European Parliament

EU progress towards Sustainable Development Goal on energy (SDG 7)

SUMMARY

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established in 2015 as a compass for global action under the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There are 17 goals on a variety of topics, with SDG7 dedicated to energy. The annual UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will discuss progress on the goals on 10-19 July 2023, with energy as one of the five goals chosen this year for an in-depth review.

The European Union has taken steps to link the SDGs with its policymaking. The von der Leyen Commission has committed to integrating the SDGs across EU policies, in line with its comprehensive approach. Eurostat has been publishing monitoring reports on SDG progress in the EU since 2017, while reporting on SDGs in EU countries has been part of the European Semester since 2019. This year the European Commission prepared the first-ever EU voluntary review of EU internal and external action towards the SDGs, to be presented at the UN HLPF in July 2023.

The EU focuses its SDG7 action on energy consumption, energy supply and access to affordable energy. Indicators monitoring progress include energy efficiency, the share of renewables in energy consumption, energy import dependency and energy poverty. EU policies and legislation address many of these areas, thus contributing to the achievement of SDG7. These include the Energy Efficiency Directive, Renewable Energy Directive, the REPowerEU plan, measures on energy demand reduction and curbing energy prices. To support SDG7 worldwide, EU external action is conducted under initiatives such as the Global Gateway strategy, Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, and energy partnerships with third countries.

While progress on SDG7 is advancing, meeting the ambitious targets for 2030 will require more effort, especially in terms of efficiency improvements, boosting renewables and ensuring access to clean and affordable energy.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

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Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in September 2015. The goals cover a variety of topics, such as poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, environment and climate, strong institutions, peace and justice. The annual UN SDG report tracks the implementation of the goals at global level, while individual countries regularly prepare their voluntary national reviews. Every year, the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) assesses progress on SDGs, with a selection of goals chosen for an in-depth review. At the HLPF on 10-19 July 2023, SDG7 on energy will be discussed in depth, alongside four other goals (on water, industry, sustainable cities and partnerships). Once every four years, a UN SDG Summit comprehensively reviews progress at Heads of State and Government level. The next summit in planned for 18-19 September 2023.

Energy transition is high on the EU agenda in light of the energy crisis and climate commitments. The European Green Deal and the REPowerEU plan set directions for the transition towards a greener, more secure and more affordable energy system. The EU is also committed to supporting the global green transition by working with its international partners and participating in a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

SDGs in the EU

Sustainable development features among EU objectives outlined in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union. It is also an important political priority of the von der Leyen Commission, reflected in its political guidelines and work programmes. The Commission has adopted a holistic approach to SDGs, described in detail in a 2020 staff working document 'Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – A comprehensive approach'. The Joint Research Centre has prepared a mapping tool that identifies EU policies in support of each SDG. The Commission considers the European Green Deal an integral part of its strategy to implement the SDGs. In 2019, the SDGs were integrated into the European Semester – the EU framework for the coordination and supervision of Member States' economic and social policies – which includes country reports analysing SDG progress.

In May 2023, the European Commission published the first ever EU voluntary review (EUVR) on progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, marking the half-way point between 2015 and 2030. The review outlines the EU's approach to SDGs and key initiatives. It is accompanied by four detailed working documents (SWD), with one of the documents outlining progress on each SDG, both in terms of EU internal and external action. The remaining documents contain a statistical annex, a document on youth engagement and results of a stakeholder consultation on the EUVR.

Moreover, EU countries regularly prepare their own voluntary national reviews, in line with UN guidelines.[1] EU level progress on SDGs is measured through an EU SDG indicator set, aligned with the UN targets but adapted to the EU context. The annual Eurostat SDG monitoring report has been published since 2017, tracking EU progress on each goal and providing background on the related EU policies. Whenever possible, progress towards existing EU targets established in legislation is monitored. The Eurostat report also provides information on the short-term and long-term trends (5 and 15 years), as well as information on global spill-over effects of EU consumption. The indicators in the SDG report measure a 5-year trend (short term) and a 15-year trend (long term) on the basis of the last available year for data, which is currently 2021. Thus, 2006-2021 is covered as the long term and 2016-2021 as the short term. While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are already largely visible for most indicators, recent developments such as the energy price crisis are only partially reflected in the 2023 report. The Eurostat website on SDGs also offers a comprehensive overview of additional information, including visualisations.

SDG7 in the EU – Targets and indicators

SDG7 aims to 'ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all'. Under the EU SDG framework, progress on this goal is monitored in three categories: energy consumption, energy supply and access to affordable energy. Seven specific indicators are used to track progress in these areas (see Figure 1). Only three energy targets are based on EU legislation (two for energy consumption and one for renewables), allowing progress towards the quantitative target to be tracked. Changes in other indicators are measured through advances towards the sustainable development objective in general.

The 2023 Eurostat SDG monitoring report shows that overall the EU made moderate progress on SDG7. As shown in Figure 1, progress has been insufficient in most indicators relating to reducing energy consumption, which is partially related to the historic low in the 2020 pandemic year and the subsequent rebound of energy consumption in 2021. Moderate to significant progress was noted in other areas such as energy productivity, share of renewables in consumption, energy import dependency and energy poverty.

Energy consumption

In the EU, **primary energy consumption** has been on a downward trend since 2006, reaching 1 309.0 Mtoe (million tonnes of oil equivalent) in 2021, which is a 13.4 % reduction over the past 15 years. In comparison, **final energy consumption** has fallen to 967.9 Mtoe or 7.5 % over the same time.[2] Long-term progress can be attributed to a structural transition towards less energy-intensive industries, improvements in efficiency in the residential sector, and substitution of fossil fuels with renewables. The overall short-term trend shows that EU primary energy consumption fell by 4.0 % between 2016 and 2021, while final consumption decreased by only 0.9 % over the same period.

Progress on both indicators is measured in relation to EU targets set out in the revised Energy Efficiency Directive.[3] This translates to a target of 993 Mtoe of primary energy and 763 Mtoe of final energy by 2030 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 – Indicators measuring progress towards SDG7 in the EU (short and long term)

Indicator		Period	Trend
Energy consumption			
Energy consumption	Primary energy consumption	2006–2021	↘
		2016–2021	↘
	Final energy consumption	2006–2021	↘
		2016–2021	↘
Final energy consumption in households per capita		2006–2021	↗
		2016–2021	↘
Energy productivity		2006–2021	↑
		2016–2021	↑
Energy supply			
Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption		2006–2021	↗
		2016–2021	↗
Energy import dependency		2006–2021	↗
		2016–2021	↗
Access to affordable energy			
Population unable to keep home adequately warm		2010–2021	↑
		2016–2021	↑

Source: Eurostat, SDG monitoring report, 2023.

Households make up about a quarter of final energy consumption. The indicator on **final energy consumption in households** per capita does not have an EU target, therefore only a general direction of change is measured. Average household energy consumption has increased by about 3.9 % since 2016, reaching 586 kgoe (kilograms of oil equivalent) per EU inhabitant. Over the long

term (i.e. 2006-2021), energy consumption per EU inhabitant has fallen by 3.6 %, offsetting an increase in the population over the same period.

The EU has also increased its **energy productivity**, measured as the amount of economic output produced per unit of gross available energy (GAE) –Gross Domestic product (GDP) per unit of energy input, in other words. Over the long term, energy productivity increased from €6.5 per kgoe in 2006 to €8.5 per kgoe in 2021. This trend points to a progressive decoupling of economic growth from energy consumption.

Figure 2 – Primary and final energy consumption in the EU, 2000-2021 (Mtoe)
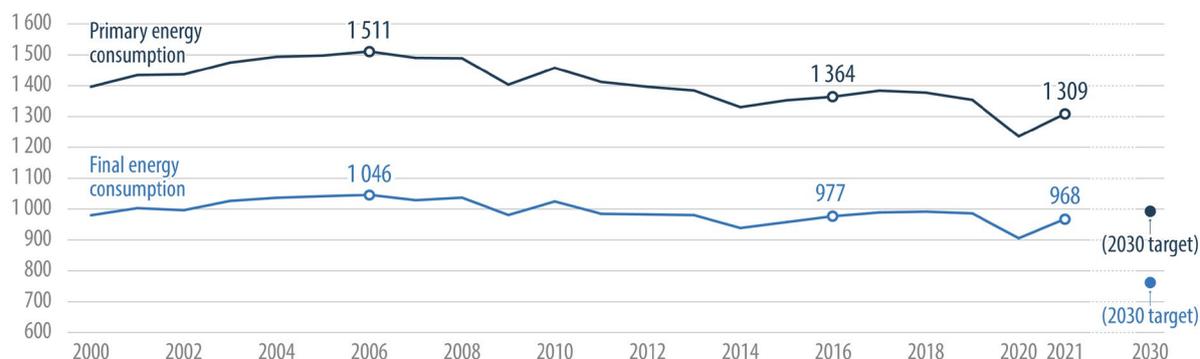
Data source: Eurostat, SDG monitoring report, 2023.

Energy supply

The use of renewable energy doubled from 10.8 % of gross final energy consumption in 2006 to 21.8 % in 2021. Individual EU countries vary from less than 12 % in Luxembourg to over 62 % in Sweden. The indicator on the **share of renewables in energy consumption** is monitored in relation to the EU target set out in the recently revised Renewable Energy Directive. This target is 42.5 % of renewables in energy consumption by 2030, which must be reached collectively by all countries.

Figure 3 – Share of renewable energy in three key sectors, 2021 (%)
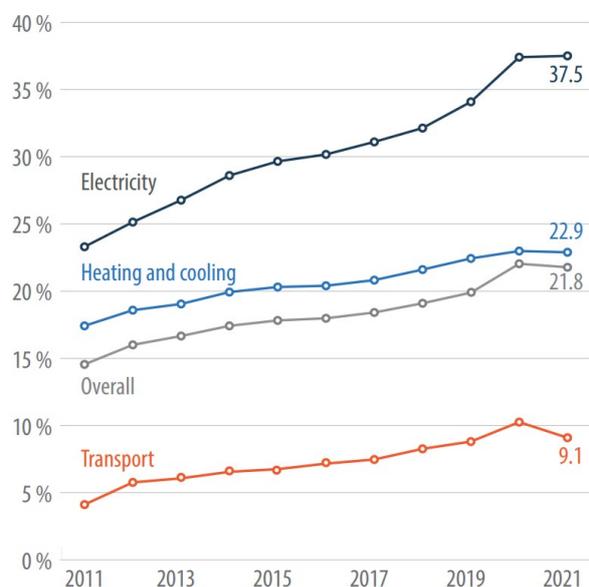
Source: EPRS, Renewable energy in the EU, 2023.

This overall share of renewables is calculated as the sum of renewables in three categories: electricity, transport, and heating and cooling (see Figure 3). The main sources of renewable energy in the EU are currently bioenergy (e.g. biomass) and waste (almost 60 %), wind (almost 14 %), hydro (over 12 %), solar (7.5 %), ambient heat i.e. heat pumps (about 6 %) and geothermal (almost 3 %). The fastest growing renewable energy source in the EU is solar.

The EU **import dependency rate** stood at 55.6 % in 2021. This means that over half of the energy used in the EU was imported, mainly consisting of fossil fuels. The long-term decrease in this value is modest, as it stood at 58.3 % in 2006. This can be explained by reduced EU energy consumption, increased use of domestic renewables and decreasing domestic production of fossil fuels.

Access to affordable energy

The indicator on the **share of people unable to afford to keep their home adequately warm** is a common measure of energy poverty.[4] The EU has made progress since the peak in 2012, when the share of people unable to afford to keep their homes adequately warm was 11.2 %, to the current share of 6.9 % in 2021.[5] However, this still translates to about 30 million people in the EU living in energy poverty. Lack of access to affordable energy often correlates with low incomes, combined with high expenditure on energy and poor energy efficiency of buildings.

EU internal policies linked to SDG7

The EU has a wide array of policies, strategies and legislation contributing to the achievement of SDG7. In the context of the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package, several pieces of EU energy legislation have been revised to better align them with EU climate objectives for 2030 and 2050. In the aftermath of Russia's war on Ukraine, the REPowerEU plan was adopted to reduce the EU dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The plan included action on saving energy, boosting renewables and diversifying energy supplies.

Two directives are particularly important in the context of SDG7, as they set out the targets for indicators used to track SDG progress in the field of energy. The revision of the Energy Efficiency Directive proposes a reduction of EU energy consumption by 11.7 % by 2030, compared with business-as-usual scenarios. It also sets out annual energy savings targets for final energy consumption in the Member States (1.49 %-1.9 % over 2024-2030) and an obligation for the public sector to achieve an annual reduction of 1.9 %. A revised Renewable Energy Directive sets a 42.5 % target of the share of renewables in energy consumption, with an indicative top-up aimed at reaching 45 %. Sub-targets are also set for several sectors, including transport, industry, buildings, and heating and cooling.

Other initiatives also contribute to reducing energy consumption. A proposed energy performance of buildings directive sets goals for energy-efficient building renovations, an obligation for solar installations on various types of buildings and for making all new buildings zero-emission by 2030. The 2020 EU energy saving plan proposes a series of short- and long-term measures to achieve higher energy efficiency and energy savings. It promotes behavioural changes (such as shifting to public transport and using efficient household appliances), awareness-raising campaigns, insulation of buildings, financial incentives for replacing fossil fuel systems with renewables, and expansion of electric vehicles. At the height of the 2022 energy crisis, the EU adopted two temporary regulations on gas demand reduction and electricity demand reduction.

In terms of boosting renewables, the EU also adopted a regulation on accelerating the permit-granting procedures for renewable installations in 2022. The solar energy and hydrogen strategies support the rollout of renewable technologies. Negotiations between EU co-legislators are also ongoing with regard to a new decarbonised gas and hydrogen framework, a proposal to reduce methane emissions in the energy sector, and a proposal reforming the EU electricity market to boost the deployment of renewables in this sector and stabilise electricity prices in the long term.

In terms of energy import diversification, the EU cut its gas imports from Russia from 41 % in 2021 to about 8 % in late 2022. However, energy demand reduction and the development of renewables only partially contributed to this decrease, thus not significantly impacting the overall EU import dependency rate. Instead, the EU sought alternative suppliers from other third countries. Important tools supporting this import diversification are the EU Energy Platform and the AggregateEU mechanism, enabling the aggregation of demand and common purchasing of gas. Imports of other fossil fuels from Russia also fell significantly: from about 30 % in 2021 to 6 % for petroleum oil in the first quarter of 2023 and from about 46 % in 2021 to almost none in 2023.[6] The main EU energy trading partners are currently the United States (US) and Australia for coal, the US, Norway and Saudi Arabia for oil, and the US and Norway for gas.

In terms of addressing energy poverty, Principle 20 of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) places energy among the essential services to which everyone should have access, while the revised Energy Efficiency Directive sets an EU definition of energy poverty.[7] The 2020 European Commission [recommendation](#) on energy poverty provides guidance to the Member States, including indicators tracking this multifaceted phenomenon. The [Electricity Directive](#) obliges Member States to monitor the number of households in energy poverty and take measures to tackle this issue. The EU has also taken a number of [measures](#) to address high energy prices over the course of 2022. Furthermore, the [Social Climate Fund](#) was established to mitigate the social costs of the green transition on vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users.

The [Energy Union](#), established in 2015 and strengthened in 2018 through the [Regulation on the governance of the energy union and climate action](#), requires the Member States to establish a 10-year [national energy and climate plan (NECP)](#). This must set out their contribution to the EU 2030 energy and climate targets (for 2021-2030), and outline their measures contributing to the achievement of a variety of goals, including energy efficiency, decarbonisation and an integrated energy market. Furthermore, a regulation adopted under the REPowerEU plan obliges Member States to submit [REPowerEU chapters](#) as part of their recovery and resilience plans used to channel the funding from the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#). This funding instrument requires 37 % of the allocations to be spent on the green transition.[8]

EU external action on SDG7

Global trends

At the global level, [progress on SDG7](#) is monitored with slightly different targets and indicators compared with the EU SDG monitoring framework (see Table 1). Only the renewables share in energy consumption and energy intensity are present in both data sets. Other global indicators include the proportion of global population with access to electricity and clean fuels, as well as installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing countries and international financial flows in support of clean energy in these countries.

Table 1 – SDG7 global UN level targets and indicators

Targets	Indicators
7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services	7.1.1 Proportion of population with access to electricity 7.1.2 Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology
7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix	7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption
7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency	7.3.1 Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP
7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology	7.a.1 International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy research and development and renewable energy production, including in hybrid systems

| 7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support	7.b.1 Installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing countries (in watts per capita)

Data source: United Nations.

Global access to electricity rose, from 83 % in 2010, to 91 % in 2020. This means the number of people without access to electricity fell from around 1.2 billion to 733 million people. Over three quarters of the global population without electricity live in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in rural areas. During the same period, the proportion of people with access to clean cooking fuels and technologies rose by 12 percentage points, to reach 69 %. This translates into about 2.4 billion people still relying on inefficient and polluting cooking systems, mainly in Asia and in low-income African countries.

Globally, the share of renewables in energy consumption reached almost 18 % in 2019, 1.6 percentage points higher than in 2010. The fastest progress in renewables share is in the electricity sector, which represents only a fifth of global final energy consumption. Progress is much slower in the heating sector, which accounts for half of this global consumption. Global primary energy intensity (i.e. the ratio of total energy supply to GDP) – improved from 5.6 megajoules per US$ (2017 purchasing power parity) in 2010, to 4.7 megajoules in 2019, with an average annual improvement rate of 1.9 %. To meet the Goal 7 target by 2030, energy intensity improvements up to 2030 will need to average 3.2 % a year.

International public financing for renewable energy amounted to US$10.9 billion in 2019, down by nearly 24 % from the previous year (see Figure 4). The five-year average also decreased for the first time since 2008, while COVID-19 is also expected to be correlated with another drop in in 2020.

According to the 2022 UN SDG report, overall, global efforts on SDG7 are advancing, but the current pace of progress needs to be accelerated to achieve Goal 7 by 2030. Progress is particularly needed in terms of energy efficiency, clean cooking solutions and access to electricity. The COVID-19 pandemic weakened many advances already made, while high prices are raising the cost of renewable installations. Policy support and mobilisation of public and private capital for clean and renewable energy will thus be essential in the coming years.

Figure 4 – International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean and renewable energy, by type of technology, 2000-2019 (billion US$)
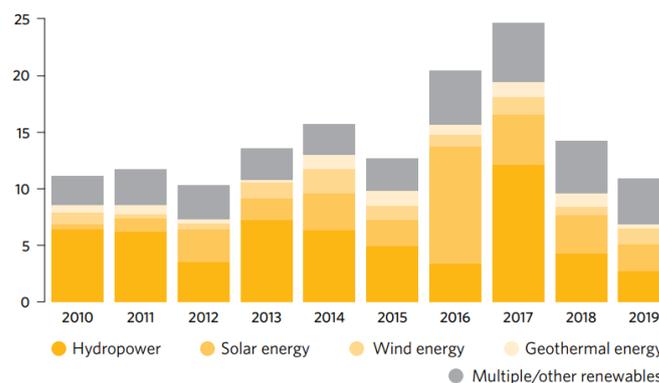
Source: United Nations, SDG report, 2022.

EU external policies in support of SDG7

The external dimension of EU action on SDGs is monitored through the European Commission's quadrennial reports. The first report on 'Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals across the world: The 2019 Joint Synthesis Report of the European Union and its Member States' was published

in 2019. In 2023, this report is replaced by the EU voluntary review. The review covers both the internal and external dimension of SDG implementation in EU context, with details on each goal described in the accompanying working document. According to this document, the priorities for EU external action in support of SDG7 include investments in sustainable energy infrastructure, capacity building and skills for energy systems based on renewables, improving access to energy services, strengthening energy communities, and developing a global renewable hydrogen market to support the decarbonisation of heavy transport and industry. Ensuring energy security is a particularly important issue in the aftermath of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis. The EU is therefore also developing energy relations with third-country suppliers.

As part of its response to the UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the EU adopted the European Consensus on Development in 2017, which defines its vision and action framework for development cooperation. The Global Gateway was launched in 2021 as an EU strategy to support its partner countries in various sectors, including energy. It brings together the EU institutions and the Member States ('Team Europe'), along with their financial and development institutions, e.g. the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to mobilise and leverage investments with transformational impact. A Team Europe initiative – the Africa-EU green energy initiative (AEGEI) under the Africa-Europe Investment Package – supports the green transition, increase in electricity production, access to energy, energy efficiency, as well as improving the regulatory environment for private investments, and market integration. The Team Europe initiative for Central Asia on water, energy and climate supports the region's transition towards a green economy, while promoting food security, jobs, growth, sustainable development, and maintaining climate neutrality and environmental sustainability. Additional initiatives focusing on energy investments in specific regions include the economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans, supporting the green transition, and the accompanying financial platform, the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF). The Energy Support Package aimed at mitigating the immediate effects of the energy crisis and accelerate the energy transition in the region is an example of projects funded under the WBIF.

Other projects focusing on energy include the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) supporting universal access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy in Africa, the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) fund financing municipal investments in energy efficiency and environmental projects in the Eastern Partnership region and beyond, as well as the Green for Growth Fund supporting investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in in Southeast Europe and the EU Neighbourhood regions, as well as the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+), which helps the least developed countries and small island developing states address climate change, for instance through green energy projects.

> ### EU external energy engagement strategy under REPowerEU
>
> As part of the REPowerEU plan, the EU adopted an external energy engagement strategy in May 2022. The strategy supports the EU's goal of phasing out Russian fossil fuel imports and diversifying energy supply, while pursuing the global green transition based on boosting renewables and energy efficiency. It also aims at supporting countries impacted by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU Energy Platform facilitates the EU's purchases of gas and hydrogen from a variety of supplier countries.
>
> Source: European Commission.

The European Neighbourhood Policy, in place since 2003 to ensure the stabilisation of the EU's immediate neighbourhood, also includes investments in the field of energy. About 35 % of the budget of the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) contributes to climate action, including support for sustainable energy. Energy is also one of the priority investment sectors covered by the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), a Global Gateway financing tool and the financing arm of NDICI-GE, as well as the Instrument for Pre-Adhesion III (IPA III).

According to the working document accompanying the EUVR, by the end of 2021, the EU-supported sustainable energy activities in partner countries led to the creation of 31 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity, which helped over 29 million people gain access to sustainable energy and energy services, and avoid 95.8 million tonnes of CO_2 emissions. Moreover, the Commission committed €732 million to energy to 2020, 44.7 % of which supported energy policy and 36 % renewable-sourced energy generation. In terms of the EU financial contribution to SDG7 as a whole, the working document states that, in 2021, the EU institutions reported commitments of €4.5 billion in projects contributing to this goal (a similar amount is reported on the EU aid explorer website, with daily updates) to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). After taking other official flows, private funds mobilised through public interventions and support to international public goods into account, the total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD)[9] from the EU to SDG7 amounted to €5.3 billion in 2021. Furthermore, the collective contribution of the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021 amounts to €8 billion for SDG7. The EU and its Member States' external funding for SDG7 predominantly goes to projects in Africa (49 %), Asia (21 %) and other countries in Europe (16 %).

Through its international partnerships, the EU aims to pursue the objectives of the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. While the EU is committed to leading and supporting the global green transition, supporting its partners in the transition is only one part, the other is dealing with spill-over effects from its activities and global challenges relating to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Examples include the EU strategy to reduce methane emissions, including in the energy sector – as the highest methane emissions occur during production and transport of fossil fuels from outside the EU. Furthermore, the EU is working towards establishing renewable hydrogen partnerships to encourage decarbonisation and support the development of renewable energy aimed for supplying the EU market. This includes, for instance, the EU's participation in the 'clean energy mission', or the International Partnership for a Hydrogen Economy (IPHE) and renewable hydrogen partnerships (e.g. with Namibia and Egypt), to support the development of renewable energy, engage countries in decarbonising their industry and supplying the EU market with renewable hydrogen or derivative fuels. The EU also supports the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) signed with South Africa, Vietnam and Indonesia, aimed at accelerating the phase-out of fossil fuels, while supporting a socially fair transition towards green technologies in vulnerable communities that depend on them.

Moreover, the EU is taking measures to encourage other countries to adapt products destined for its market. For instance, it strengthened the sustainability criteria of bioenergy in its Renewable Energy Directive, both for bioenergy produced in the EU and imported, to reduce the competition of bioenergy production with agricultural land and with high carbon stock preventing indirect land-use change. It also tightened the rules on ecodesign (energy labels) to ensure products are sustainable, reduce their negative environmental impact and increase their energy and resource efficiency.

European Parliament

In its June 2022 own-initiative resolution on the implementation and delivery of the SDGs, the European Parliament highlighted clean energy as one of the main SDG challenges in Europe. It also stressed the need to 'finance renewable sources of energy in order to ensure alignment with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and avoid future global financial pressure in the energy sector'. It underlined the contribution of delivering on the 2030 Agenda to achieving a fair green transition, in line with the European Green Deal. It welcomed the Commission's 'whole-of-government' approach to SDGs and called to strengthen SDG governance at EU level and to expand stakeholder involvement.

In its June 2023 resolution on the implementation and delivery of SDGs, the Parliament noted the disruption to the global energy supply systems caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. It highlighted the role of renewable energy in ensuring long-term energy security, universal

access and affordability. It stressed the importance of reducing energy consumption and increasing the efficiency of buildings, consumer goods and transport. It also called attention to the interlinkages between SDG7 and other SDGs, for instance on poverty, gender equality, health, climate change, food security, clean water and sustainable cities.

Outlook

Energy remains an essential topic on the EU agenda in light of energy security concerns, high prices and the climate transition. In the coming months, a number of amended key pieces of EU energy legislation will be adopted and enter into force, such as the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Renewable Energy Directive and the proposed energy performance of buildings directive. In 2024, the European Commission plans to propose new intermediary climate targets for 2040, which may also require further alignment of the energy legislation. In terms of external engagement, the EU aims to pursue its collaboration with partner countries to ensure clean and affordable energy, while also developing its strategic ties with third-country energy suppliers.

Enhanced effort to boost renewables, save energy and diversify energy supply are likely to result in the improvement of many SDG7 indicators, especially those relating to energy consumption, share of renewables and import dependency. However, energy poverty remains a challenge in light of the energy price crisis. To achieve SDG7 by 2030 in the context of the energy transition and climate action, both in the EU and globally, more effort will be needed – in particular in terms of improving energy efficiency, accelerating the roll-out of renewables and ensuring access to energy for all. These challenges require systematic monitoring of the targets, regular reviews, adequate policies, financing and multilateral partnerships.

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ENDNOTES

1   For information on regional and local reviews, see A. Widuto, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in EU regions, EPRS, European Parliament, 2022; and Joint Research Centre, European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews, European Commission, 2022.

2   Final energy consumption refers to energy consumed by end users, while primary energy consumption also includes what is used for the production and supply of energy.

3   Previous versions of the Eurostat SDG monitoring report tracked EU progress towards the EU targets for 2020 and 2030 established in earlier versions of the Energy Efficiency Directive. The 2023 edition tracks progress towards the targets set out in the agreement between the Council of the EU and the European Parliament on the revised directive, reached in March 2023 and expected to enter into force in the coming months. Similarly, EU progress on renewables is monitored in relation to the March 2023 agreement on the revised Renewable Energy Directive, while previous editions of the Eurostat report tracked progress towards EU 2020 and 2030 goals based on earlier versions of this directive.

4   For an overview of other measures of energy poverty (for instance a high share of energy expenditure in income, arrears on utility bills and population living in homes not comfortably cool in the summer), see A. Widuto, Energy poverty in the EU, EPRS, European Parliament, 2022.

5   The Eurostat SDG monitoring report only shows data for 2021. Latest statistics show that the share of people unable to keep their home adequately warm grew to 9.3 % in 2022, which was linked to very high energy prices.

6   This is largely due to the sanctions imposed by the EU on coal and oil imports from Russia. The phase-out of Russian gas imports has been slower, as gas was not included in the sanctions packages.

7   Energy poverty is defined in the March 2023 agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive as: 'a household's lack of access to essential energy services that provide basic levels and decent standards of living and health, including adequate heating, hot water, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances, in the relevant national context, existing social policy and other relevant policies, caused by a combination of factors, including but not limited to non-affordability, insufficient disposable income, high energy expenditure and poor energy efficiency of homes'.

8   A comprehensive overview of funding instruments for the energy transition is available in the final staff working document accompanying the EUVR (SWD(2023) 700).

9   The total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD) is an international standard for measuring a full range of resources for promoting sustainable development in developing countries. It monitors all official resources flowing into developing countries, as well as private resources mobilised through official means and contributions to international public goods.