

The European Parliament's Industry and Energy Committee voted on November 28 to reduce energy consumption by 40% by 2030 at EU level. MEPs wanted to be more ambitious than the EU Commission, which had proposed a 30% reduction.

Each EU country will have to set its own corresponding national energy-efficiency targets that are needed to reach the overall goal of 40% reduction in energy consumption. These would cover all stages of the energy chain, including generation, transmission, distribution and end-use, the European Parliament said on November 28.

In a separate vote, which also took place on November 28, Industry and Energy Committee MEPs agreed that by 2030, a minimum of 35% of all energy consumed in the EU would need to come from renewable, cleaner sources. For the transport sector, at least 12% of the energy consumed in each member state would have to be produced from renewables, such as the sun or wind.

National authorities need to make sure that financial programmes, supporting measures, which increase the share of electricity produced from renewables, are stable and predictable. They should refrain from making frequent changes and avoid all retroactive changes.

MEPs amended the legislative proposals to make sure that consumers who produce electricity on their premises are entitled to consume it and install storage systems without having to pay any charges, fees or taxes. They also ask member states to assess existing barriers to consuming energy produced on your own premises, to promote renewable self-consumption being developed further.

MEPs said they want to help people setting up renewable energy co-operatives in their communities, where they can install solar panels, wind turbines or hydroelectric power jointly. They therefore ask member states to ensure that consumers, particularly households, can join such renewable energy communities without being subject to unjustified conditions or procedures.

"We want Europe to have a legal framework that will stand the test of time and promote renewable energy development to facilitate the energy transition, and that is why I think we should be more ambitious," said Spanish S&D member José Blanco López, who is responsible for steering the plans through Parliament.

Overall, different groups welcomed the European Parliament's targets for Europe.

S&D vice-president for sustainability, Belgian MEP Kathleen Van Brempt said, "Energy efficiency can save us a lot of money in imports, will contribute to fight climate change, and it will also be beneficial for families and households. In any policy decision, we must look at how it affects those who are most vulnerable in our society. Well, this directive does. We

have introduced energy poverty provisions in order to oblige member states to prioritise measures for low-income and energy-poor households who are the most likely to find themselves living in badly insulated houses, and therefore need to spend more in heating, cooling and electricity”.

In reaction to the results of the vote, Wendel Trio, Director of Climate Action Network Europe, said: “By calling for more ambitious renewable energy and energy efficiency targets, MEPs reaffirmed their commitment to the promises of the Paris Agreement. The results of today’s votes will send a strong signal on the need to scale up clean energy to EU governments. The economic case of ever cheaper green energy should prompt the EU to move even faster and adopt a 45% renewable energy target.”

“While calling for higher ambition, the Industry Committee also strengthened the annual energy savings obligation. However, it failed to uphold national binding targets for renewable energy, which would help ensure that the overall EU renewable energy target is met. This needs to be corrected when the European Parliament’s plenary votes on its position early next year,” Trio said.

EU governments are expected to agree on their position on the Renewable Energy Directive on 18 December. Their position on the Energy Efficiency Directive was adopted in June. The geothermal sector, which provides solutions for energy efficient renewable heating and cooling or power, warmly welcomed these targets allowing for a robust internal market and draw the EU nearer to the objective of becoming leader on geothermal energy. “The level of ambition shown by the Parliament on renewables and efficiency is good, but it is only a minimum threshold to stay consistent with the Paris Agreement,” EGEC Secretary General Philippe Dumas said, adding that the targets also provide investors with a better long-term perspective, needed to plan significant investments by reinforcing the Commission proposal on support schemes. Such measures are essential to maintain the dynamism of European renewable energy industries, including geothermal. “For Europe to be a true climate and energy leader, the decarbonisation of the heating and cooling sector must be undertaken and this report provides sound basis for this,” Dumas added.

However, he argued that the ITRE committee “did not manage to act on the issue of fossil fuel subsidies awarded to fossil appliances in the name of efficiency. It must be pointed out that a new fossil boiler locks dependency to gas, oil or coal for decades. Renewables for heating and cooling are the solution. We hope to see the Council takes this responsibility.” Meanwhile, the associations representing the renewable heating & cooling industries, AEBIOM, EGEC and Solar Heat Europe, also welcomed the adoption of a new, key measure to promote further deployment of RES-H&C up to 2030, in the report on the revision of the

Renewable Energy Directive, voted by the ITRE Committee.

“While greatly appreciative of the ambition of MEP Blanco Lopez’s report in the level of yearly increase of RES-H&C, the industries regret that such ambition is not matched with binding obligations on Member States,” the associations said.

“Today’s vote ,November 28, is a step in the right direction. These measures are highly welcomed, and show the European Parliament’s commitment to reaching its long-term climate and energy objectives. Decarbonising EU’s heating sector is a major challenge for Member States, as well as an opportunity for generating local jobs, fostering growth, establishing energy independence and creating healthier environments. The European Commission and the Member States in the Council must now join the Parliament in its commitment to tackle Europe’s climate and energy challenge,” they said.

Source: energia.gr