

EU unveils plans to boost 'clean energy' use

November 30 2016, by Lachlan Carmichael



Photovoltaic panels dominate the landscape at the solar energy centre in Cestas, France

The EU on Wednesday unveiled "clean energy" plans to boost renewable use, cut waste and reduce subsidies for coal power in a bid to meet its commitments to the Paris climate deal.

The European Commission, the European Union's executive arm, also plans to raise binding energy efficiency targets by 30 percent by 2030 under the sweeping package of measures.

But environmental groups criticised the 28-nation EU for doing too little to end subsidies for carbon-spewing [coal power](#) plants and said the plans did not go far enough.

"We will help Europe turn the Paris agreement into concrete action," EU climate commissioner Miguel Canete said.

Under the Paris climate deal struck almost a year ago, the EU plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 over 1990 levels and make renewable energy account for 27 percent of energy use.

In 2030, the EU aims to have half of the bloc's electricity generation come from renewables like wind and solar power. By 2050, it hopes electricity will be free of carbon.

The package calls for making renewable energy increasingly market based, setting a regulatory framework designed to reassure investors and set a level playing field for different technologies.

"The new market rules sharpen price signals and promote a more flexible market," Canete said.

"Our proposals will boost trading across borders, create a level playing field for renewables, and remove barriers for new actors in the market, and ensuring certainty for investors," he added.

'High-polluting fossil fuels'

The proposals on renewables also aim to promote more jobs in a sector that already employs more than one million people. The commission said some 320,000 worked in the wind energy sector in 2014, five times more than 2005.

The 1,000-page package of measures—which still need to be approved by EU nations and the European Parliament—aims to overhaul the energy market and ensure the shift to clean energy.

The commission is calling for reducing so-called capacity mechanisms, which are seen as government subsidies used to help power companies avoid electricity blackouts.

The mechanisms used or under consideration in Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden ensure that sufficient electricity supplies are available to meet demand during peak times.

But Canete said: "Capacity mechanisms will not be used as a backdoor subsidy of high-polluting fossil fuels. That would go against our climate objectives."

The means the EU has set a limit of 550 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour for new plants while giving time for existing capacity mechanisms to adapt to the new rules.

The commission is also proposing a binding 30 percent energy efficiency target for 2030, up from the current target of at least 27 percent. This calls for equipping buildings with new [energy](#) saving technology.

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