

AT A GLANCE: BREXIT TALKS GO TO STAGE II – INTEREL ATTENDS CLIMATE SUMMIT IN PARIS – EU GOVERNMENTS GO FOR 27% RENEWABLES TARGET

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BREXIT

European Council approves move to Stage II of Brexit talks



On December 15, the EU27 leaders approved the move to the second phase of Brexit talks related to transition and the framework for the future relationship, but warned that “negotiations in the second phase

can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken during the first phase are respected in full and translated faithfully into legal terms as quickly as possible”.

On a potential transition period, national leaders agreed “to negotiate a transition period covering the whole of the EU acquis, while the United Kingdom, as a third country, will no longer participate in or nominate or elect members of the EU institutions, nor participate in the decision-making of the Union bodies, offices and agencies”. This transition period must however be in the interests of the Union and the European Council called upon the Commission to put forward appropriate recommendations to this effect, and on the Council to adopt additional negotiating directives on transitional arrangements in January 2018. As for the future relationship, the national leaders noted that the UK has signalled its intention to leave both the single market and customs union and explained that it will “calibrate its approach as regards trade and economic cooperation in the light of this position so as to ensure a balance of rights and obligations, preserve a level playing field, avoid upsetting existing relations with other third countries, and to respect all other principles set out in its guidelines of 29 April 2017, in particular the need to preserve the integrity and proper functioning of the Single Market.”

Finally, the conclusions call on the UK “to provide further clarity on its position on the framework for the future relationship”. This latter point was a recurrent theme from the Heads of State or Government throughout the European Summit with the Maltese PM, Joseph Muscat noting that “the first real big step is for the UK to say very clearly what it wants in clear terms” and this was a sentiment reiterated by the Dutch PM, Mark Rutte and Donald Tusk, who noted that it is “to get more clarity on their vision”.

Source: Dods

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ENERGY & CLIMATE

Interrel attends Climate Summit in Paris

This month Interrel attended the “One Planet Summit” in Paris, organized by French PM Macron. Please find below the main takeaways of relevance from the summit:



1. Many EU Member States were represented at highest political level but only a few committed to bold long-term objectives. Next year provides opportunities to overcome these shortfalls: additional Member States can join the alliances, publish their own long-term decarbonisation plans and enhance domestic coal phase-outs. EU countries have the opportunity to join the variety of initiatives as one way to show how to scale up action at home.
2. The summit succeeded in laying the foundations for a broad ‘community of practice’ in support of implementing climate action across the spectrum of actors – governments, banks, investors and cities. It established a forum for sharing best practices and taking concrete steps on the clean economy transition. Many announcements also raise the bar for the quality of climate action initiatives and can help build political will to enhance national pledges prior to 2020.
3. The initiatives launched show that EU’s decision makers risk falling behind on green finance. Ways to catch-up in 2018 are by preparing a strong response to the recommendations of the High-Level Group on Sustainable Finance and by stopping funds flowing to use of fossil fuels through policies or the upcoming EU budget.
4. The Summit concluded that decarbonisation of all modes of transport by 2050, in line with the well below 2 Degree Target set by the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change is possible but will require action now to enable a comprehensive transformation of this key sector in the decades to come.
5. Transport, energy efficiency in buildings and shifting out of fossil energy were seen as the most important low carbon core impact areas with a greater need for finance.
6. Announcements by countries on electric mobility were not quantified but there was a clear message of carbon neutrality and the transition from coal to renewable energy especially from the multilateral development banks like the World Bank, European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The World Bank moving away from upstream oil & gas lending by 2019 was seen as a major breakthrough in divestment from fossil energy.
7. Financing the transition emerged as a key political priority for governments, public and private institutions alike but a Just Transition was seen as key e.g. ensuring that there are new jobs created and equity in job creation, training and skills development especially within the move from high carbon jobs to low carbon jobs.
8. Urban centres/Cities are seen as where the most effort is needed.

Source: [Interrel](#)

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RENEWABLES

EU governments settle for 27% renewables target



The EU Energy ministers **agreed** this month that the EU should derive at least 27% of its energy from sustainable sources by 2030, as they adopted their position on a proposal to reform the Renewable Energy Directive.

With the union on track to meet a 20% renewable energy target by the end of the current decade, the Council is in effect calling for less than half the increase in the decade to 2030 than demanded by the European Parliament's industry and energy committee, which recently called for a 35% renewables share.

Environmental groups were dismayed that EU governments stuck with the target agreed by heads of state more than a year before the 2015 Paris Agreement. Only Portugal and Denmark called to move beyond 27%, despite the European Commission having acknowledged recently that the cost of meeting a 30% target would not be much different.

The positions of the Council and Parliament also differ considerably in terms of what is understood by 'renewable' energy in the context of the directive, with potentially far-reaching consequences for the EU's future energy mix.

The European Parliament is expected to vote on and possibly amend the industry committee's position on renewable energy reforms in January, paving the way for trilogue talks with government delegates in the EU Council as the EU's two legislative bodies seek to come to a compromise legislative text.

Source: Ends Europe

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ELECTRICITY MARKET DESIGN

Curbs on coal subsidies weakened



At the European energy ministers meeting, the European Commission's proposal to curb subsidies for carbon intensive power generation was weakened.

A **deal** reached earlier this month between energy ministers on the **Electricity Market Regulation** has

given member states leeway to subsidise coal-fired power plants, despite strong opposition by countries including France, Netherlands, Sweden and Luxembourg.

The Council agreed that coal-fired power plants that emit over 550 grams of CO₂ per kilowatt hour of electricity generated can remain switched on and eligible to supply the grid until 2035. This is a decade later than had been proposed by the Commission.

Estonia, which holds the rotating Presidency of the European Union until 1 January 2018, proposed major revisions to the Commission's text on the 550g threshold. Poland, which is the most coal-intensive EU member state, was also one of main drivers of the move to water down the proposals.

The Council position on prolonging subsidies for coal was criticised by the EU's climate commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete, but will go forward to trilogue meetings with the Commission and Parliament which are not expected to happen until spring 2018.

Negotiations in the Parliament's industry and energy committee are only expected to be wrapped up on 21 February, before a likely vote in plenary in March.

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ELECTRIFICATION OF TRANSPORT

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The Social-Democrat group in the Parliament's Environment Committee group will obtain rapporteurship on the CO2 regulation which was proposed by the European Commission early November.

The Social-Democrats in the European Parliament are strong supporters of a faster uptake of electric vehicles in Europe, and have expressed their disappointment with

the low ambition for electric vehicles incentives in the European Commission's proposal.

Source: [Interel](#)

Buildings to integrate charging stations for EVs



This month the European Parliament, European Commission and Member States held final talks on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. Main points of discussion dealt with electro-mobility, with a minimum EU requirement for buildings with more

than ten parking spaces to install at least one recharging point, and ducting infrastructure for at least one in every five parking space.

Although he hailed the EPBD deal as "a step in the right direction" and a boost for local jobs, Miguel Arias Cañete, EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, appeared slightly disappointed about the electro-mobility aspects, and said: "I would have preferred to see a more ambitious commitment to e-vehicles charging points for non-residential buildings," the Commissioner said, adding: "This would have been more consistent with our commitments under the Paris Agreement and the European clean mobility strategy."

Source: [Interel](#)

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for content, please contact the EPPI (eppi@ieee.org).