

EREF

European Renewable Energies Federation

As a federation of national renewable energy associations from EU Member States, EREF represents all renewable energy sectors such as wind, solar, small hydro, bio-energy, tidal, wave, and geothermal sources, at EU institutions. Its objective is to promote the interests of independent power, fuel and heat production from renewable sources and to establish non-discriminatory access to the European energy market. EREF strives to create, maintain and further develop stable and reliable framework conditions for renewable energy sources.

Internal summary on Stakeholder Conference: Driving up Regional Cooperation for Renewables in the European Union Brussels, Representation of the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg to the European Union, 26 April 2016

1. Meeting subject and speakers

The conference on Driving up Regional Cooperation for Renewables in the European Union organised by the Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg had a number of regional stakeholders share best practices of measures which could contribute to the making of a new energy union. A number of these stakeholders made specific requests to EU legislators for topics to be included in the upcoming legislative package on renewables. This conference aimed to provide a stage for individuals within the institutions to hear and address these requests and give insight on the EU's concrete plan to make a new and reformed energy union a reality.

The conference was split in to 3 parts.

An introductory address delivered by Christine Wolf (Member of the Representative of the State of Baden-Württemberg), Kathrin Glastra (Heinrich Böll Foundation) and Anna Leidreiter (World Future Council).

A panel which discussed the enabling of regional cooperation in practice composed of Alexandra Lafont (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière), Susanne Nies (ENTSO-E), Jo Leinen (European Parliament) and Antonio Lopez-Nicolas Baza ('Renewables and CCS Policy' unit, DG Energy).

Lastly, a panel which discussed the main challenges to regional involvement, how to remedy them with EU support and the development of an action plan that would address these challenges. The panel was composed of Claude Turmes (European Parliament); Mathieu Richard (Enercoop), Richard Tuffs (European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)), and Brandon Devlin (DG Energy).

2. Main statements and opinions on waste treatment

Ms. Lafont summarised the previous day's discussions and conclusions. She particularly re-raised the issues of regulatory competences being held at national level, political unwillingness to support renewables, a need for change regarding the taxing of renewables and a legislative possibilities for regions to cooperate.

Mr. Leinen began by acknowledging the lack of regional competences regarding energy. Followed by making a tentative point about occasional regional reluctance to back renewable projects. Spoke of a need for common administrative rules regarding regional cooperation. Spoke of the need for a budget line specifically for real regional cooperation and his commitment to push for one.

Explicitly mentioned amendments to RES Directive:

- Commitment to more interconnection between states
- A shortening of administrative procedures for regional cooperation. (Considering his wording, most likely by way of general provisions to then be upheld by Court).
- A call for Member States to make full use of available legal options for cooperation.
- A freedom for Member States to choose their cooperation mechanisms.

He finished with a strong statement on the uncompromising need to phase out nuclear energy.

Ms. Nies opened by alluding to a need for the East and the West to cooperate and her belief in the European Union. Continued by demonstrating that grid inefficiencies are costly and that grids need optimisation. Finished by proposing regional regulation of transmission networks.

Mr. Leinen then quickly left and urged Mr. Lopez-Nicolas and the commission to closely regard the proposed amendments to the renewables directive. Mr. Lopez-Nicolas responded that the Commission would do so and resend them to the Parliament.

Mr. Lopez-Nicolas began his address by stressing regional importance and inclusion the in the upcoming legislative package. Acknowledged the EU's non-success in creating cooperation mechanisms but reinstated its will to. As measures to be considered, he mentioned financial support for regional cooperation and the creation of joint projects. Stated that EU renewable percentage targets were more favourable than national targets. Obviously leading off from Ms. Nies' presentation, he mentioned a need for provisions on system operation (regional operation fenders?) and regional TSO cooperation. Finished by stating that the Commission would publish guidelines on regional cooperation.

When asked a question about the Commission's view on defining transmission regions, he responded with no concrete answer but pointed out the Commission's willingness to take both a top-down and bottom-up approach in the past.

Mr. Turmes voiced a strong opposition to the proposal for a revision of the transmission system and stated that a lack of concrete measures to redesign the market would lead to an over reliance on gap-filling mechanisms.

There was then a short coffee break and Panel 2 began.

Mr. Turmes began his passionate contribution by demanding more ambitious/higher shares of renewables. He demanded that reaching these goals should be done through setting national targets as opposed to European targets due to the fact that this would better reflect regional involvement. He strongly reaffirmed that priority access and dispatch were absolute priorities. He then ended by stating that the upcoming legislative package should go beyond cross-border cooperation but also consider slightly larger scale inter-regional cooperation.

Mr. Richard continued by outlining some examples of legislative hindrances to regional cooperation. Ended by underlining a need for stakeholders of all levels to call for the right legislation.

Mr. Tuffs again raised the need for slightly larger scale inter-regional cooperation and a specific strategic fund to finance projects of that size as had been proposed by President Juncker. Added the fact that his organization conducted a study of reasonable size with smaller stakeholders which concluded that there was a definite need for such a fund. Ended with the fact that some corporations refused to work with his organisation and that their participation was crucial in order to successfully create a new energy union.

Finally, Mr. Devlin then began by questioning whether the new energy market would prioritize larger corporations (focus on the wholesale market and transmission regulation) or local and regional level (decentralised distribution and self-consumption). He referred to market coupling as an efficient measure in reducing energy prices. Pointed out that a different investment plan would be needed to secure a new energy union. Ended by suggesting that responsibility to create policy for a new energy union did not rest solely upon the Commission.

When questioned whether regions were adequate actors to lead concrete business cases, he responded with the fact that it was more desirable for mistakes to be made and corrected locally rather than at a European level.

3. General Impressions and action points for EREF

All Commission representatives avoided shedding light on their position on various topics concerning the upcoming legislative package despite being prompted by members of European Parliament and regional stakeholders. Gave the impression that the next Commission proposal might be unsatisfactory considering a lack of any concrete intentions on legislative reforms.

Mr. Tuffs' organisation, while small, seemed like a network advocating for the right level of support. A closer examination of its stakeholder consultation/study is advisable.

Mr. Devlin suggested in a conversation after the conference that interested parties were quick to demand suggestions for the new legislative package but reluctant to propose legislation themselves. Is this option actually legally available by the Commission? Feasible? If so, has EREF looked in to creating a legislative proposal along with other interested parties? Even as an open document not to be officially transferred to the Commission.