

Infrastructure targets and the EU 2030 climate and energy framework

In the context of the current debate over the EU's climate and energy policies, Europe's targets on electricity interconnection should be updated to reflect the changing realities of the continent's energy system to 2030, including the increase in renewable energy needed to meet Europe's climate objectives, the availability of smarter grid and energy management technologies, and the increase in cross-border trading required for a fully-functioning internal energy market. These updated targets should be included in the 2030 climate and energy framework, to be considered by the European Council at the end of March.

Accelerated development of more and smarter infrastructure is of key importance for enabling integration of the European energy market and for cost-effective implementation of the 2030 climate and energy framework. Increased physical interconnection across Europe, including connecting neighbouring regions, and demand side management offer both the opportunity for facilitating the integration of greater proportions of renewable sources of electricity and for a more competitive European energy system, thereby reducing electricity prices.

European companies are currently among the world leaders in advanced grid technologies, manufacturing and development. They have the expertise and capacity to deliver the infrastructure required for Europe's changing energy system to 2030 and beyond. European companies must keep this leadership position. Due to the significant volumes of investment required for infrastructure until 2030, a clear long-term policy direction is needed to attract investors and investments and secure European jobs. To ensure social acceptability and timely delivery, this should include additional efforts to build public support, and safeguards to avoid social and environmental impacts.

In 2002, the European Council in Barcelona set a target for Member States to achieve electricity interconnection capacity equivalent to 10% of national installed production capacity. This objective was set at a time when variable renewables made up a small proportion of overall electricity generation, before the implementation of the European internal energy market legislative packages, and before the availability of advanced grid technologies and functionalities.

As part of the development of a new 2030 climate and energy framework, the European Council should request the European Commission to propose updated targets for deployment of smart grids and interconnections between Member States for 2030, alongside new measures and governance arrangements to ensure the objectives are met, and a clear timeframe for implementation.

