

A Renewable Energy Directive for nature & people

The energy transition cannot happen at the expense of biodiversity and local communities

The ecological and climate crises threaten human livelihoods, biodiversity, and the overall health of the planet. The Renewable Energy Directive (RED) is an opportunity to align priorities and champion energy solutions that can tackle these crises within the EU. Achieving the EU climate change objectives requires:

- a reduction in total energy consumption,
- an increase in renewable energy to replace fossil fuels and achieve a 100% renewable energy system by 2040,
- and an increase in energy efficiency to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 65% by 2030.

Achieving a fully renewable energy grid by 2040 is technically feasible, as shown by [EEB-CAN Paris Agreement Compatible energy scenario](#). A shift to 100% renewable is needed both to tackle the climate crisis and to reduce dependency on fossil-fuels, particularly important in current times.

However, some renewable energy sources such as hydropower, forest biomass and crop-based fuels are not necessarily environmentally sustainable since they can destroy nature. Burning almost all forms of forest biomass increases atmospheric CO₂ concentrations over climate-relevant timescales that cannot be offset by replanting trees. A fit-for-purpose RED will **avoid incentivising combustion-based energies as much as possible**, including from forests and crops. Hydropower plants can cause dramatic changes in freshwater biodiversity, surrounding wildlife and local communities and can compound the effects of climate change. The RED can address these challenges by **ceasing to finance and build new hydropower plants, maximising the efficiency** of existing hydropower installations and dedicating funding to their ecological refurbishment when needed.

Further developing and implementing more sustainable renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal can help limit biodiversity and social impacts and reach renewable energy targets when developed along with good spatial planning. For this, Member States must identify suitable and nature-compatible areas for energy and mining infrastructure, depending on the prevalence of protected species and habitats and in agreement with local communities. The RED must **outline a planning process for Member States** that both makes projects development easier and better limits the impacts of renewable energy on nature and people, respecting Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) on Indigenous People's land.

Additionally, the goals in the RED should be to **upgrade the energy grid** to be compatible with solar, wind and geothermal energy; **incentivise building renovations that help reduce energy consumption and increase renewable energy uptake such as solar photovoltaic cell energy**; and **improve electrification of the energy system** by updating existing infrastructure, electricity storage capacities, and expanding it to rural areas.

The EU must prioritise renewable energy that does not hinder the conservation or the recovery of the good ecological and environmental status of species and habitats. The RED should be made explicitly cross-compliant with other EU policies and directives such as the *Birds and Habitats Directive*, which aims to achieve favourable conservation status of species and habitats; the *Water Framework*

Directive, which aims to achieve the good ecological status of water bodies; and the *Marine Strategy Framework Directive*, which aims to achieve good environmental status of marine areas.

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