

Speed with quality? Planning of Renewable Energy Acceleration Areas

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To accelerate renewable energy (RE) implementation, the amended **Renewable Energy Directive (RED III)** aims to fast-track RE projects in EU Member States (MSs) [1]. MSs are required to identify suitable areas for RE deployment and designate **Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs)**. This joint analysis was commissioned by CAN Europe, Birdlife, EEB, and WWF EPO. It focuses on the **examination of six MSs: Estonia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Poland, and Portugal**. The study aims to **identify barriers and derive recommendations** for the **designation of RAAs**. It also features **case studies** to illustrate best practices and lessons learned. Complementing our findings, the European Commission has published guidelines on designating RAAs and planning practices [2].

Main Findings



Main Take-aways

"We welcome the RED III incentives to **speed up the deployment of renewables**. Yet, a balance has to be struck between accelerated efforts within the **energy transition and safeguarding environmental and social standards**."

- **Mapping tools need to be updated**, region- and technology-specific and consulted with relevant stakeholders
- **Outreach to the public and other key stakeholders** are essential
- Public participation and tools such as sensitivity mapping need to **be well integrated into all levels of the planning process**
- MSs should **utilize existing resources** and update them where necessary

Results & Discussion

	ESTONIA	GERMANY	GREECE	SPAIN	POLAND	PORTUGAL
Ambition of Renewable Energy Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Designation of Renewable Acceleration Areas under the Renewable Energy Directive	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Development and Integration of Sensitivity Mapping in Spatial Planning process	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Integration of Public Participation in Spatial Planning Processes	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗

Spatial planning in MSs

- Heterogenous developments among MSs with individual challenges

Overarching Barriers

- **Narrow timelines** may lead to rushed processes, affecting area designation, conservation, and public participation
- **Waived environmental assessments** resulting in **reduced public participation, assessment exemptions for wind and PV projects** as well as **reliance on outdated data** may impact species protection and environmental integrity [5]
- **Ambiguous mitigation measures** and **vague screening criteria** [5]
- **Extended procedural deadlines** without penalties can delay RE project approvals, despite acceleration efforts [5]

Methods

Evaluation of MSs Spatial Planning

- **Assessment of current spatial planning**, key instruments and public participation in MSs
- **Expert knowledge** from MSs' CAN Europe partners to evaluate and complement data

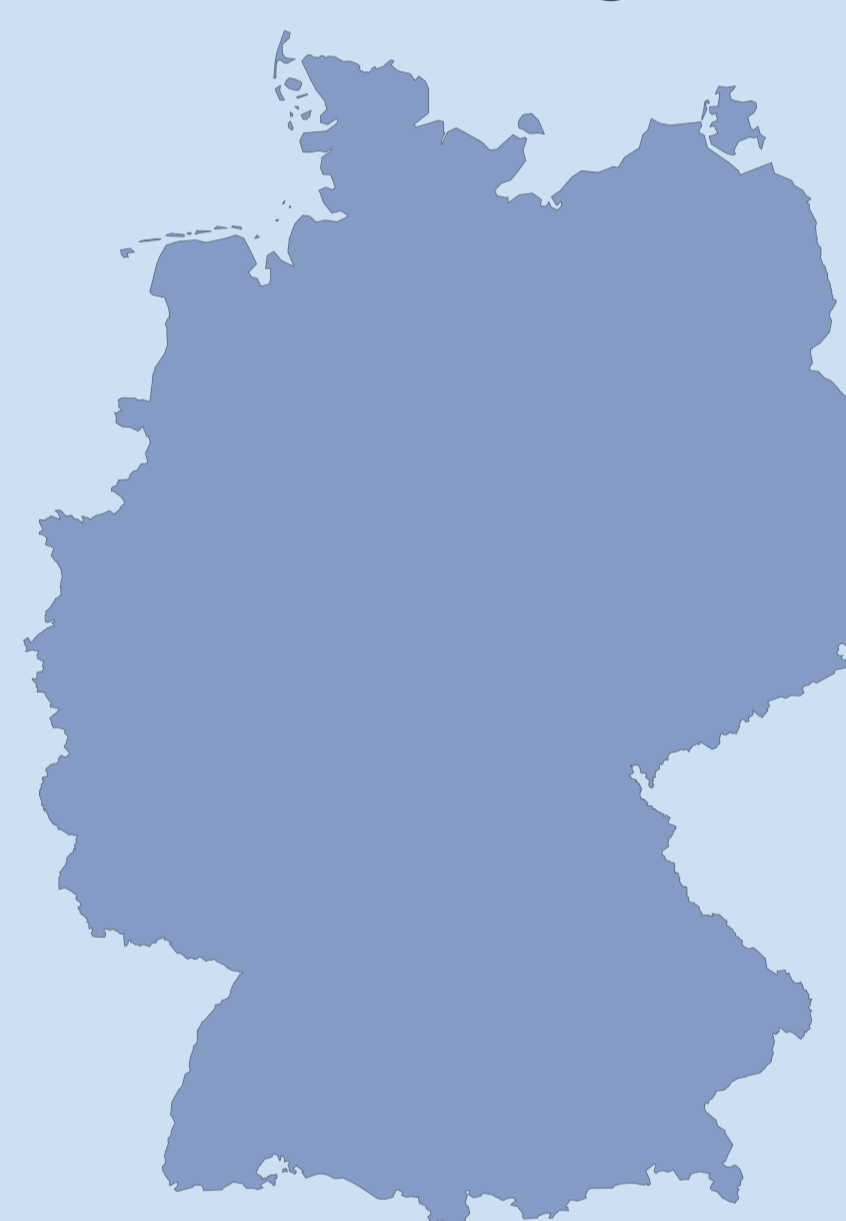
Country-specific Case Studies

- Examination of **participatory processes of one Planning Association in Germany**
- Analysis of **sensitivity mapping in Spain**
- Investigation on **fast-tracking RAAs in Portugal**

Barriers & Recommendations

- **Identification** of individual and common barriers for MSs
- **Derivation** country-specific and overarching recommendations

In the spotlight – Germany



✓ RES Policy

- **Frontrunner** in offshore wind and solar PV
- **57.7 % of net electricity** generation from RE in the first half of 2023
- **Ambitious targets** for RE (80 % of electricity from RE by 2030)

– RE Acceleration Areas

- Expansion of **wind energy has stalled** for the past 10 years
- New **regulatory framework** to drive expansion
- Use of RED III "**Transfer window**" on 21 May 2024 to adopt already designated *Windenergieflächenbedarfsgesetz* (WindBG) areas as RAAs [3]

✓ Public participation

- **Obligatory formal participation** overseen by the planning or permit authorities
- **Regional planning**: stakeholder participation in *Regionalentwicklungsplan*
- **Urban land-use planning**: possible for *Flächennutzungsplan* and *Bebauungsplan*
- **Informal participation** encouraged by voluntary provisions of information and dialogue by project developers

– Sensitivity mapping

- **No country-wide government sensitivity mapping**, but similar practices in place
- **Modified sensitivity analysis** was carried out in preparation for the designation of the regulatory framework on WindBG [4]

Contact

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