

Title Innovation and expansion of European power grids to unlock full potential of renewables can and must be done while respecting biodiversity and ecosystems On 10 November 2011, a conference organised in the European Parliament celebrated the signature of the [?European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe?](#), by Europe?s largest grid operators and environmental civil society organisations. **The unlocking of Europe?s full potential for renewable energy via the modernisation and expansion of its power grids should go hand-in-hand with nature conservation efforts, said the signatories.** In October, the European Commission put forward a draft law making it easier to build and finance crossborder power lines, which are essential to making Europe?s energy system greener. The coalition of grid operators and civil society organisations supports Europe?s ambition to boost renewable electricity and cut carbon emissions. The joint declaration was handed to European Commissioner for Energy Günther H. Oettinger and aims at supporting grid expansion to integrate renewables and at raising public awareness of this necessary commitment, while ensuring that development is fully in line with the EU biodiversity commitments and legislation. **Renewables-Grid-Initiative Executive Director Antonella Battaglini:** "*This declaration shows that Europe's energy and environmental commitments don't need to be in conflict - we can build grids fast for renewables and also protect nature. We need new alliances across society to acknowledge the challenges and to find acceptable solutions. We invite the Commission to use this declaration as a first building block for European guidelines on grid expansion and nature protection.*" **Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy, BirdLife Europe:** *?Europe has to upgrade its electricity grids to accommodate the big surge in renewable energy needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but this can, and must, happen in a way that safeguards birds, biodiversity and our most precious nature sites.?* The joint declaration is also a pledge for the grid signatory operators and organisations to lay the ground for cooperation on specific pilot projects to develop best practices and to improve the implementation of grid development in line with nature conservation objectives. Grid operators commit to helping meet Europe?s objectives to protect nature, for example by ensuring that risks to birds from power lines are minimised. At the same time, the NGOs commit to supporting crucial grid development for the integration of renewables from larger centralised and smaller localised generation sources. **Notes** [1]The signatories The signing NGOs are BirdLife Europe, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Friends of the Earth Europe, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Germanwatch, Global Nature Fund, Greenpeace Europe, Natuur en Milieu, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), WWF. The grid operators are Elia (Belgium), National Grid (UK), REE (Spain), RTE (France), Statnett (Norway), Swissgrid (Switzerland), TenneT (Netherlands), Terna (Italy), 50Hertz (Germany). For more information, please visit <http://www.renewables-grid.eu>