



**POLITICAL
INTELLIGENCE**

Guide to France's new law to accelerate renewable energy projects

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Introduction

President Emmanuel Macron has pledged to boost France's renewable energy production as part of his government's multibillion euro "France 2030" investment plan, including a significant increase in onshore wind and solar power generation by the end of the decade. France's reliance on nuclear power has meant it has lagged behind other EU countries in developing greener energy sources, with renewables catering for about one fifth of energy consumption. The government aims to double that by 2030, a move that has become increasingly critical since the invasion of Ukraine triggered an energy crisis in Europe. To support that ambition, the Minister for Energy Transition introduced a bill in September 2022 designed to speed up the rollout of renewable energy projects in France by streamlining the administrative processes and expanding access to suitable sites. After intense debate, the Renewable Energy Acceleration Bill (Projet de loi relative à l'accélération de la production d'énergies renouvelables) was passed by the country's lawmakers in February 2023 and promulgated on 10 March.

This Dods Political Intelligence report, based on bespoke client research produced by our French monitoring team, provides an overview of the new legislation and a range of political and stakeholder reactions to it including links to original sources.

Overview

In February 2022, in a [speech](#) on French energy policy, President Emmanuel Macron set out several big renewable energy targets, including a tenfold increase in solar power, 50 offshore wind farms and the doubling of production of onshore wind turbines by 2050. While France is Europe's second largest producer of hydropower, renewable waste, and biofuels, it was the only EU country that failed to meet a 2020 target to get 23 percent of its energy from renewable sources. The government wants to increase the proportion of the country's gross final energy consumption that comes from renewable sources to 40 percent by 2030 from 19.3 percent in 2021.

However, at a visit to the country's first commercial-scale offshore wind farm in September, Macron acknowledged that renewable projects take "too much time in France" and pledged to cut red tape to speed up the process. On average, including planning processes and construction, it takes about five years to build a solar farm in France, seven years for an onshore wind farm, and even longer for an offshore wind farm. The [Saint-Nazaire offshore wind farm](#) that Macron visited, which is owned by Eolien Maritime France (EMF), a consortium of EDF Renouvelables, Enbridge and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, took 10 years to become fully operational. To help speed up delivery of such projects, Energy Minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher introduced the Renewable Energy Acceleration [Bill](#) on 26 September to "promote the deployment of renewable energies while guaranteeing the protection of biodiversity, minimizing soil artificialization, and improving local acceptability". After multiple revisions and an accelerated procedure, the bill was [adopted](#) by the National Assembly on 31 January and then the Senate on 7 February. Following two parliamentary appeals, the Constitutional Council [censured](#) part of the law, before a final text was promulgated on 10 March.

The [new law](#) is part of a broader energy plan which aims to support the fight against climate change and reduce France's dependence on imported energy, which accounts for about two thirds of the country's consumption. That plan includes a [Citizen consultation](#) on the energy mix

which closed in December 2022, a [draft law to facilitate the deployment of nuclear energy](#) which is being discussed in parliament, a five-year Energy Act scheduled for July 2023, and a Multiannual Energy Programme planned for July 2024.

The Renewable Energy Acceleration Act focuses on four key areas: speeding up local planning procedures, cutting red tape, making more land available for solar and wind power generation, and improved distribution of the benefits of renewable energy. Several related decrees are expected in the coming months.

1 - Accelerating local planning procedures

The law introduces a five-year territorial planning system for renewable energy projects. After public consultation, each commune will have to identify “acceleration zones” where renewable energy projects could be developed quickly in their area. A map detailing those zones will be prepared and sent to a regional energy committee. Once the regional objectives have been reached, the municipalities will be able to delimit “exclusion zones”.

A specific planning mechanism will be developed for offshore wind. A public consultation will follow in 2024 to define a map of “priority areas”. These zones will be targeted beyond territorial waters (more than 22 kilometres from the coast) and outside national parks with a maritime section.

The law will also give rise to a new Renewable Energy and Biodiversity Observatory.

2 - Cutting red tape

The new legislation aims to simplify the environmental requirements for renewable energy projects, such as satisfying the presumption that they serve an overriding public interest (RIIPM). The law also facilitates procedures for planning renewable energy and decarbonisation projects and includes measures to reduce the risk of legal challenges to “save time and make projects more secure”. A national mediator for renewable energy will also be created, and officials in charge of renewable energy project will also be appointed in each local area.

3 – Making more land available for solar and wind power

To encourage more renewable energy projects, the new law facilitates the installation of solar panels on “land that is already developed or does not present a major environmental challenge”. That includes land bordering roads, motorways, rail tracks, waterways, coastal wasteland and existing outdoor car parks of over 1,500 m². In terms of property, at least half the roof area of new or significantly renovated non-residential buildings must be covered by solar panels by 2027, up from a minimum of 30 percent coverage in 2023. This requirement will be extended to existing non-residential buildings from 2028. In addition, private low-cost housing organisations will have to carry out a feasibility study for adding solar panels to their properties. The new law also regulates and promotes agrivoltaics—where land is used both for solar power generation and agriculture. Ground-mounted solar power installations will be prohibited on arable land, and solar panels will be prohibited in forested areas if they require the felling of trees.

Before new onshore wind turbines are installed, operating permits will have to consider new factors, including so-called “visual saturation effects” in the landscape. This section also includes

measures relating to methanisation, hydroelectricity and geothermal energy. Large public companies and companies with more than 250 employees will have to implement plans to develop their land by February 2025 to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure.

4 - Improved distribution of the benefits of renewable energy

The new law creates a mechanism to redistribute the value generated by renewable energy projects. Winners of renewable energy tenders will have to participate in the financing of "green" projects for the municipalities involved or for the French Biodiversity Office. Local authorities and their inhabitants will also be able to take part in renewable energy production projects.

Stakeholder reactions

The following section provides commentary on the legislation from across the political spectrum, unions, and other stakeholders, translated into English but including links to original sources:

[Elisabeth BORNE](#), Prime Minister: *"I salute the transparent work on this text which is necessary for our energy sovereignty and the climate. Building a Green Nation, the first major nation to move away from fossil fuels, is our goal with Agnès Pannier-Runacher."*

[Agnès PANNIER-RUNACHER](#), Minister for Energy Transition: *"It is a text that allows the time taken to examine projects, particularly marine wind farms, to be halved and which makes them more secure in the face of appeals. It is a text that prioritises the use of land that has already been artificially developed to install solar panels. This will make it possible to gain seven years on the trajectory that we have to maintain by 2050, according to the RTE scenario. This is a text that puts elected representatives and their territories back at the centre of the game."*

[Vincent BRU](#), Democrat MP for the Pyrénées Atlantiques: *"By reducing the time it takes to appraise projects, by mobilising land that has already been developed, and by putting our elected representatives back at the heart of the decision-making process, we are investing in our future. An important law to make our transition a success."*

The [Libertés, Indépendants, Outre-mer et Territoires group](#) at the National Assembly: *"Accelerating renewable energy projects is a necessity to put an end to fossil fuels. But in order to accelerate, we must also know how to slow down, especially where acceptability is lacking. This is the case for wind power and ultra-saturated landscapes. Our group voted for the Renewable Energy Law."*

[Jules NYSSSEN](#), President of the Syndicat des Energies Renouvelables (SER): *"This is the first time that renewable energies have had a dedicated text. It is a symbol, and we hope that this important political step marks the beginning of a new era for renewable energies in our country. SER calls on the government to give clear instructions and means of action to the services that examine the dossiers to enable them to support this desire to accelerate on the ground. Finally, the SER now calls on the government to rapidly engage in an in-depth and civic debate on our energy objectives for 2030, which will be reflected in the energy and climate programming law expected in the autumn."*

The [ENGIE Group](#): *"The implementation of the law will now be key to accelerate the effective deployment of renewable energies in the territories and in the country's energy mix. The development of renewable energies is a major lever to meet the challenges of security of supply and control of energy costs posed by the energy crisis. Therefore, in the coming months, ENGIE will be attentive to the development of onshore wind power, large-scale solar projects and the massive deployment of biogas, which are fundamental for the stability of our energy system."*

[Gaz Réseau Distribution France](#) (GRDF): *"New funding mechanisms will promote Circular Economy projects by creating a direct link between green gas producers and local consumers."*

[Sophie PRIMAS](#), LR senator: *"I largely share the objective of accelerating renewable energy, but I regret the government's method: to do this properly, it would obviously have been necessary to legislate on the five-year law, and thus give a clear strategic direction. More anticipation and stability are expected by the economic actors, in a context of serious energy crisis."*

The [Foundation for Research on Public Administration and Policies](#) (iFRAP): *"The renewable energy law has a big role to play in correcting the strategic mistakes of the past. In an emergency, it is inevitable to pursue the development of renewable energies, even if they are costly and entirely dependent on supplies from foreign companies, and to tolerate the constraints associated with their implementation. However, beware of over-ambitious targets. In the absence of data on consumer needs and production costs, the facilitation law is not in a position to focus its actions on the most desirable technologies in terms of needs, production costs or industrial and export prospects."*

The [Confédération Française de l'Encadrement dans le secteur des Energies](#) (CFE Energies): *"The CFE Energies regrets that this law amounts to a collection of measures without any real strategic vision for the country, its industry and its employees. For the moment, the development of renewable energies is based on a model that pushes for the maximisation of margins and a low-cost strategy favouring imports, without any social or environmental clause. The CFE Energies also regrets that the bill avoids the impact of the development of renewable energies on the economy of the electricity system. Parliament cannot ignore these economic and regulatory issues."*

The [Ecologist group](#) in the National Assembly: *"The group has chosen to abstain on the occasion of the last reading of the Renewable Energy bill in the Assembly. After the Joint Committee, the text has gained neither strength nor ambition. It does not contribute to catching up with our country, which is last in the European class."*

[Maxime LAISNEY](#), La France Insoumise (LFI) deputy for Seine-et-Marne: *"This law is only an alibi to move towards a return to nuclear power. We will defend a 100% renewable energy mix in the next energy act. Consequently, we are voting against this Bill."*

[Julie LAERNOES](#), NUPES Member of Parliament for Loire-Atlantique: *"Why is no new renewable energy target set when the nuclear target is redefined? We do not support the government's energy trajectory, which is based solely on the electrification of uses and a revival of nuclear power."*

[Nicolas NACE](#), Energy Transition Campaigner for Greenpeace France: *"This text is cruelly lacking in ambition, at a time when the energy crisis is showing us the absolute need to massively develop renewable energies. The government will bear a great responsibility for the delay of France on its*

objectives, but also more concretely on the consequences of the large-scale energy crisis that we are going through and that will have repercussions on our emissions and the bills of our citizens. Anti-wind ideology has influenced this law too much. Instead of guaranteeing safeguards for the involvement of local residents and respect for biodiversity, the anti-wind lobby and the alliance between the government and right-wing parliamentarians have succeeded in scuttling the energy transition."

The [World Wide Fund for Nature](#) (WWF): *" WWF welcomes the creation of a territorial planning mechanism that was absent from the initial bill. To give a real boost, WWF calls on mayors to mobilise without delay, in good consultation with the State services and citizens, to make this territorial planning a driving force for acceleration. WWF also calls on the French State to assume its responsibilities by increasing the deconcentrated means to deploy territorial planning and accelerate the examination of files throughout France."*

[Michel GIORIA](#), general delegate of the France Énergie Éolienne association: *"This is a real change in method. The mayors will be in a situation of co-piloting with the State, which gives them a real responsibility. It is also the first time that certain subjects have been put forward: planning, redistribution of the fruits of the transition, etc. Local elected representatives have not only a new role but also a co-responsibility in the definition of 'acceleration zones'. On the other hand, the debates in the Assembly have shown on the right and the extreme right a form of denial of the facts and a real distancing from the climate issue, under the guise of defending nuclear power. As for the left, the parties will have to manage and work out their contradictions, between renewables, biodiversity and planning."*

[Intercommunalités de France](#): *"The bill does not sufficiently take into account the structuring role of the intercommunality in terms of ecological planning, urbanism and regional development. The elected representatives solemnly call on the government to reconsider the role that intermunicipalities should have in the choice of green energy acceleration zones".*

[Marc FESNEAU](#), Minister of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty (MASA): *"Final adoption of the Renewable Energy Law with the vote of the Senate: a dual objective of accelerating renewable energy projects and preserving our food sovereignty. The controlled development of agrivoltaics will be one of the levers to translate this ambition."*

The [Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles](#) (FNSEA): *"This is a balanced and satisfactory text, which recognises the essential role of the agricultural world in the energy transition while ensuring a fair balance between this issue and food sovereignty."*

[Jeunes Agriculteurs](#) (JA): *"Jeunes Agriculteurs is pleased that the mixed joint committee has reached a conclusion. Nevertheless, we warn of new loopholes that could be used to develop projects that consume land. We call on all our partners and our network to be present during the consultations to identify the areas for implementation in the framework documents of the Chambers of Agriculture. The fight for agricultural land will continue on the ground!"*

The [Ligue de Protection des Oiseaux](#) (LPO): *"The LPO is delighted with the progress made...However, the LPO is totally unfavourable to Article 4, and to such a broad and systematic allocation of the RIIPM, which allows for exemptions from the obligations to conserve protected animal and plant species and their habitats. It calls for this mechanism to be reserved for projects that make a significant contribution to the energy transition and to the security of supply of the network."*



The [Canopée Forêts Vivantes Association](#): *"The law on renewable energy has decided: Yes, it is still possible to cut down forests to install panels. Our demands have been partially heard: it is now forbidden to cut down more than 25 hectares."*

[Pierre OUZOULIAS](#), Communist Senator for the Hauts-de-Seine: *"The Renewable Energy Law requires architects of French buildings to take into account the development of renewable energy, thus subordinating the heritage code to the energy code. How will the Architectes des Bâtiments de France proceed? With what competences? This change is regrettable."*

[Julien LACAZE](#), President of Sites & Monuments: *"There is no reason to give Renewable Energies a presumption of "major public interest" (article 4) that puts it above the interest of biodiversity or heritage (a listed monument is listed for reasons of "public interest"). Furthermore, we ask you not to deprive the Architectes des bâtiments de France of their power of negotiation in the implantation of solar panels in heritage zones, a measure already rejected by the Senate. Experience shows that the simple opinions of the ABF are very rarely followed by the petitioners."*

The [Confédération Française de l'Encadrement des Energies](#) (CFE Energies): *"The development of renewable energies desired by the government must lead it to renounce the AReNH as well as the opening of hydraulic concessions to competition. The CFE Energies denounces the greedy behaviour of certain players in this sector. It asks the government to draw the consequences on the functioning of the electricity market in order to abolish the AReNH, a deadly mechanism that has run out of steam, and to finally have the political courage to enter into an arm-wrestling match with the European Commission in order to definitively bury the opening up of the country's hydraulic concessions to competition."*

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