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P8_TA(2016)0292

Renewable energy progress report

European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2016 on the renewable energy progress report (2016/2041(INI))

(2018/C 091/03)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Titles XX on environment and XXI on energy thereof,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Titles IX on employment and XVIII on economic, social and territorial cohesion thereof,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular its Protocol (No 26) on services of general interest and Protocol (No 28) on economic, social and territorial cohesion,
- having regard to the Commission report entitled ‘Renewable energy progress report’ (COM(2015)0293) and to the national plans,
- having regard to the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 11th Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 11) held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015, and to the Paris Agreement,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards an Integrated Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan: Accelerating the European Energy System Transformation’ (C(2015)6317),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘An EU Strategy on Heating and Cooling’ (COM(2016)0051),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050’ (COM(2011)0112),
- having regard to the European Council conclusions of 23-24 October 2014,
- having regard to Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 laying down the rules for participation and dissemination in ‘Horizon 2020 — the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)’ and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2015/1513 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 September 2015 amending Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the EESC study on the role of civil society in the implementation of the EU Renewable Energy Directive entitled ‘Changing the future of energy: civil society as a main player in renewable energy generation’,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 140, 5.6.2009, p. 16.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 81.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 239, 15.9.2015, p. 1.

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- having regard to the Sustainable Energy Action Plan of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy,
 - having regard to the Aarhus Convention of 25 June 1998 on 'Access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters',
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 February 2014 on a 2030 framework for climate and energy policies ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 October 2015 on 'Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris' ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2015 on achieving the 10 % electricity interconnection target — Making Europe's electricity grid fit for 2020 ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2015 on 'Towards a European Energy Union' ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the opinions of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A8-0196/2016),
- A. whereas the EU as a whole is on track to reach the 2020 targets for renewables, but further intensified action is required in some Member States;
- B. whereas renewable energy costs have significantly decreased in recent years, which, along with technological advances in production and storage, has made renewable energy increasingly competitive with conventional generation, offering a unique chance to create a genuine European energy policy that would boost competitiveness and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; whereas the transition towards a sustainable, forward-looking energy system must include efforts towards energy efficiency, renewable energy, best use of Europe's energy resources, technology development and smart infrastructure; whereas a long-term, stable regulatory framework is needed in order to create economic growth and jobs and ensure that the EU retains a global leading role in these areas;
- C. whereas according to Article 194 TFEU, European energy policy must ensure the functioning of the energy market and security of energy supply, as well as promoting energy efficiency and savings, the development of renewable energy and the interconnection of energy networks; whereas binding national and EU targets, concrete planning and reporting obligations and enabling measures have been key drivers of investment certainty and the expansion of renewable energy capacity in the EU, as well as of transmission and distribution infrastructure;
- D. whereas, in line with the COP 21 Paris Agreement, the Renewable Energy Directive needs to be adapted to comply with the agreed goal of keeping the global temperature increase to 1,5 °C above pre-industrial levels; whereas an economy based on 100 % renewables can only be achieved by reducing our energy consumption, increasing energy efficiency and boosting renewable energy resources;
- E. whereas ambitious policies for renewable energy, in combination with energy efficiency, are a major driving force in reducing the EU's imports dependency and its overall external energy bill and enhancing energy security vis-à-vis external providers; whereas the EU imports more than half of all the energy it consumes, at a cost of more than EUR 1 billion every day, accounting for over 20 % of total imports; whereas imports dependency is particularly high in the case

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0094.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0359.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0445.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0444.

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of crude oil, natural gas and hard coal; whereas the imported fuel costs avoided as a result of the increasing use of renewable energy amount to at least EUR 30 billion a year;

- F. whereas the development of renewable energy can help to ensure energy security and sovereignty, eliminate energy poverty and foster the economic development and technological leadership of the EU while tackling climate change; whereas renewable energy sources would contribute to providing European citizens with stable, affordable, sustainable energy, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable; whereas renewable energy sources should enable citizens to benefit from self-generation and predictable energy supply;
- G. whereas the development of renewable energy should coincide with the development of a well-functioning internal electricity market; whereas the Energy Union should be based on a transition towards a sustainable, forward-looking energy system with energy efficiency and savings, renewable energy and smart infrastructure as major pillars;
- H. whereas EU companies in the renewable energy sector, many of which are SMEs, employ 1,15 million people in Europe and have a 40 % share of all world patents for renewable technologies, making the EU a global leader; whereas, according to the Commission, 20 million jobs could be created between now and 2020 in the green economy, which is also a major opportunity for job creation in rural areas; whereas projects owned by SMEs, cooperatives and individuals play an important role in innovating and developing the renewable energy sector;
- I. whereas the Commission is committed to making Europe the world number one in renewable energy, which is an industrial policy imperative; whereas China has become the worldwide front-runner in investing in renewables, while investment in Europe fell by 21 %, from EUR 54,61 billion (USD 62 billion) in 2014 to EUR 42,99 billion (USD 48,8 billion) in 2015, the lowest figure for nine years;
- J. whereas continued investment in renewables requires both ambitious public and private leadership and commitment and a long-term, stable and reliable policy framework consistent with the EU's climate commitments arising from the Paris Climate Agreement, which holds great potential for job creation and growth in Europe;
- K. whereas ambitious and realistic goals — public participation, monitoring and supervision, clear and simple policy rules and support at local, regional, national and European level and the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including the social partners (bringing together representatives of workers and industry) and other civil society organisations — are key, and need to be strengthened further for the successful development of renewable energy;
- L. whereas respect for ownership rights is important when promoting renewable energy;
- M. whereas renewable energy offers an opportunity for greater energy democracy in energy markets by empowering consumers to participate actively on an equal footing with other stakeholders in the energy market, to self-generate and self-consume, store and sell renewable energy produced by themselves, individually or in collective management, as well as through public and private investment, including decentralised forms of energy production launched by cities, regions and local public authorities; whereas renewable energy projects should allow greater control by citizens over their energy consumption and the energy transition and promote their direct involvement in the energy system, including through investment schemes;
- N. whereas offshore wind in the North Sea region has the potential to generate over 8 % of Europe's power supply by 2030;

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- O. whereas certain Member States are more exposed to a single supplier of fossil fuels; whereas thanks to renewables 30 billion euros' worth of imported fossil fuels were saved, and natural gas consumption was reduced by 7 %, thus strengthening the energy independence and energy security of Europe, which remains the largest energy importer in the world;

Progress on renewables

1. Welcomes the Commission's commitments on renewable energy; considers with respect to the Renewable Energy Directive that the current combination of binding national targets, National Renewable Energy Plans and biennial monitoring has been a key driver of renewable energy capacity development in the EU; urges the Commission to ensure full implementation of the 2020 Renewable Energy Directive and to put forward an ambitious post-2020 legislative framework; stresses, in this regard, that a stable long-term regulatory framework is needed, including national and EU renewable energy targets that are consistent with the most efficient path towards the Union's long-term climate goals (2050);

2. While noting with satisfaction that the EU is on track to meet its 2020 target, expresses its concern at the large number of countries (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) which, according to the Commission's 2015 Renewable Progress Report 2014-2020 estimates, may have to strengthen their policies and tools to ensure they meet their 2020 objectives, while achievement thereof is also not certain in the case of Hungary and Poland; calls on Member States that are lagging behind to undertake additional measures to get back on track; welcomes the fact that some Member States have already met or will very shortly meet their 2020 targets, well ahead of time, such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Romania, Finland and Sweden;

3. Regrets that the Commission's Renewables Progress Report does not put forward country-specific recommendations to adjust their policies and tools to ensure they meet their 2020 objectives; stresses that access to capital is key, yet the cost of capital in the EU-28 has been diverging significantly, resulting in a North/West vs East/South divide; notes that the existence of a variety of different policies for promoting renewable energy risks further widening the competitiveness gap among EU countries; points out the need to have an EU financial mechanism aimed at reducing high risk-derived capital costs of renewable energy projects;

4. Stresses in this respect the importance of identifying and sharing best practices in terms of national renewable energy policies and of promoting their adoption under a more convergent European model, favouring increased cooperation and coordination among Member States; calls on the Commission to maintain its role in monitoring the progress and actively supporting the development of renewable energies; highlights the importance of assessing renewables as to their competitiveness, sustainability, cost-effectiveness and contribution to geopolitical stability and climate change goals;

5. Acknowledges the important role played by national plans and reporting obligations in the monitoring of Member States' progress, and believes these obligations should be continued in the post-2020 period; recognises that the determination of the energy mix of Member States remains a national competence in the context of Article 194 TFEU, with each Member State promoting the development of its own renewable forms of energy, so that energy mixes remain highly diversified;

6. Stresses the importance of simple, accessible, affordable and efficient administrative procedures;

7. Calls on the Commission to include an evaluation of the impact of renewables on cost and prices, especially prices for households, in the future renewable energy progress reports;

8. Highlights the importance of an EU legislative proposal on energy market rules, as a more integrated market is key to the development of renewables, and to reducing energy costs for families and industry;

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9. Stresses the importance of stable and cost-effective renewable support schemes for long-term investment that remain responsive and adaptable in the short term and are tailored to national needs and circumstances, allowing gradual phasing-out of subsidies for mature renewable technologies; welcomes the fact that a number of renewable energy technologies are rapidly becoming cost-competitive with conventional forms of generation; stresses that the energy transition hinges upon the transparency, consistency and continuity of legal, financial and regulatory frameworks with a view to strengthening investor confidence; regrets retroactive changes to renewable support schemes that alter the return on investments already made; calls on the Member States to always announce any renewable support scheme adjustments and consult stakeholders widely well in advance; calls on the Commission to check the compatibility of national support schemes with the European Commission Guidance in order to avoid any unnecessary delay in their implementation and minimise market distortions;

10. Stresses that research and development activities play an essential role in the development of renewable energies; recalls Parliament's target of 85 % of financing for non-fossil energy under the energy chapter of Horizon 2020; calls on the European Commission and the Member States to further facilitate the effective use of all existing funding schemes and to ensure access to capital, particularly for SMEs, and to support research and development in the fields of renewable energy, its storage and related product development with a view to making the EU renewable industry more competitive, enabling better uptake of renewables and avoiding further widening of the competitiveness gap among EU countries;

11. Stresses that electricity storage can contribute to providing flexibility in the EU electricity system and to balancing fluctuations resulting from renewable energy production; reiterates that the current Electricity Directive 2009/72/EC does not mention storage, and stresses that the upcoming revision of the Electricity Directive takes into consideration the multiple services that energy storage can provide; considers that clarifying the position of storage would allow transmission and grid operators to invest in energy storage services;

12. Stresses that support schemes at all levels should be focused on technologies with great potential for reducing the costs of renewables and/or increasing market uptake of renewables;

13. Considers that future R&D strategy should focus on facilitating smart grid and smart city developments; furthermore considers that the electrification of transport, smart vehicle charging and vehicle-to-grid technology could contribute significantly to improving energy efficiency and potential uptake of renewable energy sources;

14. Considers that the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund can contribute to meeting the targets under Directive 2009/28/EC and the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy, as well as funding research and innovation in connection with renewable energy generation, while supporting job creation and economic growth; underlines the importance of thematic concentration within cohesion policy, since this should contribute to channelling investment towards the low-carbon economy, including renewable energies, especially in the light of the prominent role of the thematic objective 'Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors'; calls on the Member States to increase their efforts and make best use of the funding opportunities existing for this purpose, while underlining the opportunities for local business development and job creation; recalls the common provisions in the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund supporting the eligibility of projects related to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in private households, public buildings and enterprises, and believes that regional renewable energy market integration, which could be achieved through such funding, would represent an important contribution of cohesion policy in this respect;

15. Underlines the need for increased cooperation and coordination within and between Member States and regions and for an integrated approach to public investment in and financing of technical improvement, smart-grid development and implementation, grid adaptation and capacity, smart metering, storage, demand-side management, energy efficiency and innovative renewable energy production;

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16. Stresses that grids in many Member States are simply unable to receive power generated from variable renewables; stresses that modernisation of the energy grids is essential to accommodate changes in production and transmission;

17. Calls urgently for a strengthening of transparency and public participation, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at an early stage in the development of national plans for renewable energy; regrets the current lack of information regarding the implementation of Renewable Energy Directive provisions and stresses the need for more detailed biennial reports from Member States; calls on the Commission to strengthen its role in monitoring and supporting the progress of renewable energies; calls on the Commission to enhance transparency regarding the use of its enforcement power;

18. Stresses the importance of involvement by all levels of administration, as well as associations, in the implementation of a European renewables-based model of energy production, consumption and self-consumption; calls on the Commission to step up its support for the Covenant of Mayors, Smart Cities and Smart Communities and the 100 % RES communities, which allows sharing of knowledge and best practice;

19. Notes that increased regional cooperation on renewables is key to ensuring the further development of renewable energy sources;

20. Welcomes the fact that in 2013 the use of renewable energies enabled the generation of around 388 million gross tonnes of CO₂ to be avoided and led to a reduction in demand for fossil fuels in the EU of 116 Mtoe;

21. Highlights the enormous job-creation potential of the renewable energy sector; calls on Member States to ensure that labour standards are not lowered as a result of the energy transition, which should be based on the creation of quality jobs;

Renewables for the future

22. Stresses that the RES targets must be set in line with the climate targets agreed by 195 countries in Paris in December 2015; notes the proposal from the European Council for an at least 27 % renewable energy target for 2030; recalls Parliament's call for binding targets of at least a 30 % share of renewable energy consumption to be implemented by means of national targets in order to ensure the necessary investor and legal certainty; believes that, in the light of the recent COP21 agreement, significantly higher ambition is desirable; insists that clear and ambitious objectives in this regard are a tool to improve certainty and to ensure a leading position for the EU at a global level; calls on the Commission to present a more ambitious climate and energy package 2030 which increases the EU target for RES to at least 30 % to be implemented by means of individual national targets;

23. Stresses the relevance of the new renewable energy and market design legislation in creating a new framework fit for the development of renewable energies on the basis of reliable support schemes and full participation of renewable technologies in the market;

24. Realises that tax cuts are a powerful incentive for making the shift from fossil energy to renewable energy, and urges the Commission to reform the Energy Taxation Directive and the state-aid rules, which are preventing these incentives from being used to their full potential;

25. Stresses that the targets already agreed for 2020 must be taken as the minimum baseline when revising the Renewables Energy Directive, so that Member States cannot go below their 2020 national target after 2020; underlines that the EU 2030 renewable energy target requires collective achievement; stresses that Member States should develop their national plans in a timely fashion and that the Commission needs enhanced oversight capacities, including beyond 2020, endowed with adequate tools for effective and timely monitoring and the possibility of intervening in the event of counterproductive measures; believes that such monitoring will only be possible if the Commission determines national benchmarks for Member States against which their progress in renewable deployment can be measured;

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26. Highlights the potential for Europe in the development of renewable energy, and underlines the importance of long-term and favourable conditions for all market actors;
27. Highlights the important contribution of renewable energy in the reduction of overall carbon emissions; stresses the importance of renewable development in achieving the objectives agreed at the COP21;
28. Stresses that Member States should increase the justified use of provisions for statistical transfers and the development of cooperation mechanisms to meet their targets, in accordance with Article 6 of the Renewable Energy Directive; underlines the importance of cooperation among Member States, which would be beneficial to system optimisation, efficient provision and enhanced cost-saving in renewable energy; calls on the Commission to provide Member States with further incentives, information, a cost benefit analysis and guidance in this respect;
29. Highlights the need to define a strong, robust and transparent governance system to ensure the implementation of the 2030 renewable energy target with due respect for national competences in determining the energy mix, while allowing for full democratic control and scrutiny of energy policies; calls for an intensive replication of the current successful system of national targets, national Renewable Energy Plans and biennial reports; believes that these should be embedded in the Renewable Energy Directive, which must ensure accountable, effective and transparent monitoring of Member States' commitments and the implementation of existing European legislation, in order to lay the foundation for a well-functioning European Energy Union;
30. Points to the importance of single binding templates for national energy and climate plans in order to ensure comparability, transparency and predictability for investors; believes that trajectories and policy planning for each Member State must continue to be broken down by sector, technology and source;
31. Urges the European Commission to codify in legislation a grandfathering principle for renewable energy power plants to prevent retroactive changes to renewable energy support mechanisms and guarantee the economic viability of existing assets;
32. Calls for the removal of unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and for investments that enable the achievement of the 10 % electricity interconnection target by 2020; underlines that increased regional cooperation can contribute to ensuring cost optimisation for integrating renewables and drive down costs for consumers; recalls the importance of wide public consultation and participation from an early stage in the planning of new energy infrastructure projects, while taking account of local conditions; recalls the importance of technical advice and environmental impact assessments for renewable energy generation and distribution projects;
33. Notes the gap between available skills and the changes in labour market demands resulting from the development of renewables; underlines that active education/training and skills strategies are key in the transition to a sustainable, resource-efficient economy; stresses the importance of the social partners, as well as the public authorities in developing skills schemes and training programmes;
34. Highlights the need for adequate financing at EU level, to be achieved inter alia by comprehensively de-risking investments in order to incentivise broad use of renewable energy sources;

Citizen and Community Energy

35. Believes that local authorities, communities, households and individuals should form the backbone of the energy transition and should be actively supported to help them become energy producers and suppliers on an equal footing with other players in the energy market; in this context calls for a common comprehensive definition of the concept of 'prosumer' at EU level;
36. Considers it of major importance to establish a basic right to self-generation and self-consumption, as well as the right to store and sell excess electricity at a fair price;

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37. Recalls that Member States are, on the basis of public participation, to develop a Citizen and Community Energy strategy and describe in their national action plans how they will promote small and medium-sized renewable energy projects and energy cooperatives and factor them into their legislative framework, support policies and market accessibility;
38. Calls for the introduction of a new Citizen and Community Energy chapter under the revised Renewable Energy Directive to address the main market and administrative barriers and provide a more conducive investment environment for self-generation and self-consumption of renewable energy;
39. Notes that appropriate licensing and administrative procedures are not yet in place for all technologies in all countries; asks Member States to suppress administrative and market barriers to new self-generation capacity, to replace lengthy authorisation procedures with a simple notification requirement and to put in place efficient one-stop shops for project permits, grid access and support with financial and technical expertise, as well as guaranteeing prosumers' access to alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms; urges the Commission to ensure full implementation and full continuity beyond 2020 of Articles 13 (administrative procedures) and 16 (access and operation of the grids) of the current Renewable Energy Directive;
40. Highlights the importance of taking into account the differences between micro, small and large producers; notes the need to develop suitable conditions and tools for 'prosumers' (active energy consumers, such as households, both owners and tenants, institutions and small businesses that engage in renewable energy production either on their own or collectively through cooperatives, other social enterprises or aggregations) to contribute to energy transition and facilitate their integration into the energy market; recommends reducing to an absolute minimum the administrative barriers to new self-generation capacity, in particular by removing market and grid access restrictions; suggests shortening and simplifying authorisation procedures by moving to a simple notification requirement; suggests that the revision of the renewable energy directive could include specific provisions to remove barriers and promote community/cooperative energy schemes via 'one-stop shops' dealing with project permits and providing financial and technical expertise; encourages the Member States to make use of de minimis exemptions under the European Energy and Environment State Aid Guidelines, so that small and medium-sized projects continue to benefit from dynamic feed in tariffs, exempting them from complex auctioning processes;
41. Stresses the importance of public participation from an early stage in boosting environmentally friendly renewable energy projects while taking account of local conditions;
42. Stresses the need to strike a balance, through adequate market regulation, between the development of centralised and decentralised energy production so as to ensure that consumers who cannot afford to become 'prosumers' are not discriminated against; stresses the need to provide technical and administrative facilities for the collective management of energy production; underlines that self-generation and renewable sources are not the root cause of higher European energy costs;
43. Highlights the fact that an increased focus on implementing energy efficiencies in all sectors will assist the EU in boosting its competitiveness and in the development of innovative and cost-effective energy-saving solutions;
44. Stresses the environmental, economic and social benefits of an integrated approach to energy and the need to promote synergies between and within the electricity, the heating and cooling and the transport sectors; further calls on the Commission to assess how flexible sources of renewable energy can complement variable energy sources and how this should be taken into account in energy planning as well as in the design of support schemes;

Electricity

45. Stresses that renewable electricity production should be integrated into the electricity distribution systems at all levels, as well as into transmission systems, given the changes towards a more flexible and decentralised model for energy production that takes account of the market;
46. Notes that non-variable forms of renewables production, such as hydroelectric power, which can be rapidly mobilised and are environmentally responsible, offer a way of supporting the integration of variable renewables into the market;

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47. Calls for an integrated approach to energy policy that encompasses grid development and regulation, storage, demand-side management and energy efficiency improvements, as well as increasing the share of renewable energy sources; highlights the need to avoid locking in technologies that are incompatible with decarbonisation;

48. Notes that market integration of renewable electricity generation requires flexible markets on both the supply and the demand side and that this will require the construction, modernisation and adaptation of grids and the development of new storage technologies;

49. Stresses that electrification of both heating and cooling systems, transport and other sectors is crucial in order to ensure a fast and efficient transition to renewable energy sources;

50. Highlights that, as long as the electricity system is inflexible, priority access and dispatch for renewable energies is needed in order to promote grid upgrades and foster the deployment of storage and demand response; calls on the Commission to make proposals for strengthening and clarifying priority access and dispatch rules for renewable energy in the post-2020 period; stresses that the possibility of a priority access and dispatch phase-out should be evaluated on the occasion of the mid-term review of the future RES Directive expected by 2024;

51. Stresses that priority access to the grid and priority dispatch for renewable energy as stipulated in the current Renewable Energy Directive should be maintained and reinforced; calls for a post-2020 regulatory framework that ensures proper compensation for renewable electricity curtailment;

52. Notes the Commission's strategy to increase demand-response mechanisms; stresses that this should not create an additional burden for citizens or increase energy costs for the consumer; stresses that demand-response mechanisms could provide an opportunity for energy cost reductions, while highlighting that participating in demand-response or dynamic pricing mechanisms should always remain strictly on an opt-in basis only;

53. Believes that developing electricity storage solutions will be an indispensable element in the development and integration of high levels of renewable energy, assisting in balancing the grid and providing a means to store excess renewable power generation; calls for a revision of the existing regulatory framework in order to promote the deployment of energy storage systems and remove existing barriers;

54. Stresses that the issue of electricity bottlenecks continues to hamper the free flow of renewable energy across Member State borders and to slow progress on establishing a true Internal Energy Market in the European Union;

55. Emphasises that consumers should be empowered and have the right incentives to participate in energy markets; notes that dynamic, market-based prices should be designed to elicit appropriate demand responses from consumers and activate necessary production, as well as facilitating smart and efficient consumption; recommends the Commission to further analyse their impact on various consumer groups;

56. Stresses that certain consumers have rigid consumption patterns and may be negatively affected by enhanced price-based efficiency mechanisms; stresses in this regard the importance of energy efficiency policies in Member States that are focused on consumers in a vulnerable situation;

57. Considers that there should be a clear EU regulatory framework for self-consumption of renewable energy and for renewable energy communities/cooperatives that takes account of all benefits when designing payment mechanisms for sales of surplus production, access and use of the grid; calls on the Commission and Member States to promote the self-production of energy and the implementation and interconnection of local renewable energy grids as a complement to their national energy policies; highlights the fact that 'prosumers' should be allowed to access the energy grid and market at a fair price and should not be penalised with additional taxes or charges; expresses its concern at the initiatives taken by some Member States to create obstacles to the exercise of the rights to self-consumption and self-production;

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58. Notes that consumers currently contribute little to the intended construction of new renewable energy generation capacities when they opt for electricity tariffs that are marketed with a fuel mix disclosing 100 % renewable energy sources; calls for an accurate, reliable and transparent tracking mechanism so that 'green' claims are tied to measurable criteria regarding additional environmental benefits;

59. Urges the Member States to make better use of geothermal-sourced heat and cooling energy;

Heating and cooling

60. Welcomes the Commission communication of February 2016 on an EU strategy on heating and cooling, but highlights the lack of progress and low targets set for renewable use in heating and cooling, in particular in buildings; stresses the great potential for continued progress in renewable use in heating and cooling; notes that the heating and cooling sector accounts for half the EU's final energy consumption and therefore plays a key role in achieving the EU objectives on climate and renewable energy resources; recognises the benefits of increasing renewable energy in the heating and cooling sector; stresses the increased flexibility of thermal infrastructure and storage in facilitating the integration of variable renewable sources by storing energy in the form of heat, offering excellent returns on investment and providing opportunities for enhancing quality local employment; calls on the Commission to bridge the regulatory gaps in the post-2020 renewables legislative package; reiterates that efforts in the heating and cooling sector hold great potential for increased energy security (given that 61 % of gas imported into the European Union is used in buildings, mainly for heating purposes), for example through the development of district heating/cooling networks, which are an efficient means of integrating sustainable heat into cities on a large scale, since they can simultaneously deliver heat derived from a range of sources and are not inherently dependent on any one source;

61. Welcomes the Commission's heating and cooling strategy communication, which emphasises the need to phase out fossil fuels, which still account for 75 % of fuel used in the sector, and to fully replace them with energy efficiency measures — our major chance of reducing use of fossil fuels — and renewables;

62. Calls for further measures to exploit the remaining significant potential of renewable energy in the heating and cooling sectors in order to fully achieve the 2020 goals; calls on the Commission to bridge regulatory gaps in those sectors in the post-2020 renewables legislative package;

63. Notes that biomass is the renewable energy most widely used for heating today, representing some 90 % of all renewable heating; it plays a key role in Central and Eastern Europe in particular in enhancing energy security in a sustainable manner;

64. Stresses the need to facilitate a transition to energy-efficient renewable heating devices, while ensuring adequate support and enhanced information and assistance for energy-poor citizens;

65. Stresses the need for a comprehensive and effective definition of renewable cooling;

66. Emphasises the need to renovate and enhance the performance of district heating and cooling systems, as district heating and cooling networks can use and store electricity powered by renewables and then distribute it to buildings and industrial sites, boosting the level of renewable heating and cooling;

67. Highlights the potential of prosumer groups, including households, micro and small businesses, cooperatives and local authorities, for establishing collective energy systems such as district heating that provide cost-efficient renewable heating and cooling, as well as for the many synergies between energy efficiency and renewable energy;

68. Considers that synergies between the Renewable Energy Directive, the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Energy Performance of Building Directive should be reinforced in order to enhance use of renewables in heating and cooling;

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69. Notes that energy efficiency projects related to both heating and cooling are important tools for ensuring stable and predictable energy consumption patterns and combating energy poverty;

Transport

70. Notes that the target of 10 % renewables by 2020 in the transport sector is significantly lagging behind, partly owing to the challenges for a biofuel-based renewable strategy for transport; recalls that transport is the only sector in the EU where GHG emissions have risen since 1990; points out that renewable energies are key to achieving sustainable mobility; calls on the Member States to increase their efforts to deploy sustainable measures in the transport sector such as demand reduction, a modal shift towards more sustainable modes, better efficiency and the electrification of the transport sector; calls on the Commission to develop a framework for the promotion of the use of electric vehicles fed by renewable electricity and to improve the legislative framework so that it offers prospects for biofuels with high GHG-efficiency, taking into account indirect land use change (ILUC) in the period after 2020;

71. Calls for the partial use of CAP to be maintained and increased in order to support investment in the production and use of renewable energy in the agricultural sector;

72. Estimates that transport represents over 30 % of final energy consumption in Europe and that 94 % of transport relies on oil products; considers, therefore, that an effort towards increased use of renewables in the transport sector must be ambitious, with a clear link to the decarbonisation of the transport sector;

73. Asks the Commission to propose ambitious measures to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport, including through renewable fuels, increased electrification and enhanced efficiency, and to step up efforts to promote technology development and innovation in these areas;

74. Notes the importance of the electrification of the transport sector for the decarbonisation of the economy and calls on the Commission to develop a framework for the promotion of the use of electric vehicles fed by renewable electricity, as a key to achieving the 2030 targets;

75. Awaits the European Commission's strategy in June 2016 for decarbonisation of the transport sector and stresses in this context that increased uptake of renewables must be promoted in order to ensure that transport contributes actively to reaching the 2020 targets;

76. Welcomes the progress made in developing new biofuels and engines by the projects completed under the EU Clean Sky Joint Undertaking;

77. Highlights the importance of developing the next-generation biofuels using biomass or waste;

78. Points out the need for an improved regulatory environment and long-term conditions in order to support development for renewable energy in the aviation and shipping sectors;

79. Stresses the need for a modal shift in the transport sector to accommodate sustainable mobility regulation and policies, including intermodality, sustainable logistic systems, mobility management and sustainable urban policies that switch the energy consumption in transport to renewable sources and/or minimise overall energy consumption, encouraging more active travel models, developing and implementing Smart Cities solutions and supporting urban eco-mobility and appropriate urban planning; calls for the Member States and the EU to promote a modal shift of passengers and cargo from road and air transport towards rail and maritime transport; calls on the Commission to assess the potential of trolley-truck technologies;

80. Urges the EU institutions, as a way of showing their firm commitment to renewable energies, to develop renewable energy capacities of their own to cover their own buildings' energy demand; stresses that, until such capacities are developed, the EU institutions should purchase green energy in order to meet their needs;

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81. Emphasises that a larger modal share of walking, cycling, car-sharing and car-pooling, combined with public transport systems, is crucial to reducing and avoiding EU oil dependency and thereby reducing GHG emissions;
82. Highlights the potential of bike systems and infrastructures to improve the sustainability of transport in urban areas;
83. Highlights the potential for reducing emissions and contributing to the low-carbon economy by increased electrification of transport systems;

Sustainability criteria for biofuels and bioliquids

84. Calls on the Commission, given the need for greater synergy and consistency in European policies, to lay down sustainability criteria for bioenergy, taking into account a thorough assessment of the functioning of existing EU sustainability policies and the circular economy policies; recalls that a strengthening of EU energy security should be achieved through the sustainable use of own resources, in line with the objective of improving resource efficiency;
85. Urges caution with regard to the growing trend of use of forest biomass as a leading EU renewable energy source, which can have potentially damaging effects on climate and the environment unless sustainably sourced and properly accounted for; notes that the climate impacts of bioenergy must be accounted for in the long term, given the long periods needed to achieve parity times by harvested forests;
86. Notes that bioenergy already accounts for 60 % of renewable energy in Europe and that its use is set to continue to grow; stresses the need to clarify, as a matter of urgency, the greenhouse impacts of the various uses of forest biomass for energy and to identify the uses that can achieve the greatest mitigation benefits within policy-relevant timeframes;
87. Emphasises that the production of biofuels should not interfere with food production or compromise food security; believes, however, that balanced policies to promote increased European yields in feedstock crops such as wheat, maize, sugar beet and sunflowers could include provision for biofuel production, taking account of ILUC, in a way which could provide Europe's farmers with a secure income stream, attract investment and jobs into rural areas, help address Europe's chronic shortage of (GM-free) high-protein animal feed, make Europe less dependent on fossil fuel imports; believes that in cases of market oversupply of the agricultural products referred to, the production of biofuels and bioethanol would represent a temporary outlet which would maintain sustainable purchase prices, safeguard farmers' incomes during crises, and serve as a market stability mechanism; stresses the need to encourage the integration of uncultivated arable land which is not being used to produce food into the production of bioenergy, with a view to meeting national and European renewable energy objectives;
88. Believes that livestock manure can be a valuable source of biogas via the use of manure processing techniques such as fermentation, while also stressing the importance of making this an economically viable option for farmers;
89. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to promote the importance of sustainable forest management, and hence the key role of forest biomass as one of the EU's crucial renewable raw materials for reaching its energy targets; draws attention to the increasing demand for forest biomass, which means that sustainable forest management, in line with the EU forest strategy, should be even further strengthened and promoted, as it is crucial for biodiversity and the ecosystem function of forests, including the absorption of CO₂ from the atmosphere; points out the need, therefore, for balanced exploitation of resources grown in the EU and imported from third countries, bearing in mind the very long regeneration time required for wood;

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90. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.
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