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Brussels in brief

EU energy policy

[European Commission uses State aid guidelines to push its EU energy vision](#)

The European Commission is proposing to phase out support for renewable technologies after 2020 in a move that pushes its narrow vision for EU energy policy and clouds the future of wind energy.

According to state aid guidelines published early April, the Commission recommends removing support mechanisms for renewable technologies that are expected to become "grid competitive" between 2020 and 2030, without specifically defining what the term means; whereas the guidelines only apply to the period from 2014 to 2020.

The proposals also push for energy market integration above market stability, with premiums for renewables allocated through tenders to replace feed-in tariffs. They also suggest "technology neutrality", which does not distinguish between the maturity of technologies like onshore and offshore wind energy.

Nevertheless, a number of exemptions have been included, allowing Member States to opt out of tendering, to tailor support for technologies at different levels of maturity and to determine the pace at which national support is adjusted to comply with the guidelines.

Justin Wilkes, EWEA's deputy CEO, was quoted in EWEA's press release as saying: "The Commission would have liked to put the cart before the horse, by focusing on forcing wind energy to

compete in a market which still does not exist, while ignoring the obvious market distortions that need to be tackled first, such as the majority of subsidies that go to fossil fuels and nuclear".

"While we welcome the drive for long-term market integration of wind energy, state aid guidelines are not the ideal tool for the Commission to legislate on energy policy. Member States should be flexible in implementing the guidelines, in order to enable the most cost-efficient development of wind energy in Europe, and avoid increased uncertainty for the sector," he continued.

Wilkes finished by adding: "In the main, the opt-outs will become the most important tools used by Member States because the Commission has failed to propose good design requirements for its favoured method of tendering."

Key facts and background:

State aid is defined as an advantage conferred on a selective basis to undertakings by national public authorities. It is illegal in the EU, with certain exceptions - for example for renewable energy support - and the details of these exceptions are defined in guidelines.

All renewable energy support schemes implemented by Member States, which are State aid and do not comply with the guidelines, are therefore illegal.

The new guidelines, which come into force on 1 July 2014, are valid for six years until 2020, replacing current existing guidelines. The guidelines state that "grid competitive" renewables should have their support phased out between 2020 and 2030. The term "grid competitive" is not defined in the guidelines.

Existing schemes do not have to be changed to comply with the guidelines by a specific date; new programmes need to comply but key provisions, such as tendering, do not fully come into force until 2017.

The opening of national support mechanisms is suggested rather than imposed on Member States.

Technology neutral tenders will be automatically considered not to result in over-compensation. Member States can opt out of the tendering process. They will need to choose between a feed-in premium, an investment aid-based programme or a tradable green certificate. Feed-in tariffs will not be allowed for installations above 3 MW, or three wind turbines.

If you want to hear how EWEA influenced this particular proposal from the Commission, read on for an interview with our policy expert Pierre Tardieu.

Trade

[Ministers support removal of trade restrictions on wind turbine components](#)

In early May, EU Foreign Affairs Ministers backed a pledge to liberalise trade in 54 types of green goods, including wind turbine components. The pledge to launch WTO negotiations in order to eliminate trade barriers on the list of items - known as the 'green goods initiative' - was made by the EU and 13 WTO members earlier this year.

Justin Wilkes, EWEA's Deputy CEO, said the removal of duties and other trade barriers would help the wind energy sector reduce costs: "The ability to trade wind turbine components freely, without the restriction of tariffs, is a fundamental part of facilitating the growth of the wind industry globally," he stated.

"Going forward, policymakers must work to ensure that this initiative extends to all of the world's major trading partners and not just a select few."

"The next step is to broaden the negotiation to barriers other than tariffs which impede the globalisation of the wind energy supply chain – such as local content requirements."

Offshore wind energy

Countries to identify best use of sea space

Member States will plan how better to coordinate sea-based activities under a directive just adopted by the European Parliament.

The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive requires EU countries to identify the most efficient and sustainable uses of maritime space - including offshore wind, cables and shipping - and to coordinate all relevant policies affecting coastal areas.

Such planning is key to offshore wind development, providing stability and clarity for investors. EWEA strongly supports the development of an integrated and coordinated Maritime Spatial Planning policy across Europe.

From 2010 to 2012, EWEA worked on the EU-funded project SEANERGY 2020, which focused on maritime spatial planning from the offshore renewable energy perspective. Contact Angeliki Koulouri on Angeliki.Koulouri@ewea.org for more information.

Investment – your opinion

SURVEY: What are the barriers to investing in renewables?

Which policies put a brake on wind and solar investments? The OECD wants to know what the industry thinks as part of its study "Achieving a level playing field for international investment in green energy" due to be published by end 2014. If you would like to participate in the study, [please fill in the OECD's questionnaire](#) by Thursday 15 May.

EWEA collaborates with the OECD including work on trade-related topics and organising a public debate with Ronald Steenblik on subsidies in the power sector – read the next story for a full report.

Subsidies

Coal, gas, OECD and EC join EWEA's debate on power sector subsidies

From direct government support to tax breaks and the cost of negative externalities like pollution, subsidies to the power sector take many different - and often hidden - forms. In fact, the exact definition of a subsidy was the crux of EWEA's at times heated

debate "subsidies to the power sector: Europe's best kept secret?" on 29 April with over 100 attendees.

Subsidies to renewable energy are the most transparent and visible, they are directly in an EU Member State's budget, explained Tom Howes, from the European Commission's DG for Energy. "Being so transparent they are the first to attract the eye so there is an unfair treatment in their visibility," Howes told the audience.

Ronald Steenblik from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said that subsidies are extremely difficult to measure. "Is government inaction a subsidy?" he questioned, adding that the OECD does not include inaction such as the failure to tax externalities like pollution in its definition.

For Thomas Becker, CEO of EWEA, "a subsidy is always an act of political will. There's nothing wrong with them, but transparency is key," he said. Meanwhile, Brian Ricketts, Secretary General of EURACOAL said "obligations on consumers to purchase an amount of green energy sound like a subsidy to me."

Howes said that the European Commission has just launched a study which will investigate direct and indirect subsidies and the cost of externalities in the power sector – which should be finished in six months. "It's a pretty good secret what subsidies are," he said, adding that the Commission has encountered difficulties in obtaining figures. "There are many different reasons why different groups are unwilling to reveal costs and subsidies. We couldn't get some fuel price data on imports, it's labelled as confidential," he said adding that data on exemptions is also patchy.

Meanwhile, "nobody could find anything on nuclear," Howes said. "Many people do not have an interest in exposing figures," Becker added. "There's a whole lot of other market failures to bring to the table. It's very messy. We need data and to explain the relationships," Howes said.

For Beate Raabe, Secretary General of Eurogas, there aren't any direct subsidies to the gas sector in Europe and one of the solutions to the problem of including pollution externalities in the power market lies in the Emissions Trading System (ETS) – the EU mechanism for putting a price on carbon emissions. However, "the ETS is not working very well at the moment, we need to make that work. We need to define these externalities and be very transparent about it," Raabe said.

Ricketts called for market-based solutions. "Renewables have disrupted the market – a consequence of having subsidies – we need a level playing field," he said. Becker countered with: "it's a question of pricing our behaviour. Do you think coal should pick up the bill for the health and pollution costs of its production?"

"Coal should not have to pick up the pollution bill because the sector we depend on will crumble," Ricketts said citing consumer's willingness to buy cheap goods from China, a coal-based economy.

The well-attended debate threw up many pertinent questions – what exactly is a subsidy? How do we count the cost of indirect subsidies like pollution costs? Do subsidies distort the market and can we fix everything with the Emissions Trading System? And, for wind power, when can it stand on its own two feet without subsidies?

"The fossil fuel industry is trying to frame renewables as an industry that can only survive with subsidies. Yet fossil fuels historically and currently have many more subsidies. Wind can be without subsidies when all other industries do not get subsidies," Becker said.

Speakers agreed that the Commission's forthcoming study should shed more light onto the subsidy debate. "Hopefully this time we will have a better set of data and a better story to tell," said Howes.

The debate "subsidies to the power sector: Europe's best kept secret?" took place at the EWEA's office in Brussels on 29 April. [See the debate in full](#). EWEA is working on producing an information pamphlet about subsidies in the power sector – keep an eye on www.ewea.org in the coming months.

Health and safety

[EWEA launches new health and safety video](#)

Working at height, setting foot in hostile environments and dealing with massive equipment – the wind energy industry presents health and safety challenges. EWEA has worked on a new video designed to support training programmes for new technicians highlighting some of the challenges and potential solutions, [watch it here](#).

[EWEA's work on health and safety](#) is focused on the promotion of best practice and the harmonisation of rules, standards and trainings – a vital step to reducing the risks for personnel working on-site. Contact Ivan.Pineda@ewea.org for more information.

Wind energy research

[APPLY: Do you want to help decide the future of wind energy research?](#)

Would you like to help decide the future direction of research in wind energy at EU-level? Put yourself forward to become part of the European Wind Energy Technology Platform – TP Wind's – Steering Committee. The Committee is the decision-making body of the Platform – which is hosted by EWEA - setting its overall strategy. It meets twice a year in Brussels.

Apply online by midnight on Sunday 18 May. Candidates will be selected by the TPWind secretariat, the current Executive Committee and the current Working Groups' chairs and notified in July 2014. To find out more about the application guidelines and to apply, [click here](#).

More information on TPWind activities: www.windplatform.eu

EWEA news

[Dates for your diary – 2015 events](#)

[EWEA OFFSHORE 2015](#)

10 - 12 March 2015, Bella Center, Copenhagen, Denmark

What happens when?

- Call for abstracts will open in July, close beginning October 2014
- Call for reviewers and session chairs will open in July, close beginning September 2014

- Registration will open in October 2014
 - Exhibition and sponsorship sales are open – significant reductions for EWEA members.
- Contact sales@ewea.org

[Find out more](#)

[EWEA Annual Event 2015](#)

17 - 20 November 2015 - Porte de Versailles, Paris, France

What happens when?

- Call for abstracts will open in November 2014, close beginning April 2015
 - Call for reviewers & session chairs will open in November 2014, close beginning March 2015
 - Registration will open in June 2015
 - Exhibition and sponsorship sales are open – significant reductions for EWEA members.
- Contact sales@ewea.org

[Find out more](#)

[2014 – from workshops to EWEA lead sponsor meetings](#)

[Technology workshop: Analysis of operating wind farms](#)

9-10 December 2014 – Malmö, Sweden

Following our successful workshop "Analysis of operating wind farms" Lyon, France – July, 2012, many of the 160 attendees requested that we return to the topic two years later in order to debate progress in the field. See the [programme & proceedings](#) and [attendee list](#) from the first edition. The call for abstracts is now open.

[Technology workshop: Wind turbine sound](#)

9-10 December – Malmö, Sweden

Call for abstracts is now open. After our first workshop "Wind Turbine Noise – from source to receiver" held in Oxford, UK – December 2012, many of the attendees and eight exhibiting companies requested that a second edition should be held two years later. The 2014 EWEA sound workshop will focus on amplitude modulation (AM/OAM), low-frequency sounds (LFS), sound levels and tones. See the [programme & proceedings](#) and [attendee list](#) from the first edition.

Working Groups – exclusive to members

EWEA holds a number of Working Groups themed around the issues you care about. Below is a calendar of upcoming sessions. Contact Iga Niewiadomska on Iga.Niewiadomska@ewea.org if you would like to attend.

Grid Code Requirements

27 May – Meeting focused on the cross-border committee decision on requirements for generators network code - EWEA offices, Brussels.

19 July - Meeting for preparing best-practice document for fault ride-through requirements for the implementation phase of the

requirements for generators network code - Enercon offices, Bremen.

Stable Frameworks (EWEA board members only)

20 May – Competition compliance guidelines, State aid guidelines, 2030 EU climate and energy framework, how can Europe maximise its benefit from wind energy? - EWEA offices, Brussels.

Offshore Wind Industry Group

1st half of June (date tbc) – Meeting focused on cost reduction pathways for offshore wind - EWEA offices, Brussels.

EWEA National Associations network

20 May – Meeting on competition compliance guidelines, 2030 targets, State aid Q&A, integrating renewables, UK electricity market reform (RenewableUK) – EWEA offices, Brussels.

EWEA Lead Sponsors

13 May - EWEA Lead Sponsors workshop: Transforming electricity markets – towards a future proof market design – EWEA offices, Brussels.

What does EWEA do for you?

EWEA works hard to influence the EU decisions that affect your business and make the connections that will drive the wind industry forward. Here is a snapshot of what we are up to in May...

Thomas Becker, CEO of EWEA, spoke at [WINDPOWER 2014](#) – the American Wind Energy Association's conference and exhibition in Las Vegas, 5-8 May. He gave the audience the low-down on the market for wind in Europe and explained why we need a 2030 EU-wide target for renewables. He will also speak at the [European Business Summit](#) on 15 May and at the Polish Wind Energy Association's event [PWEA 2014](#) on 27 May.

Our policy experts will be speaking at the [4th New Energy Investor Summit](#) on 26-27 May in Zurich – an event where you can meet strong Swiss and European utilities and institutional investors to present your investment opportunities. If you would like to attend, EWEA membership entitles you to a special registration fee of €490, down from €1,530. Please use the code "projectdeveloper2014" during registration.

EWEA will also be speaking at the [APRAISE](#) – a European Commission funded research project - policy workshop on 23 May in Brussels.

Meet EWEA – introducing Pierre Tardieu

This month Pierre Tardieu, Senior Political Affairs Advisor – Stable Legislative Frameworks, outlines his role at EWEA and the favourite parts of his job...

"I am part of the Political Affairs team and am now in my third year at EWEA. I lobby on topics including national issues, support mechanisms, State aid and trade policy. Part of my job includes managing the EWEA Stable Frameworks Working Group – I work with EWEA members to coordinate common positions and make sure members get the chance to give feed-back on EU-level decisions that affect them.

"Influencing the EU decision-making process involves a lot of meetings with decision-makers. For example, we target advisors to the European Commissioners to create 'allies' within the Commission on specific proposals. These may be within the energy department, but also within other departments when we are trying to create momentum for a favourable proposal, or to block a proposal that we believe may be detrimental to the wind industry.

"I work with national wind energy associations on their country-specific issues which may involve me writing a letter to the relevant European Commissioner or meeting with the Commission services and MEPs to voice national concerns at EU level.

"In a recent and interesting case, last summer the competition arm of the European Commission started consulting other Commission departments on a State aid guidelines proposal that was particularly detrimental. Basically, they had decided that now that renewable energies are mainstream, support mechanisms should be more market-orientated with a technology-neutral approach to support. This would have meant that all renewables would have to compete for support and the cheapest would have won. Onshore wind would have been fine, but this would have been a disaster for offshore wind energy. We managed to get the support of around eight commissioners on our point of view and now Member States can keep supporting different technologies in different ways.

"Another case I'm working on is a move by some big members of the World Trade Organisation (including the US, China and the EU) to scrap import duties on green products – crucially, the list includes many things we're interested in like blades and nacelles. I'm consulting you as EWEA members on this list to find out if your needs are met in this proposal – if you have something to say please get in touch with me directly and I'll listen to your concerns. We would even like to take the WTO proposal further to broaden its scope to include things like local content requirement barriers. These negotiations should wrap-up in 2015 – I'm looking forward to the outcome!

Contact Pierre on Pierre.Tardieu@ewea.org



EWEA

THE EUROPEAN WIND ENERGY ASSOCIATION