



Committee of the Regions

The EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives

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CoR welcomes EC Energy Roadmap 2050 but warns priorities must be rebalanced

The Committee of the Regions has broadly welcomed the European Commission's Energy Roadmap 2050 announced today but has warned that more will need to be done to help local and regional authorities to play their part in reducing energy consumption and switching to more sustainable energy sources. After a long and lively debate, the Committee also rejected separate proposals for setting Europe-wide targets for the renovation of public buildings, arguing that such a sensitive issue should be left to each Member State to decide for itself.

The EU has set itself the ambitious target of 'decarbonising' its economy by 2050, but the Commission warns that Europe will fall well short of this goal if further action is not taken. The roadmap suggests a number of scenarios, each implying major changes that will have to happen for 'decarbonisation' to become a reality, including a larger role for electricity, greater decentralisation of energy networks, increased energy savings, a sharp rise in the use of renewables, and significant roles for carbon capture and storage and nuclear energy.

Jean-Louis Joseph (FR/PES), mayor of La Bastidonne, whose [opinion on energy efficiency](#) was adopted yesterday in the CoR plenary, welcomed the Commission's reassertion that 'the first tool of the EU energy strategy is and should remain energy efficiency' and that 'the role of local organisations and cities will be much greater in the energy systems of the future', but highlighted the widening gulf between this statement and the reality on the ground.

"The European Commission's own impact assessment shows that we are still far from reaching the 20% objective on energy efficiency set for 2020, in no small part because EU decision makers have failed to listen to repeated calls for more support in this area. In my 2009 opinion on the [second strategic energy review and energy performance of buildings](#), I criticised the imbalance in investments between proven energy efficiency measures and untested technologies such as CCS, and it is disappointing to see that the Commission still believes that both should be granted equal importance. I am glad, however, that the CoR adopted a call to make the 20% energy efficiency target binding in our vote yesterday."

"We could move so much more rapidly towards the energy efficiency target if the right incentives and targets are put into place now. That is why I supported the Commission's proposals that the public sector – including local and regional authorities - should be required to renovate 3% of its buildings annually and purchase high-energy-performance products, services and buildings, and I regret that this was ultimately rejected by the Committee in plenary. "

The setting of a 3% pan-European target was narrowly rejected by the CoR plenary on Tuesday on the grounds that it could unnecessarily cripple the finances of many local and regional authorities, and that the proposals potentially breached the principle of subsidiarity which states that decisions should be taken at the most appropriate level of government.

But Joseph said that encouraging public authorities to take action through the setting of targets could also have extremely beneficial effects. "Buildings currently consume about 40% of all primary energy, and recent studies suggest that wide scale renovation of the EU building stock between now and 2050 can deliver more than 1 million direct, new, local jobs and can provide a significant return on investment. This is a true win-win scenario."

Commenting on the Energy Roadmap, **Michel Lebrun** (BE/EPP), member of the parliament of the French-speaking community, CoR rapporteur on a number of energy-related dossiers in 2011, including the [resource-efficiency flagship initiative](#) and [energy infrastructure priorities](#), added "the Commission is right to underline the importance of increasingly accommodating locally produced renewables into the grid; the grid needs to become much smarter to deal with variable generation from many distributed sources.

"That is why it is so important that we are prepared to put our money where our mouth is: there needs to be a commitment from all EU stakeholders to set aside funds from the next Multiannual Financial Framework to invest in partnership with industry and Member States to develop new energy technologies on a large scale. This is not an easy message to pass on in times of financial austerity – governments are reluctant to invest now for long-term gain – but if we are not sufficiently brave we run the risk of undermining all our efforts until now and falling far short of our goals for 2020."

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The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives. The mission of its 344 members from all 27 EU Member States is to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are obliged to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the EU Court of Justice if its rights are infringed or it believes that an EU law violates the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.

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