

Nine European Union member states, Bulgaria among them, had exceeded their renewable energy targets for 2020 in 2014.

EU's Europe 2020 strategy envisions that 20 per cent of the bloc's energy consumption by 2020 should come from renewable energy sources, although individual countries were set their own targets, based on their different starting positions, renewable energy potential and economic performance.

In Bulgaria's case, this target is 16 per cent, which the country matched in 2012. In 2014, the share of renewable energy in total consumption was 18 per cent - a full percentage point less than the previous year (Slovenia and Croatia were the only other two countries to see their renewable energy production decline in 2014).

After a period of strong growth, helped by the generous feed-in tariffs offered by the government, Bulgaria has attempted in recent years to slow down the growth of renewable energy in the country, which is one of the main factors blamed for electricity price hikes. Overall, Bulgaria ranked 12 among EU states in terms of the share held by renewables in domestic energy consumption.

The nine EU countries that reached their 2020 targets in 2014 were Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Sweden. Two other countries - Denmark and Austria - were within less than a percentage point of matching their Europe 2020 targets.

France (at 8.7 percentage points), the Netherlands (at 8.5 percentage points), the UK (eight percentage points) and Ireland (7.4 percentage points) were the furthest away from their respective targets, Eurostat said.

Sweden had the highest share of renewable energy in gross consumption, at 52.6 per cent, followed by Latvia and Finland on 38.7 per cent each. The lowest proportion of renewables were registered in Luxembourg (4.5 per cent), Malta (4.7 per cent), the Netherlands (5.5 per cent) and the UK (seven percent).

The EU average in 2014 was 16 per cent of renewable energy in final consumption, up from 8.3 per cent in 2004, the first year for which the data is available, and a full percentage point higher than in 2013.

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