, industry and transport sectors. This will contribute to the objective of phasing out the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels as soon as possible, as set out in the REPowerEU plan. In addition, thanks to their low operational costs, renewables positively impact energy prices across the EU. Today's proposal therefore caters for immediate simplification and accelerated permitting for the installation of solar equipment on artificial structures, repowering of renewable energy power plants and facilitate faster deployment of heat pumps. It also grants renewable power plants the status of overriding public interest with the aim of eliminating bottlenecks in new permitting procedures.

### 2. Why is the Commission putting forward this proposal so soon after the REPowerEU Plan?

In the REPowerEU Plan we put forward a comprehensive set of measures that are expected to lead to long-term structural changes in our energy system and bring us towards our ambitious targets for renewable energy. However, as the crisis persists with energy prices remaining at high levels, we need to take further immediate action. With this proposal, we are quickly following up to the request of the the European Council to fast-track the simplification of permitting procedures in order to accelerate the rollout of renewables and grids, including by means of emergency measures. Considering the scale of the energy crisis, its social, economic and financial impact and the need to act as fast as possible, the proposal is designed as a temporary emergency measure, through a Council Regulation based on [Article 122](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. When adopted by the Council, it will enter into force as a matter of urgency and will be directly applicable in all Member States. It will apply for one year, covering the time needed for the adoption and transposition of the Renewable Energy Directive, currently discussed by the co-legislators, in all Member States.

### 3. Why does this proposal focus only on certain technologies and types of projects?

The proposed urgent measures can be implemented by the Member States in a rapid manner, without requiring burdensome changes to their national procedures and legal systems. Some of these measures are of general nature, such as the introduction of the presumption that renewable energy projects are of overriding public interest for the purposes of the relevant environmental legislation, or the introduction of clarifications regarding the scope of certain environmental Directives. The repowering of renewable energy plants that are near the end of their economic life is also an option for increased renewable energy production with the least impact on the grid infrastructure and the environment. Other measures target specific technologies, such as solar photovoltaics. Solar energy is one of the cheapest sources of electricity available and can be rolled out rapidly, directly benefitting citizens and businesses. Similarly, a rapid roll-out of heat pumps, which often replace gas boilers, accelerates the transition away from the use of gas in heating.

### 4. What does the presumption of overriding public interest for renewable energy projects entail?

Renewable energy plants, heat pumps or wind energy are crucial to fight climate change and pollution, reduce energy prices, decrease the Union's dependence on fossil fuels and ensure the Union's security of supply. Considering them as being presumed of overriding public interest and serving public health and safety would allow new projects to benefit, where necessary, from a simplified assessment for specific derogations foreseen in the relevant Union environmental legislation with immediate effect, during the period of validity of the proposed Regulation.. This reflects the important role that renewable energy can play in the decarbonisation of the Union's energy system, in offering immediate solutions to replace fossil-fuel based energy and in addressing the challenging situation in the market. Today's proposal also specifies that where specific projects have adopted appropriate mitigation measures and carried out proper monitoring to assess their effectiveness, any killing or disturbance of protected species will not be considered deliberate.

## **5. Why do you propose to exempt solar installations from environmental impact assessments?**

The objective of this proposal is to accelerate the deployment of renewables in an urgent manner, while safeguarding environmental protection standards. The proposal only grants derogations from a dedicated environmental impact assessment to two specific categories of solar energy installations which are likely to have minimal impact on the environment. The first is the deployment of solar panels on the roofs of buildings, as well as in parking lots, all sorts of sheds, along transport infrastructure or any other artificial structures. The second are small installations below 50 kW of capacity, which are not likely to have major adverse effects on the environment or the grid, and or to raise safety concerns. For these reasons, the proposal streamlines the permit-granting process applicable to these installations by introducing administrative positive silence.

## **6. Why are you targeting the repowering of renewable energy plants to address the ongoing crisis?**

Repowering means renewing renewable energy power plants for the purposes of replacing the existing capacity or increasing the capacity or efficiency of the installations. It has therefore significant potential to reduce gas consumption. Existing renewable energy power plants have typically been built at sites with significant renewable energy potential, which makes it key to maintain these sites in operation instead of decommissioning the installations. For instance, for onshore wind energy, it is estimated that around 38 GW, which corresponds roughly to a quarter of today's installed capacity, is reaching the end of its normal operational life of 20 years between 2021 and 2025. Repowering with more modern turbines allows the existing capacity to be maintained but with fewer, bigger and more efficient turbines; or increasing the capacity of the plant. As another example, when repowering a solar installation, increases in efficiency and capacity can be achieved without increasing the space occupied. Immediate simplification and accelerated permitting for repowering are therefore crucial for maintaining and increasing the renewable energy capacity in the Union.

## **7. How much additional renewable energy capacity do you expect to be deployed as a result of this proposed Council Regulation?**

The proposed Council Regulation does not alter the renewable energy objectives set out in the REPowerEU Plan. Rather, it is meant to address the bottlenecks in permitting procedures that hamper the accelerated deployment of renewable energy projects. According to estimates, 2022 will already be a record year in terms of additional renewable energy capacity, expected to surpass 50 GW. Solar photovoltaic installations only are estimated to reach an increased capacity of 40 GW, with the vast majority of the surge taking place in the rooftop solar sector. Nevertheless, in order to achieve the 2030 target included in the EU Solar Energy Strategy, this rate of deployment still needs to increase by 50% to 60 GW/year. Global manufacturing of solar panels is growing rapidly, which indicates that the panels will be available. With the adoption of this proposal and other flanking measures, in particular the adoption of the revised Renewable Energy Directive or initiatives in the skills sector, this acceleration is possible. When it comes to repowering wind energy power plants, the potential for additional capacity varies from one project to the other, depending on the number and capacity of the individual turbines in the repowered project compared to the original one.

## **For More Information**

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