

Speed with Quality: Renewable Acceleration Areas can be a game changer that Member States need to get right

13th May 2024, Brussels - Today, the European Commission published their recommendations and guidance to Member States to improve and streamline permitting procedures and auctions for renewables, including guidance on designating Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs). This is a welcomed initiative from the Commission as Member States need to exponentially accelerate the deployment of wind and solar, but it must be done so in a manner that is sustainable, inclusive and respects nature.

In response to the Commission's publication, the Oeko-Institut, CAN Europe, WWF EU, Birdlife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau have published their [joint analysis and recommendations](#) regarding the renewable energy spatial planning and designation of RAAs, along with [scoring](#) for 6 EU Member States. These analysis and recommendations emphasise how crucial early public participation in spatial planning processes is needed, along with prioritising artificial and dual land use areas for renewable energy development, addressing country-specific shortcomings and promoting coordination between national, regional and local spatial planning frameworks.

"While we welcome the European Commission's guidance, we stress the importance of upholding the highest environmental and social standards when identifying suitable areas for renewables deployment and designating acceleration areas, as mandated by the revised Renewable Energy Directive. It is essential that speed does not compromise thorough environmental assessments and meaningful public participation. Balancing speed with quality can further build public support for renewable energy and assist in nature restoration efforts, truly creating a win-win scenario for all. - Seda Orhan, Renewable Energy Programme Manager at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe.

These recommendations were derived from analysis conducted by environmental and nature NGOs across the EU on Member States' spatial planning and mapping processes for renewables development. In particular, six countries (Estonia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Poland and Portugal) were examined closely in regards to their designation of RAAs, their environmental sensitivity mapping and public participation processes. Overall, despite showing more ambition for renewable energy deployment, most of the countries were ill-prepared in regards to the designation of RAAs and sensitivity mapping for RES deployment, except for Portugal which is a front runner in the mapping of renewable acceleration areas despite challenges including administrative resources and public participation. For public participation, only Estonia and Germany have inclusive public participation well integrated into their spatial planning processes.

"Our recent analysis highlights how Member States are not fully prepared for renewable energy coordinated planning and the designation of renewable acceleration areas in a manner that is inclusive and can minimise impacts to biodiversity. Although we welcome the RED III incentives to speed up the deployment of renewables, a balance has to be struck between accelerated efforts within the energy transition and safeguarding environmental and social standards. With further mapping and designation ongoing, there is a crucial opportunity for all Member States to improve their spatial planning processes accordingly,

and work together to meet the EU's climate, energy and biodiversity targets.” - **Marion Wingenbach, Senior Researcher at Oeko-Institut's Energy and Climate Division.**

“Two years after REPowerEU, it is refreshing to see the Commission follow up with additional guidance on the delicate but vital task of establishing adequate Renewables Acceleration Areas. Progress among EU countries remains uneven, with significant challenges persisting in renewables spatial planning: improving coordination between different levels of government and public agencies, thoroughly integrating environmental sensitivities into planning processes, and ensuring meaningful public participation. Environmental NGOs must be very proactive at this stage, urging lawmakers and planning authorities to look at best practice and take on board civil society recommendations. In this way, plans for acceleration areas will be closely aligned with nature conservation and social cohesion objectives. - **Cosimo Tansini, Policy Officer for Renewable Energy at the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).**

“This report is very timely with today's Commission recommendations on the implementation of new permitting rules for Member States. Countries are especially scoring too low on the integration of public participation in spatial planning processes. It is essential that the rapid deployment of renewables is done with and for people and that spatial planning is achieved in an inclusive and ecosystem-based approach that minimises impacts on nature and maximises benefits for local communities.” - **Arnaud Van Dooren, Renewable Energy Policy Officer at WWF European Policy Office.**

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Notes to the Editor

Below is the scoring for each of the six Member States based on the ambition of their renewable energy policy and how well they are prepared to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy in an inclusive, nature - positive manner.

OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF SPATIAL PLANNING PROCESSES & PRACTICES FOR ONSHORE RENEWABLE DEPLOYMENT IN SELECTED MEMBER STATES



	 ESTONIA	 GERMANY	 GREECE	 SPAIN	 POLAND	 PORTUGAL
Ambition of Renewable Energy Policy						
Designation of Renewable Acceleration Areas under the Renewable Energy Directive						
Development and Integration of Sensitivity Mapping in Spatial Planning process						
Integration of Public Participation in Spatial Planning Processes						

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