

APREN welcomes launch of "environmental simplex"

The diploma meets the European Commission's indications, simplifying the permitting of renewable projects and helping to accelerate the energy transition.

The promise of a one-stop shop is still unfulfilled.

APREN – The Portuguese Renewable Energy Association welcomes the measures introduced by the government to simplify the permitting of renewable projects. The measures are part of the "Environment + Simple" package, presented on December 7 by the Minister of Environment and Climate Action, Duarte Cordeiro, and the Prime Minister, António Costa.

The "Environment + Simple" package, in the words of the Prime Minister, aims to accelerate the energy transition, intensify the decarbonisation of the economy, accelerate the circular economy and *debureaucratize* the day-to-day relationship of public administration with citizens, covering various sectors of activity.

"The launch of this package is an essential step in speeding up the installation of more renewable power, in order to reduce Europe's energy dependency and the impact of climate change, the effects of which are already being felt. Permitting remains one of the main obstacles, due to the associated bureaucracy, the lack of human resources in the entities involved, and the digitization of processes and procedures. It is fundamental to overcome the difficulties and continue to foster private investment and regulatory stability in the sector," said Pedro Amaral Jorge, President of the Board of APREN.

This package of measures follows the recommendations of the European Commission. Last May, the entity chaired by Ursula von der Leyen, had already launched the REPowerEU, a set of measures to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, making renewables essential to drastically reduce Europe's energy dependence.

Last November, EU energy ministers agreed specifically on accelerating permitting, drawing up a regulation that will introduce urgent measures such as: establishment of maximum time limits for the granting of permits for the installation of solar energy equipment; modernisation of existing renewable electricity generation plants (re-equipment) and the deployment of heat pumps; and the categorisation of renewable projects as in the best public interest.

The package now announced by the Portuguese government aims at the following:

- Elimination of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for replacement of equipment in existing renewable facilities, with or without change of installed capacity, provided that certain requirements are met;
- Elimination of the mandatory AIA for solar power plant projects, when the area occupied by solar panels and inverters is ≤100ha (case 3)
- Elimination of case-by-case analysis for the production of electricity from solar sources when:
 - The installed area is less than 15 hectares;
 - Is not be located less than 2 kilometers away from other photovoltaic plants with more than 1 MW, and when, as a whole, does not result in an area of occupation of more than 15 hectares;
 - The connection to the sectioning station of the RESP (Electric Reserve of Public Service) is made by voltage line less than or equal to 60 kV and with a maximum extension of 10 kilometers;

- Elimination of case-by-case analysis for the production of electricity by wind source when one tower is concerned, provided that at a distance greater than 2 kilometers from another tower;
- Elimination of AIA for hydrogen production from renewable sources and water electrolysis;
- Extension of the deadline from 10 to 15 working days, for the issuing of opinions by the administrative entities;
- General deadline for increased EIA, but its counting becomes more transparent for all, without suspensions;
- A 45-working day (instead of 30) for the permit for the use of water resources has been resumed;
- The promise of creating a broad and ambitious solution to bring administrative entities together in a single decision-meeting for the entire Public Administration and including all phases of the procedure (not one phase only), rather than a mandatory procedural conference only for the environment area;

APREN reiterates the need to strengthen the teams of public entities responsible for the permitting process, to digitize in an integrated way all processes and procedures, and the creation of a one-stop shop, a measure that the Association has been advocating for several years now.

Lisbon, December 14, 2022.

For more information, please refer to:

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About APREN:

The [Portuguese Renewable Energy Association \(APREN\)](#) is a non-profit association founded in October 1988. Its mission is to coordinate and represent the common interests of its members, promoting renewables energies in the electricity field. APREN works closely with the government and other official entities, both on a national and international levels. It participates actively in the definition of energy and environmental policies, valuing natural resources for electricity production, namely hydric, wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, biogas, and urban solid waste.