Estonia renewable energy growth

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Estonia has notably decreased its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), mainly due to an overall reduction in electricity and heat generation from oil shale and growth in generation from wind, solar photovoltaics (PV) and domestic forestry biomass. However, starting in 2020 net GHG emissions have been increasing due to a rebound in electricity and heat generation from oil shale and to land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) becoming a net emissions source, mainly due to increased emissions from forests.

This report provides policy recommendations to help Estonia address its energy sector challenges and drive a clean, secure and just energy transition. It highlights international best practices relevant to Estonia and details areas where Estonia"s leadership can assist other countries with their energy sector challenges.

The Climate Ministry has announced plans to get to 5,600 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy capacity in Estonia by 2035, focusing on expanding wind, solar, and energy storage.

The vision statement"s targets include 3,000 MW of onshore wind capacity by 2035, and the plan also aims for 1,250 MW of dispatchable power to support grid stability.

Potential for additional wind capacity is tied to a four-terawatt-hour auction that may offer EUR30 million annually. "In fact, solar panels continue to receive some support, but only when integrated with comprehensive renovations," Uiga, who holds the energy portfolio, stated.

Dispatchable capacity is set to grow from 1,000 MW by 2030 to 1,200 MW by 2035, as oil shale usage declines, though interim reserve capacity will be maintained, the ministry said.

Natural gas, such as that used by the Kiisa power plant, to the south of Tallinn (250 MW capacity) will also increasingly come to support Estonia"s energy needs, the ministry added.

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Estonia"s ambitious targets for a climate neutral economy by 2050 highlight the country"s commitment to the energy transition, but a quicker phase out of oil shale use in electricity generation and streamlining permitting for new renewable energy projects are essential to realise these goals while maintaining energy security, according to a new in-depth policy review by the IEA.

The report commends Estonia for its progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions as the country"s shift away from fossil fuels to renewables such as wind, solar PV and biomass yields results. However, the report

finds that emissions have been on the rise since 2020, primarily due to an uptick in the use of shale oil in electricity and heat generation, while land use and forestry have become a net source of emissions.

The report recognises that Estonia, like other countries in the region, is facing challenges following Russia"s invasion of Ukraine. Estonia has taken decisive action to end all remaining energy trade with Russia while safeguarding regional energy security and maintaining progress on the energy transition. It has already taken steps to ensure regional gas security while working to reduce its natural gas demand and bring down emissions in its gas supply, including by increasing biomethane production.

"Estonia is making great strides to reduce its reliance on oil shale and boost deployment of wind and solar generation" said IEA Deputy Executive Director Mary Burce Warlick. "It now needs to build on this success and accelerate the energy transition by aligning fiscal measures with its medium and long-term energy and climate goals. It is important that such action is taken with a people-centred transition in mind. The IEA is committed to continuing to work with Estonia to achieve itsenergy transition goals."

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