

Embargoed until: 09:30 CET Paris time – 18 March 2021

Trends in Austria

Facts from the *Renewables in Cities 2021 Global Status Report*

Key Takeaways on Renewable Energy in 2020 in Austria

- Austrian cities have adopted an ambitious and integrated approach to renewable energy target-setting, with most targets aiming for 100% renewable shares and applying economy-wide and city-wide.
- In **Vienna**, a ban on natural gas in new buildings led city authorities to estimate that by autumn 2020, “climate protection areas” would become possible in 8 of the city’s 23 districts, with the rest following in 2021.
- Austria is among the top producers of district heating, serving mostly urban areas, and the share of renewables in these systems is the seven-highest in the world.

Brand new data shows

- 8 cities in Austria had renewable energy targets and/or policies (from a global total of over 1,300 cities). This covers 3 million people, 32.6% of the urban population in Austria.
- Austrian cities are lagging behind on setting net-zero¹ targets: **Graz** is the only Austrian city with a net-zero target by 2050.
- Only 10 cities in Austria declared a climate emergency in 2019 (no new declarations in 2020); worldwide 1,852 cities have such a declaration.

Renewable Energy Developments in Austrian Cities

City renewable energy commitments and policies

- 6 Austrian cities set renewable energy targets, all but one had 100% city-wide and economy-wide renewable energy targets.
 - In 2019, **Güssing** achieved 100% renewable energy use economy-wide.
- Two Austrian cities, **Graz** and **Vienna** had a total of 6 renewable energy policies aimed at different sectors:
 - Both had active low emission zones since 2008 (**Vienna**) and 2013 (**Graz**).
 - **Graz** started providing new subsidies for solar thermal and solar PV in 2020.

¹ “Net-zero” emissions can be achieved, for example, by using natural sinks, such as reforestation or adopting agricultural best practices, or through a technological solution, such as carbon capture and storage. Net-zero targets also are referred to commonly as “climate-neutral”, “carbon-neutral” or “zero-emission” targets, although technically these are not the same. Carbon neutrality refers to net-zero emissions of only CO₂, whereas climate neutrality indicates a broader focus on net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases. There is no agreed-upon definition, and implementation of these targets also varies broadly.

- In 2020, **Vienna** passed a new mandate for the installation of solar systems on newly constructed residential buildings (a similar requirement was already in place before for all new buildings, except for residential and educational buildings) and implemented a new subsidy programme to fund this type of projects.

Scaling up renewables in buildings and transport

- **Most fossil fuel bans applicable to buildings have been adopted elsewhere but with its natural gas ban, Vienna** will be able to produce renewable heat for 80% of new buildings. The city has an ambitious heat zoning plan, with 4 districts already banning fossil fuel heating in new buildings and a targeted ban on fossil fuel heating in all buildings city-wide by 2040.
- Austria is among the top producers of district heating; around 48% of this is derived from renewable energy sources.
- **Only a few of the many financial incentives supporting EVs worldwide link e-mobility with renewable electricity. Austria has been one of only two countries** (along with Germany) **with a national subsidy programme for this effect for several years. Austrian cities seem to be following the national-level example:** In 2020, the municipality of **Baden** promoted the combination of solar electricity and e-mobility, giving EV buyers a bonus if they already had a solar PV system at their house, and offering a subsidy of up to 30% more for installing a solar PV system if an EV is registered at the same address.

Citizen engagement to achieve energy and climate goals

- **Austrian cities are working with utilities to address energy poverty: Vienna** has worked with the country's largest energy provider, Wien Energie, to safeguard the supply of energy to people in precarious living situations, by cancelling so-called dunning costs² and interest.
- **Partnerships with utilities have also helped citizens get involved in renewable energy projects:** In **Vienna**, between 2012 and October 2020, 6,000 citizens had taken part in a programme whereby the city-owned utility, Wien Energie, installs solar panels on buildings and then offers people the opportunity to buy the panels and lease them back to the utility for an annual return.

Austria's Energy Profile

<https://www.iea.org/countries/austria>

Regional Trends: Europe

- European cities are global leaders on urban energy and climate issues, often driven by the push for greater climate action and the desire to improve the health of city residents; Europe is spearheading the climate emergency declaration movement, accounting for almost half of the total 1,852 declarations (2020). More than 350 cities had a renewable energy target.

² Dunning involves any communication between the utility and the customer such as phone calls or letters to ensure the collection of payment on outstanding invoices. Dunning costs refer to any additional expenses associated with this process.

- In line with the EU Green Deal, cities have also committed to net-zero goals, developed more holistic strategies, integrated solutions to decarbonise activities in urban areas: scaling up renewables on municipal buildings, using waste and wastewater as inputs, shifting municipal fleets, integrating solar and geothermal district heating.

Questions? Please contact press@ren21.net or +33 1 44 37 50 99.

All report materials, figures, case studies and the full data pack can be downloaded here:
<http://ren21.net/rec2021press>