

Committing to sustainable electricity grids in Europe

Title

One way to tackle the threat of climate change is to change how we source our energy. We are all increasingly dependent on electricity to power our computers and dishwashers and the thought of the masses of energy needed to power entire industries is mind boggling. **One way to improve how we source our electricity is to move to renewable energy.** To do this on a broader European scale expansion of the electricity grid is required, in the form of new energy production installations and thousands of kilometres of new power lines. If these projects are only planned well, Europe can make these changes at the necessary scale without harming the environment and wildlife where the new facilities are built.

The Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) works to do just that. RGI is a partnership that brings together green NGOs, including BirdLife Europe, and grid operators, to promote the expansion of renewable energy generation and the modernisation of transmission capacity in Europe. **At a conference on Wednesday 5 December in Brussels, RGI launched its European Grid Report in support of the previously released European Grid Declaration.** The declaration, signed last year by a coalition of Europe's largest environmental NGOs and grid operators, supports grid expansion to integrate renewables, while ensuring that development is fully in line with the EU biodiversity commitments and legislation. The **new report** publishes over 80 practical experiences by different RGI members across Europe that could be models of good practices for responsible grid operators. The organisations attending the event also signed the second part of the **European Grid Declaration on Transparency and Public participation**, stating the willingness of RGI members to better inform and involve concerned stakeholders and the broader public about grid extension plans and projects.

The **report** and the **extended European Grid Declaration** were presented to European Commissioners Günther H. Oettinger (Energy) and Janez Potočnik (Environment), who welcomed the initiative. Ariel Brunner, Head of Policy at BirdLife Europe stated "If the European Union wants to develop a coherent and sustainable renewable energy policy, it has to upgrade its renewable electricity grids to meet the ever increasing need for power, while safeguarding biodiversity, birds and their habitats." If a sustainable energy system is to be successfully developed and implemented in the EU investing only in renewable is not sufficient; decision makers will have to take into account all related issues, which includes our environment. For more information, please contact **Elodie Cantaloube**, Media and Communication Assistant at BirdLife Europe
