



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by Commissioner Simson at the opening session of the 2024 European Sustainable Energy Week

Brussels, 11 June 2024

Dear fellow panellists,

Dear members of the EUSEW community,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, everybody!

I'm delighted to see you all.

This is the 18th edition of the European Sustainable Energy Week. And my 5th as EU Energy Commissioner. But this year's edition feels particularly special.

For one, the European elections have just taken place.

Millions of citizens across the EU – including I hope many of you here – have cast their votes for the next European Parliament.

This is one of the biggest elections the world will see this year.

And it's testament once again to one of our fundamentals, which is living united in a democracy.

This edition is also special because it will be the last one of this mandate.

And I can't help but cast my mind back to June 2020 – to my first EUSEW week.

We were in a very different place then.

The European Green Deal had just been launched six months earlier.

The world was in the grip of a global pandemic.

And we held our EUSEW week virtually – this was something we were not used to!

Fast forward four years and look at where we are now.

We have raised targets for renewables and energy efficiency.

We have put in place new rules to make buildings more energy efficient.

We have reformed both electricity and gas markets, rewritten our infrastructure policy priorities, and prepared the ground for clean hydrogen to take off.

In short, we have a new legal framework for a green, fair, and secure energy system. And by doing so, we have defined a credible, comprehensive path towards net-zero.

However, I cannot look back at the past four years without talking about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

This was, no doubt, the most pivotal moment of this mandate for EU energy policy.

The EU found itself in an unprecedented position when the Kremlin began weaponising energy supplies.

This sent our markets into turmoil and came as a major shock to our energy system.

But it did not change the direction we had set under the Green Deal.

It only confirmed that our path towards decarbonisation and home-grown renewable energy is the right way to cut our dependencies and ensure the EU's long-term energy security and prosperity.

Results speak for themselves:

Since 2019, EU wind and solar capacity has grown by 65% (+188 GW).

Wind capacity climbed by 31% (+52 GW).

Solar capacity has surged even faster, more than doubling (+113%) from 120 to 257 Giga Watts.

This is equivalent to installing more than 230 000 solar panels every day during these four years.

All this to say that the era of fossils fuelling our economies is behind us, and we are now firmly moving into the age of renewables.

But this does not mean that our work is over.

It is the beginning.

Now we must take the right steps to ensure that our industry can grow and compete in this new normal.

And this is exactly what the Commission has been focused on over the past year.

We are taking action to speed up the energy transition, secure our industrial base, and ramp up clean tech manufacturing in Europe.

This involves many different avenues of work, but for the sake of time, let me focus on three key issues.

First, we have moved from rules and target setting to a focus on implementation.

As you know, we have new rules for rolling out renewables fast, developing Europe's net-zero technology manufacturing eco-system, and building stronger supply chains.

Now, it's about breathing life into all our new rules and targets where it matters – and that is on the ground in Member States.

Just last month, the Commission provided Member States with updated new guidance to help them implement the EU renewables framework in the most effective way.

This includes recommendations on speeding up permit granting procedures, designating renewables acceleration areas, and improving the design of auctions for renewable energy.

Second, we are moving the needle on infrastructure.

In just one year, we've taken the issue of electricity grids out of a blind spot and put it right at the top of our priorities.

This is at the heart of our competitiveness agenda. Modern, upgraded, and digital grids will enable us to deliver on our renewables targets.

The investments needed are unprecedented – both at transmission and distribution levels.

But I do believe that we are at the beginning of a new wave of investment in grids.

Third, we've been preparing the ground for hydrogen to take off in the EU.

We have a completely new framework for Europe's hydrogen economy in place and this gives industry and business a clear direction of travel.

There is huge opportunity here for growth and jobs.

As an example, just last week, I was in Japan for a High-Level Hydrogen Business Forum to deepen EU-Japan cooperation on hydrogen business and technology development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next three days of this conference, you will have the opportunity to debate all of this and much more.

We will cover every aspect of net-zero energy solutions for a competitive Europe – and I know we will come out of our discussions energised and inspired.

Let me end by saying that it's been an honour to open this ceremony for the past five editions.

Each EUSEW week has been a highlight for me.

It is, after all, the biggest annual event dedicated to renewables and efficient energy use in Europe.

It's where many seeds were planted.

And we will continue to count on this EUSEW community in the quest to build a greener, better, and more competitive energy system.

So, without further ado, I have the great honour of declaring the 2024 European Sustainable Energy Week officially open!

Let's get started!

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