

Biomass drives wedge in EU Parliament over renewables permitting rules



Gonzalez Casares [© European Union 2022 - Source : EP]

[T](#) *Euractiv is part of the Trust Project >>>*

A cross-party agreement over a new EU regulation to boost the deployment of renewable energies falling apart because of disagreements over biomass ahead of a plenary vote scheduled for Wednesday (14 December).

Members of the European Parliament will vote Wednesday on a new law to accelerate the permitting process for new renewable energy power plants.

The proposal was tabled in May this year as part of a package called REPowerEU, aimed at reducing Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels in response to the war in Ukraine.

Before the vote, a cross-party consensus had been reached among the Parliament's main political groups to preserve the compromise amendments adopted last November during a vote in the committee on industry, research and energy.

Among those who backed that compromise were the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), the centrist Renew Europe, the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the Greens.

However, the EPP tabled a last-minute amendment, calling for the inclusion of biomass energy plants in the fast-track permitting process, thus "lowering environmental standards and criteria for these biomass combustion plants," a parliamentary source told EURACTIV.

As a consequence of the broken agreement, the other groups have decided to withdraw their support.

"Unfortunately, the EPP decided to break this compromise late on Tuesday, which provoked an immediate reaction from my group, withdrawing our signature from the compromise amendments," said Spanish MEP Nicolas Gonzalez Casares, who is shadow rapporteur on the REPowerEU proposal for the S&D group.

"That is a compromise, a common agreement, where everybody gives in, there is no room for amendments, and certainly not in this way," he told EURACTIV.

The draft that will be voted in plenary foresees a reduction of the maximum length of the approval process for new installations from twelve to nine months if they are located in renewable "go-to areas".

In the original text proposed by the Commission, biomass combustion plants were excluded from the fast-track permitting scheme.

Contacted by EURACTIV, the EPP refused to comment on the record about their decision to leave the cross-party coalition.

Green MEP Michael Bloss says he doesn't understand why the EPP insists on including biomass in the permitting regulation, saying go-to areas were meant for wind and solar, not biomass. "Go-to areas are not about the biomass plants," Bloss said. "The problem with biomass was never permitting."

On the S&D side, Gonzalez Casares reminded that the compromise deal voted in Parliament committee is the result of give and take on both sides.

“That is why from minute one we have told the EPP that if it withdrew its amendment, we would do the same. There is still time. Otherwise, my group will have to take the decisions it deems appropriate for the plenary vote,” the Spanish MEP said.

[Edited by Frédéric Simon]

Read more with Euractiv

© 1999 - 2024 | Efficacité et Transparence des Acteurs Européens. EURACTIV MEDIA NETWORK BV. | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Cookie Policy](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact us](#)

