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From Green Deal to Green Recovery: An Initiative of the European Solar Thermal Industry

Within a few months, the COVID-19 crisis added a dramatic level of urgency to act – beyond single national interests. In light of the current discussion on the Green Deal launched as a strategic priority by the European Commission, a joint statement has been co-signed by 176 companies, R&D entities, and associations across Europe. The initiative led by the European Solar Thermal Electricity Association (ESTELA) is calling for recognition of the European solar thermal industry's important role in the fight against climate change and in providing immediately available solutions to decarbonize energy systems.

Corona brings with it a new urgency to revive the European economy, while at the same time the Green Deal offers an opportunity to make the economy green and resilient after the COVID-19 crisis. Solar thermal technologies (Concentrated Solar Thermal, CST) bring immediately available solutions to decarbonize energy systems while opening wide business opportunities and creating sustainable jobs. The CST initiative therefore calls for a "Green Recovery" with the inclusion of solar thermal energy.

The decarbonization challenge applies to three sectors: electricity, heating and cooling and transport. Electricity appears today as the relatively easier-to-reach target, while heat and even more transport are facing complex challenges and will need more time and effort. CST can provide dispatchable electrical power and high temperature heat (up to 900°C) with a very high capacity factor (7000h/year) to enable the decarbonization of industrial processes. A smart integration of CST in energy policies will result in innovative multi-technologies solutions impacting the above-mentioned sectors. Besides the CST technologies addressed by ESTELA, also non-concentrating solar thermal technologies operating at lower temperatures can contribute significantly to the decarbonization of the building and industrial sectors.

The CST initiative points out that the European solar industry should not be addressed only as the Photovoltaic sector (PV), discarding the considerable assets of CST. Large corporations, SMEs and research entities in many European countries are working in parallel on sustainable answers using solar technologies. In this business reality, CST is not a competitor to PV, but a driver for the further deployment of solar electricity generation within Europe and abroad. The European solar thermal industry can provide power on demand at utility scale without further delay, at low costs. This is the timely answer to the challenge of intermittency of PV and wind at reasonable costs.

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To reap the benefits of CST especially, to further reduce CST costs through economies of scale and to keep the European technological leadership in the field of CST, the signatories therefore call for the energy policy course to be adjusted. Among other things they demand the inclusion of CST and its characteristics into national regulatory framework conditions and tendering schemes for renewables electricity projects, access to comparable financial conditions – as available to non-EU competitors on world markets – and the support of large scale CST demonstration projects for high temperature process heat and industrial decarbonization projects within a more ambitious European innovation ecosystem.

Link to the initiative:

https://www.estelasolar.org/20200528_joint-initiative-of-the-eu-solar-industry/

For more information, please contact ESTELA at contact@estelasolar.org, www.estelasolar.org



Section of a CST parabolic trough power plant near the town of Ouarzazate in Morocco. ©Fraunhofer ISE.