

[‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’; conference: new financial tracking report published](#)



Supporting the future of Syria and the region – Brussels IV Conference

The European Union is this week and next week hosting and co-chairing with the United Nations the fourth Brussels conference on “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”. The aim of the Conference is to maintain the support of the international community behind UN efforts to address critical humanitarian and resilience needs in Syria and the region, and facilitate a lasting political solution in Syria in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015).

The Conference is the main pledging event for the Syrian crisis in 2020. The EU has today published a report on delivery against the pledges made at the third Brussels Conference in March 2019, on behalf of the Conference co-chairs, the EU and UN.

The report shows that in 2019, donors contributed €8.9 billion (US\$10 billion) in grants to Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. This delivery is 43% higher than the pledges made at the Brussels Conference for 2019 (€6.2 billion / US\$7 billion). For the period 2020 and beyond, 71% of the pledges announced last year (€1.5 billion / US\$1.7 billion) have already been contributed. Of the €18.5 billion (US\$21 billion) worth of loans pledged for 2019 and beyond, €16.5 billion (US\$18.5 billion) (88%) have been made available in refugee-hosting countries.

At the third Brussels Conference, the international community and the governments of refugee-hosting countries came together to support the millions of civilians affected by the conflict inside Syria as well as the refugees, the countries and communities generously hosting them. The international community pledged €6.2 billion (US\$7 billion) in funding to support humanitarian, stabilisation and development activities in 2019 in Syria and the region, and a further €2.1 billion (US\$2.4 billion) for 2020 and beyond. In addition, International Financial Institutions and donors announced €18.5 billion (US\$21 billion) in loans for 2019 and beyond.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[Spain: Green recovery – EIB finances](#)

the largest solar project in Andalusia



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- **The Cabrera Solar Project will provide clean energy for 145 000 people**
- **CO₂ emissions will be reduced by more than 300 kt CO₂-equivalent per year**
- **The project is supported by the Investment Plan for Europe**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is investing €43.5 million to finance the largest solar project in Andalusia and one of the most powerful in Spain. Despite the COVID-19-related lockdown in Spain, over 85% of the construction plan was successfully completed by May 2020. This investment, backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments ([EFSI](#)), the main pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe, will contribute to Spain's green recovery and will create around 350 jobs during the implementation phase in the [transition](#) region of Andalusia.

The Cabrera Solar Project includes the construction and operation of four 50MWp photovoltaic solar plants in Alcalá de Guadaira, Seville. The four plants will provide enough clean energy to supply nearly 145 000 households per year and will contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions by 300 metric kilotons (kt) CO₂-equivalent per year. It will have a significant impact on the Spanish renewable energy market, helping the country to meet the government's objective of generating 20% of all the country's energy needs from renewable sources by the end of this year. Moreover, the Cabrera Solar Project will contribute to meeting the European Commission's target of ensuring that at least [32%](#) of Europe's final energy consumption comes from renewables by 2030.

“As the EU climate bank, we are committed to investing in green recovery in Europe, building sustainable infrastructure while spurring the creation of green jobs. Spain is a market with huge potential for renewable energy and the EU bank is proud to support the investments needed to meet the country’s renewable energy targets,” said [EIB Vice-President Emma Navarro](#), **responsible for climate action at the Bank and for operations in Spain**. *“Despite the economic challenges caused by COVID-19, we should not forget that climate change still represents one of the biggest threats to our future.”*

Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for the Economy, said: *“With the EU’s financial support, almost 145,000 Spanish households stand to benefit from clean energy, drastically reducing the CO₂ emissions of the Andalusia region. The project will also provide the construction and engineering sector with 350 jobs in the short term. With every investment of this kind, we take another step closer to our goal of making the European Union climate neutral by 2050.”*

The project, sponsored by Encavis AG and developed by Solarcentury, secured senior debt facilities for an aggregate amount of €96 million from the EIB, Deutsche Bank and Rabobank, and reached financial close in June 2020. As for the construction and operation of the [Talayueta solar plant, also financed by the EU bank](#), sponsored by Encavis AG and Solarcentury and developed by Solarcentury, also the Cabrera Solar Project is a greenfield renewable energy project financed without any form of government or public support and entirely relies on revenues from the sale of electricity. The Project entered into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with **Amazon.com Inc.**, which hedges the off-take price for a significant volume of the energy production. The EIB will contribute to the crowding-in of other investors and private lenders, while EFSI will provide the long-term non-recourse debt financing, crucial to ensuring the viability of the project.

Background information

The EIB is the world’s largest multilateral provider of climate finance. Its goal is to be a leader in mobilising the finance needed to limit the average global temperature increase to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels to meet the Paris Agreement objectives. [On 14 November 2019, the EIB’s Board of Directors approved its new climate objectives and the new energy lending policy](#). The Bank will gradually increase its financing for climate and environmental objectives by up to 50% by 2025, to ensure that the EIB Group mobilises at least €1 trillion in the critical decade between 2021 and 2030 to promote investments helping to meet these objectives. It also announced its intention to align all EIB Group activities with the Paris Agreement. To this end, the EIB will cease financing fossil fuel-based projects from late 2021.

Over the past five years, the EU bank has provided around €62 billion to finance energy infrastructure. This included over €53 billion for renewable energy, energy efficiency and electricity grid projects in Europe and around the world.

About Solarcentury:

Established in 1998, Solarcentury is a leading global solar power company that develops, constructs, owns and operates utility-scale solar and smart technology across Europe, Latin America and Africa. Independent and headquartered in the UK, Solarcentury is known internationally for developing and building some of the largest utility-scale solar projects in the UK, the Netherlands, Spain, Kenya and Mexico, including pioneering projects such as the world's first solar bridge at Blackfriars Station in Central London. Solarcentury's mission is to make a meaningful difference in the global fight against climate chaos by making solar power the dominant energy source worldwide. During Solarcentury's 22-year history the business has helped solar power become mainstream, and our projects have generated 6 billion kWh of clean electricity, saving over 1.7 million tonnes of CO2 emissions.

About Encavis:

Encavis AG (Prime Standard; ISIN: DE0006095003 / WKN: 609500) is a producer of electricity from renewable sources listed on the SDAX of Deutsche Börse AG. As one of the leading independent power producer (IPPs), Encavis acquires and operates solar parks and (onshore) wind farms in 10 European countries. The plants for sustainable energy generation generate stable yields through guaranteed feed-in tariffs (FIT) or long-term power purchase agreements (PPA). Within the Encavis Group, Encavis Asset Management AG specialises in the area of institutional investors. Encavis AG's environmental, social and governance performance was evaluated by ISS-oekom, one of the world's leading ESG research and rating agencies, and received the ISS-oekom Prime label.

[FRA speaks at annual meeting of ENNHRI Disability Working Group](#)

FRA, along with other Framework members, described its current activities in the area of disability and potential joint activities between the Agency, other Framework members and the Working Group.

Working Group members and Framework members also discussed potential cooperation on providing input to the upcoming review of the EU's implementation of the Convention by the UN CRPD Committee, due to begin in 2021.

Austria: Investment Plan for Europe – EIB finances wind farms of Windkraft Simonsfeld



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- **EU climate bank advances €63 million**
- **Bulk of financing backed by Juncker Plan guarantee**
- **Erste Bank financing new windparks with an amount of €22 million**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is providing €63 million of finance for the construction and operation of two new wind farms in Austria (Prinzendorf III and Powi V) of Windkraft Simonsfeld with a total capacity of approximately 43.6 MW. The facilities will be operated by a project company belonging to Windkraft Simonsfeld AG, which has been successfully running wind farms in Austria and Bulgaria since the end of the 1990s. The overall capacity of the wind farms operated by Windkraft Simonsfeld currently amounts to 202.5 MW.

The bulk of the EIB financing (€40.9 million) will go directly to Windkraft Simonsfeld. These funds are backed by a guarantee from the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe (the Juncker Plan). Under this plan, the EIB and the European Commission are working together as strategic partners to boost the competitiveness of the European economy. The remaining loan amount of €22.1 million will be provided by Erste Bank and guaranteed by the EIB. Windkraft Simonsfeld will put €21 million of its own funds into financing the wind farms.

This is the second time that the company benefits from the Investment Plan for Europe's support. In January 2018, a [€48 million financial agreement](#) to build three new wind farms with Windkraft Simonsfeld in Austria was made possible under EFSI.

The EIB Vice-President responsible for operations in Austria, Andrew McDowell, said: "The promotion of sustainable, competitive and secure sources of energy is a key policy objective and, as the EU climate bank, a priority sector for EIB financing. We are therefore very pleased to be able to promote the development of renewable energies in Austria in close cooperation with our trusted partner, Windkraft Simonsfeld. The Prinzendorf III and Powi V wind farms are testament to Austria's commitment to the renewable energy transition."

Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for the Economy, said: "Investing in renewable energies is crucial to meet the goals of the European Green Deal and to reach climate neutrality by 2050. This new EU support for Windkraft Simonsfeld will help to make two new wind farms a reality, bringing clean energy to thousands more households in Austria."

"As the EU climate bank, the EIB is firmly committed to the Paris climate targets and the continued development of renewable and sustainable energy sources. When selecting our partners, we also take environmental and ethical considerations into account under the principle of green financing, which is why we have once again opted for EIB financing, as we did two years ago. We are pleased to have a partner that shares our commitment to the renewable energy transition and to the fight against catastrophic climate change," said Alexander Hochauer, Commercial Manager of Windkraft Simonsfeld AG.

Willi Cernko, Member of the Management Board Erste Bank: "Financing renewable energy sources is definitely one of our strategic core areas. This is particularly important to us because in the next few years sustainable energy generation in Europe will be one of the biggest issues where we are happy to be available as a financing partner to help push this effort forward."

Background information

Windkraft Simonsfeld AG

Windkraft Simonsfeld AG operates 84 wind turbines in Austria and two in Bulgaria (as at 31/12/2019). With its headquarters in Lower Austria, Windkraft Simonsfeld generated approximately 577 million kWh of electricity in 2019, which is equivalent to the consumption of 144 400 households. In 2021, Windkraft Simonsfeld will build 14 new wind turbines at the Prinzendorf III und Powi V wind farms. The over-the-counter joint stock company is owned by over 2 000 shareholders.

Erste Bank und Sparkassen is the largest provider of financial services in Austria. Around 15.500 staff attend to more than 3.8 million customers at over 1,100 branches and banking service points. In 2019, Erste Bank und Sparkassen helped 28.700 people to fulfill their dream of owning their own home, paid out EUR 292 million in interest to domestic savers, and helped

22.100 young entrepreneurs to implement their business ideas.

[EMCDDA and Europol join EU institutions in dialogue on the impact of COVID-19 on the world drug situation](#)

On the occasion of **International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking**, the EMCDDA and Europol are joining representatives of the **EU institutions** today in providing the European perspective on the impact of COVID-19 on the world drug situation. The panel discussion will conclude a [special event](#) of the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and is co-sponsored by the European Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)⁽¹⁾.

In a statement marking the day, **European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Ylva Johansson** said: 'The route from drug producer, to distributor, to user, and indeed to money launderer, is becoming ever more sophisticated, more circuitous and more profitable. In recent years, illicit drugs have increased in availability, with technology enabling online trade, postal dispatch, and hidden profits throughout the EU. Modern organised crime needs a modern organised response. We will soon present a robust and ambitious EU action on tackling drug smugglers, improving prevention strategies and targeting those who profit from others' addiction'.

Floriana Sipala, Head of the Organised Crime and Drugs Policy Unit at the European Commission, will present the opening remarks on the CND panel, followed by a speech from **Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle**. **EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel** will deliver the [closing remarks](#) ⁽²⁾.

The EMCDDA and Europol have been 'taking the pulse' of the impact of COVID-19 on drug use, drug services and drug markets. In a [report](#) published last month ⁽³⁾, they explored drug market developments under the pandemic and their impact on public health and security in the EU. The analysis reported higher prices, local shortages and reduced purity for some drugs, while noting continued violence among suppliers and distributors. It also described how organised crime groups have remained active and resilient, by adapting transportation models, trafficking routes and concealment methods during the pandemic.

Speaking today, **Catherine De Bolle** said: 'The pandemic has had a major impact on our lives, and is slowing down our economy. Unfortunately, this downturn has not been seen in international drugs trafficking. While our legal economy

is weakening, criminal markets have continued their business and have become even stronger, generating huge profits. The movement of bulk quantities of drugs to the European Union and between EU Member States has continued and seizures of illegal drugs in some EU countries during the first half of 2020 have been higher than in the same months of previous years’.

‘More than ever, this worrying trend should motivate us to ensure that any recovery from the pandemic is accompanied by a strong and effective law enforcement response, combined with a sustained public health response. We need to collectively establish that drug traffickers do not benefit from the potential social and economic consequences of the crisis’, **Executive Director De Bolle** added.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel declared: ‘The economic recession that we have in front of us is likely to be harmful in terms of mental and physical health and could result in a significant increase of substance use in the general population. It can be expected that it will amplify the negative consequences of the pandemic for people who are using drugs and for vulnerable groups in general. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to integrate drug-related services into the essential health services at national level, to provide adequate equipment and tools for frontline workers, and to maintain the funding and functioning of drug-related services in the post-pandemic period.’

Alexis Goosdeel concluded: ‘The way in which the different services and authorities have been working together in the European Union in the times of this pandemic has shown that the “balanced approach” of the EU drugs policy has contributed to care and to protect, rather than to punish’.