

Updated environmental impact assessment rules should not hamper low-carbon investment

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New proposals to streamline the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive must strike the right balance between environmental protection and ensuring that investment in low-carbon energy projects can still take place, EURELECTRIC said today, as the European Parliament's Environment Committee votes on the proposals by the European Commission.

'The European electricity industry is already facing a difficult investment climate. The proposed rules, while continuing to ensure a high degree of environmental protection, should not make investing in Europe's low-carbon energy future even more difficult. The revised Directive should support, not hamper the transition to a low-carbon economy,' said EURELECTRIC Secretary General Hans ten Berge.

The power sector has repeatedly voiced its concern about the poor investment climate it is facing in Europe. In a EURELECTRIC **report** published last year, energy leaders said the unprecedented investment volumes deemed necessary - € 1 trillion by 2020 - would not occur, mainly due to volatile national and European regulation that is creating uncertainty among potential investors.

The proposal to revise EIA rules is a good example of such regulatory uncertainty that could act as a significant barrier to low-carbon investment. Despite the Commission's stated intention to streamline the procedure, EURELECTRIC is concerned that the substantial modifications proposed would, in fact, make assessing the environmental impact of energy projects more complicated and costly - without necessarily improving environmental outcomes.

The proposal would add new requirements that exceed what can be realistically assessed by project developers, such as impacts of projects on biodiversity or climate change. In addition, the screening process - which determines whether a project requires an EIA in the first place - risks becoming as comprehensive as the EIA itself. This could ultimately lead to the bizarre situation in which project developers are required to produce an analysis that is as comprehensive as an EIA, to demonstrate that an EIA is unnecessary.

Similarly, modifications proposed for the scoping step, which specifies which EIA information should be provided, seem to require developers to include information on an unrealistic range of alternatives to the proposed projects. EURELECTRIC believes that scoping should be limited to reasonable project-specific alternatives.

EURELECTRIC's full views on the proposal are available [here](#).

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