

# France drops renewables targets in new energy bill

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A new energy bill sets targets for renewing France's park of nuclear energy plants but not expanding wind or solar power production.

Critics are deriding as a step backward a new French energy bill that favors the further development of nuclear power and avoids setting

targets for solar and wind power and other renewables.

France, like other EU countries, aims to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050.

The proposed text, which is slated to go before the cabinet early next month and then be submitted to lawmakers, reaffirms France's commitment to [nuclear power](#) to ensure "[energy](#) sovereignty".

The country became a leader in [nuclear power generation](#) after the 1973 oil crisis, building over 50 such power plants that produced around two-thirds of the country's electricity.

But those reactors are aging and France has yet to bring the first of a new generation of nuclear power plants online.

The proposed text affirms "the sustainable choice of using [nuclear energy](#) as a competitive and carbon-free" source of electricity, and targets the construction of at least six but as many as 14 new reactors to pull off the transition to [clean energy](#) and meet climate change goals.

But the proposed text sets no such targets for building renewable capacity, in particular wind and solar, whereas previous energy laws did.

The Ministry of Energy Transition said "it is false to say that there is no renewables objective" as the [government](#) will set the targets itself later.

But that pledge does not satisfy activists and experts.

"It's a terrible step back," said Arnaud Gosse, a lawyer specializing in environmental law.

He recalled that in a 2019 law, parliament stated the desire to debate the

share of different energy sources in overall production.

## 'Tending' instead of targets

"If you only quantify nuclear power, you do not know the share of non-renewable energies. As a result, nuclear gets prioritized and, depending on remaining coverage needs, non-renewables will be the subject of floating (future) decrees. It's no longer a mix," Gosse said.

To reach its stated ambition of carbon neutrality by 2050 France will have to massively ramp up the production and share of renewables, studies have repeatedly shown.

After years of prevarication, France last year voted through two bills designed to speed up progress on nuclear as well as renewables.

In November, the government put forward initial figures proposing a doubling to 18 GW of offshore [wind power](#) in 2035 as well as setting out the annual rate of deployment of solar panels needed to hit 75 GW in 2035, while also aiming for a doubling of onshore wind power capacity to 40 GW in 2035.

Jules Nyssen, president of France's Renewable Energies Union, declared himself "stunned" after discovering that renewables targets did not appear in the draft.

The text promises to make efforts rather than set objectives and uses formulations such as "tending towards a reduction".

For Anne Bringault, energy transition manager of the Climate Action Network, "this is an extremely significant step backwards, and totally inconsistent with European objectives.

"Even if the objectives are raised, we no longer have such a strong commitment to them," she said.

The draft law also drops targets for reducing energy consumption via renovation of buildings.

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