

Conference statement

GRIDS 2010: The backbone of Europe's energy future

"Energy is a key driver for growth and a central priority for action: we need to complete the internal market of energy, build and interconnect energy grids, and ensure energy security and solidarity. [...] We need to make frontiers irrelevant for pipelines or power cables. To have the infrastructure for solar and wind energy."

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission; State of the Union 7 September 2010

Europe's electricity transmission networks are vital infrastructure: backbones of Europe's economy, prosperity and quality of life. EWEA's Grids 2010 Conference highlights the urgency and importance for Europe's future of major grid investments.

National electricity markets have been undergoing an important transition towards increased liberalization and a more integrated European energy market.

The European Union has set objectives to fight climate change and increase the share of renewable energy to 20% by 2020, requiring an increase in the share of electricity from renewables from 15% in 2005 to 34% in 2020. It also aims to reduce greenhouse gases by 80-95% by 2050. Wind power is fundamental to meet those objectives.

In order to create a properly functioning European energy market, and to integrate the

large amounts of renewable energy – including offshore and onshore wind energy – expected by 2020 and 2030, very large investments for grid expansion are needed. ENTSO-E's pilot Ten-Year Network Development Plan estimates that grid expansion investments in the range of €23-28 billion are needed over the next five years.

While Europe's transmission system operators are willing and able to make such investments, the European Union, Member States, and regulators must make it a priority to: set appropriate regulatory and financial frameworks to facilitate - cross-border interconnection capacities, key European corridors for electricity trade, offshore grids, and even a future supergrid.

Therefore, the EU, its Member States, regulators and industry need to acknowledge the urgency and importance of major grid investments, by:

- speeding up permitting for grid investments, for the permitting process to be completed within a maximum of five years,
- supporting cross-border regulation, cooperation and coordination for speedy implementation of European integrated wholesale electricity markets,
- supporting Transmission System Operators and others to finance new infrastructure in the capital markets through appropriate European regulation, EU funds and European banks.

