

The importance of transparency in the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) Revision

The [NECP revision process](#) offers EU member states the chance to identify ‘net zero risk areas’, evaluate – and be honest with the public – about how well-developed planning is across different sectors, ensure internal consistency and avoid double counting. Information to be included in the NECPs is broad-ranging and very detailed. It includes public and stakeholder consultation; national objectives and targets; planned policies and measures; modelling for business as usual as well as with planned measures including macroeconomic analysis and assessment of the health, environmental, employment and social impacts of planned policies and measures; and investment requirements. There is a need for transparency from government about the complex issues which must be covered by the NECPs in order for citizens to understand the scale of the changes which must occur, the interactions between sectors and to allow informed decisions about key policy choices to be made at national level so that countries can [take ownership of the transition to net-zero](#) and [assess how well features of their climate governance arrangements are operating](#).

1. What is the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) revision process?

The [NECP](#) is a ten-year plan which must outline how an EU member state will tackle climate change through emissions reductions, increase in renewables, interconnections and research and innovation. The ongoing EU revision process requiring member states to revise their NECPs by June 2023 presents member states with a timely opportunity to enhance transparency on planned climate measures and supporting policies.

2. Why is transparency in the NECPs so important?

- The NECP revision process is a once-in-a-decade chance to enhance member state transparency on planned climate measures and supporting policies. It is an opportunity to identify so called ‘net-zero risk areas’. These are areas which have cross-sectoral implications, but which are challenging to accurately quantify meaning it is hard to evaluate where member states are with their planning on these topics. Potential net-zero risk areas whether demand for energy sources such as bioenergy and hydrogen matches up to domestic production and imports, whether the total land use that will be needed for anticipated quantities of food, biomass, renewables and afforestation matches the suitable land that is available for these purposes, whether the planned level of renewable electricity production matches its potential in the country and whether this is sufficient to accommodate expected demand increase due to electrification in all sectors. Identifying these areas and making sure information is very clear will help ensure internal consistency and avoid double counting.
- Without transparency it will be impossible for citizens to fully participate in the conversations about the critical policy choices that will be made during the transition to net zero. [Recent advice from the European Scientific Advisory Board](#) on climate change highlighted the importance of inclusive public participation and decision-making to ensure equity and justice and to catalyse wider innovation and capacity development. Transparent NECPs mean that even if governments don’t yet have all the answers the necessary problem solving can progress and these vital conversations with society can be honest and well-informed.
- This means that countries must be comprehensive and specific in the information they include in their NECPs. They must include detailed info on the specific shifts that will enable their country to reach net zero, the impacts on material use and the imports of new energy alternatives like synthetic fuels. Without transparent NECPs it will be impossible to assess whether the sum of national plans will deliver the either the country’s own or the EU’s overall climate targets.

Please cite this document as:

Ciara Brennan, ‘The importance of transparency in the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) Revision’ EJN Briefing Paper, June 2023 available [here](#).

3. Why should we focus on transparency in the NECP process now?

The process for revising NECPs is already well underway, with draft NECPs due on the 30th June 2023. The EU Commission will assess these drafts in December 2024 and final NECPs must be submitted by June 2024. It is therefore essential that transparency is implemented throughout this process because there is less than 1-year left to ensure it is done properly.

4. What are the benefits of having transparent NECPs?

- Encouraging public participation: Transparency in NECPs can help to encourage public participation in the development and implementation of climate policies. This can help to ensure that the policies are more effective and better aligned with the country-specific needs and preferences of society – encouraging national ownership of the policy choices made.
- Enhancing accountability: It becomes easier to hold governments and other stakeholders accountable for their commitments and actions if the public is well-informed about the real choices which need to be made. This can help to build trust and credibility among stakeholders and ensure that everyone is working towards a common goal. It can also help dispel negative narratives which will slow down political decision making on climate action.
- Improving data quality: Transparency in NECPs can also drive governments to invest in the improvement of data quality and availability, which is essential for making informed decisions about energy policies and investments. It can promote innovation and problem solving in research which can lead to new ideas and solutions about how to meet targets. It can also allow countries to evaluate their progress compared to other countries and reconsider their strategies and policies if course corrections need to be made. Effective EU policy-making towards climate neutrality needs detailed information and new initiatives such as the [European Climate Neutrality Observatory](#) are placing an emphasis on the need for transparency.

5. Why is it particularly important for Ireland's NECP to be transparent?

On Friday 2nd June 2023, Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its [latest projections](#) for greenhouse gas emissions up until 2050. In a stark assessment, the EPA analysis indicated that Ireland will miss its 2030 targets by a wide margin and across all sectors – including agriculture, industry, electric and transport. The scale of the disparity between Ireland's legally binding targets and its anticipated performance has attracted [severe criticism](#) from leading NGOs and the Government [has struggled to explain](#) how Ireland can possibly close this very significant gap. The EPA has warned that to reach the 2030 target Ireland must now develop implementing policies that deliver emission reductions across all sectors of the economy in the short term as well as introducing a more ambitious 2024 climate plan and Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council has [called for](#) the immediate production of a detailed emissions trajectory for each sector, setting out how the sectoral emissions ceilings will be achieved. The NECP revision offers an opportunity to set out exactly how Ireland will meet its targets and be honest with the public about where it is with plan-making and what issues still need to be resolved.

6. What should member states do to improve transparency in NECPs?

- Identify areas where there are risks of inconsistency and double counting across sectors.
- Identify areas where information is lacking on key parameters which have cross-sectoral implications.
- Provide aggregate assessments of the planned demand and supply of energy and other key resources.
- Reflect on whether the sum of the plans is consistent with national targets and commitments.
- Reflect on whether the sum of the plans is consistent with the EU level picture.

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