



RÉGION
NORMANDIE

Management of the transition to renewable energy in Normandy

Action needed to engage citizens and project proponents

This policy brief is a deliverable of
APPROVE - an Interreg Europe Low-carbon economy project

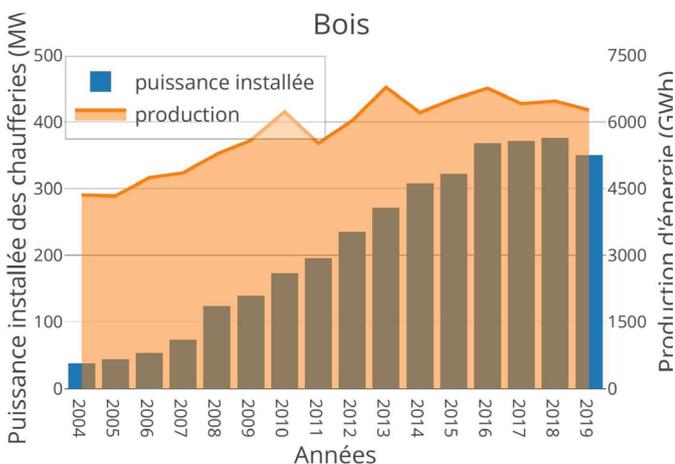
APPROVE
Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

The Region of Normandy was created in 2016 after the merger of the Upper and Lower Normandy Regions. It is composed of six administrative departments for a total of 3.4 million inhabitants representing 5.1% of the French population. Normandy is the 9th Region in France in terms of inhabitants. Population density is 111.8 / km².

From an energy point of view, Normandy is characterized by three nuclear power plants providing more electricity than the territorial consumption. But the history of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) started in 1990's with the first regional wood energy program. Its objectives were to organize and involve the stakeholders of this activity creating a real cluster around wood energy in Normandy, and to develop the use of wood for the production of renewable heat or electricity. A few years after, Normandy is an example in France for the organization of the wood energy sector from forestry/wood exploitation to management of heat plants.



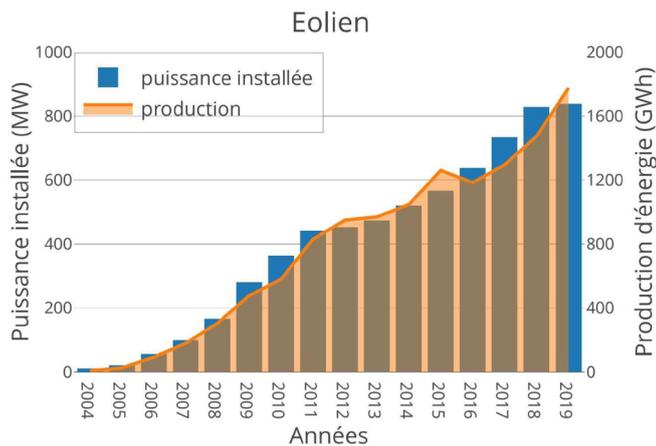
Legenda: abscissa : years elapsed / left ordinate : installed capacity in MW / right ordinate : energy production in GWh. Blue bar chart: evolution of the installed capacity. Line chart: evolution of the energy production.

Comment: There has been a continuous development of the installed capacity except in 2019, and in the meantime the production fluctuated in a general positive trend.

Normandy is also interested in wind energy. Four offshore wind farms (2,5 GW) are approved and two of them have entered in construction phase. The production of renewable electricity will start in early 2023. Onshore, there are now (2019 data) 82 windfarms representing 838 MW of installed capacity.

Key points

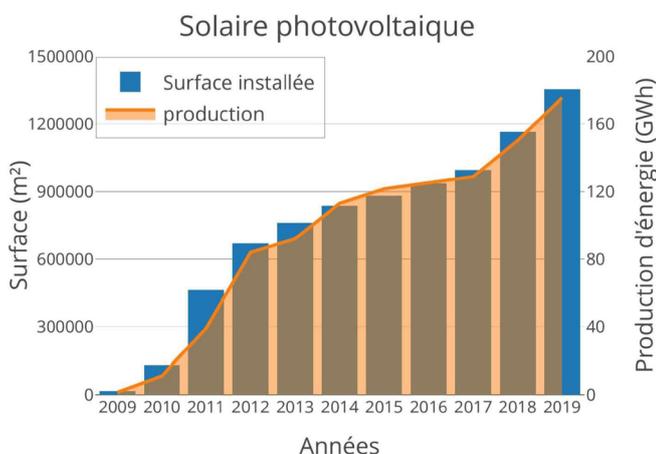
- ▶ Normandy is currently below the French national objectives on the share of renewable energy in its energetic mix considering its final energy consumption. However, the territory has real assets to develop renewable energy production. **The Normandy Region implements a regional policy** (notably through three-year programs) **in order to develop and support the projects. Results are particularly good in the field of biogas production.** Nevertheless, like the wind energy sector, the biogas production meets an increasing opposition from some inhabitants. APPROVE has identified some needs and challenges but also some tools and good practices which allow to improve the way to promote and make the energy transition possible in Normandy.
- ▶ **The Normandy Region** has chosen to concentrate its efforts on the way to **take into account the main arguments of the opponents to renewable energy projects** (especially for the biogas sector which is facing a noteworthy increase of lawsuits), and on the participation of citizens in renewable energy projects. Two actions have been set up to that purpose.
- ▶ The main recommendation that can be made is to **think of the acceptability of the policy or projects before launching a public policy aiming at the development of renewable energies in a territory.** The citizens' awareness raising, participation and involvement in the energy transition is as important as the funding of the projects. It is often easier to implement a public policy with this attention rather than set up actions in reaction to oppositions.



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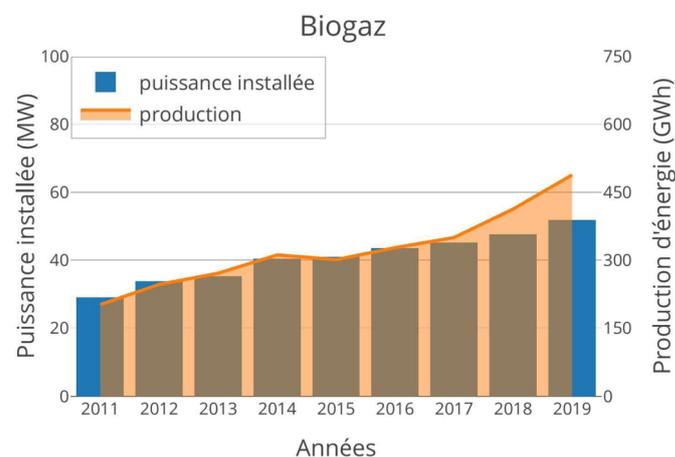
As concerns the solar photovoltaic energy, Normandy reached 178 MW of installed capacity in 2019, with 1 350 000 m² of solar panels.



Legenda: abscissa: years elapsed / left ordinate : installed capacity in square meter / right ordinate : energy production in GWh. Blue bar chart: evolution of the installed capacity. Line chart: evolution of the energy production.

Comment: As for wind energy there has been a notable increase of installed capacity have been created in less than 10 years. However, we can see two phases of development and a period of stability (2011-2014). It seems that a new period of stability has started.

Considering the success of wood energy organization, the Normandy Region and the National agency of environment and energy have decided to start a similar action dealing with biogas production in Normandy. A three year program 2018-2020 has been engaged with the aims to organize the stakeholders and make projects possible. The results are really good with a lot of new projects under preparation or even under construction. The number of biogas plants rose from 66 in 2016, all small scale installations producing electricity, to 143 on 2021 September 1 (including medium sized plants), 17 of which injecting gas into the grid (only one in 2018 / 12 in 2020 out of 132 biogas plants).



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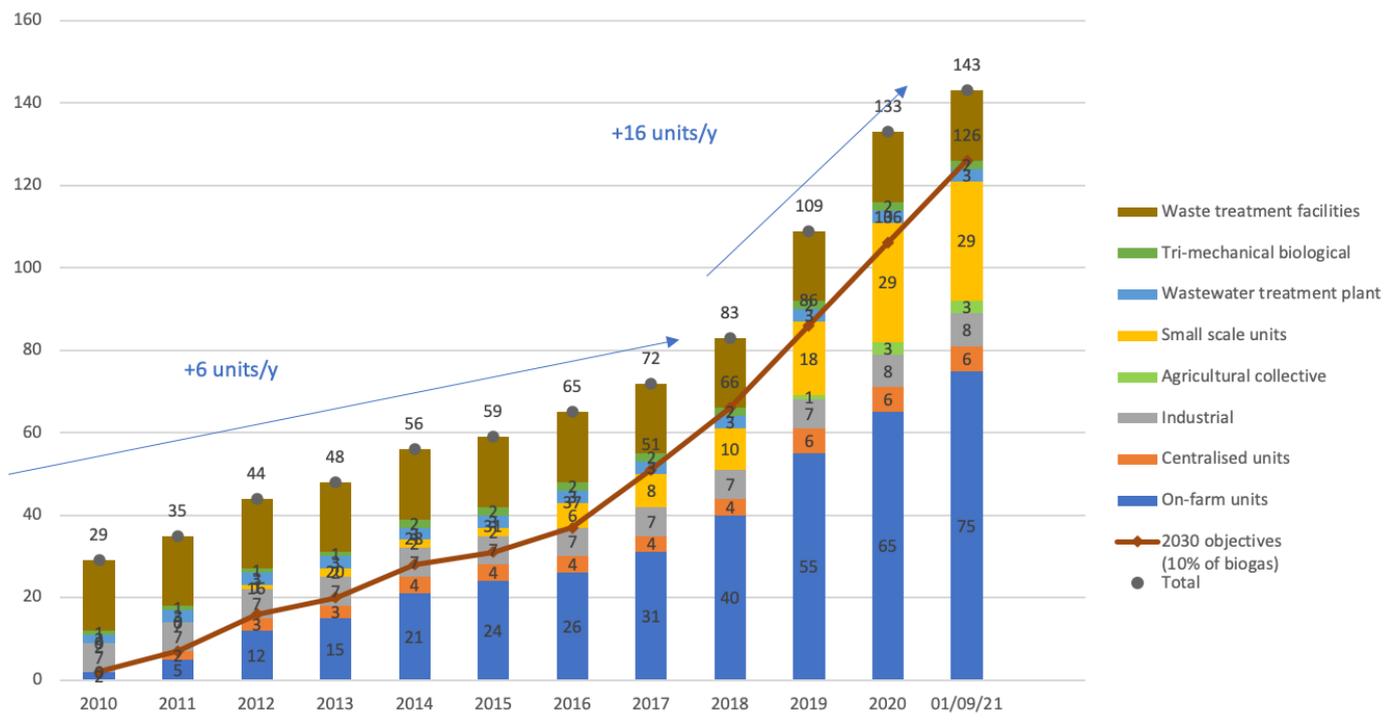
Comment: As for others renewable energy the installed has doubled un less than 10 years. Below, one can see the clear increase of the number on biogas plants. Until 2017 there was an average of 6 new plants per year. Since 2018 it has been an average of 17 new plant per year. The colored bars refer to the type of plant (blue & green = projects held by farmers (individuals or groups)).

However, depending on the kind of renewable energy and the location, the development of new plants generates more and more lawsuits and legal proceedings causing consequent delays or cancellations.

Moreover, the permitting process generally involves citizens only at the late stage of the project development, when the most important choices have already been made. This creates a feeling of

powerlessness which in many situations evolves into an active opposition as soon as people know about a new project. Population has therefore the feeling to be kept apart from the decisions.

Development of biogas production units in regards to the regional roadmap



Legenda: abscissa : years elapsed / ordinate : number of biogas plants

Good practice

Collaborative planning for improving social acceptance of forestry practices in state-owned lands



The objective of this Lapland practice is to combine the needs of different interest groups in the choice of forestry practices, improving their social acceptance.

Metsähallitus, the organisation responsible for managing state-owned forests, uses collaborative forestry planning methods that ensure the local inhabitants and stakeholders have a possibility to influence their living surroundings and the land use. These collaborative methods include cooperation groups, thematic workshops, negotiations and newer types of collaborative planning, such as online map questionnaires, to increase public participation.

More information: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/approve/good-practices/>

The multiplication of oppositions to RES production projects is a concern for the Regional Council, which pays attention to the energy transition objectives to reach for its territory. The aim of the Region, by participating into the Interreg Europe APPROVE project, was to boost the trend regarding the renewable energy development improving its

ERDF Regional Operational Programme (ROP) but also its regional funding measures by:

- Developing/supporting new projects, especially in the field of biogas production, to be funded under the ROP under investment priority 4.a ("Promoting the production and distribution

of energy from renewable sources”). When Normandy Region decided to participate in APPROVE, only one biogas production project had been submitted and approved in the framework of the Haute-Normandie ERDF ROP. Normandy Regional Council was making the statement of a lack of projects submitted.

- › Working for a better governance and management of the policy instruments, and especially promoting effective stakeholder engagement in the energy planning process or providing stakeholders with a better understanding of the scope of the policy instrument and its content.
- › Contributing to improve the local acceptability of RES.

The awareness raising of citizens is a key point for reachable energy transition objectives. Their

involvement in the way the territory is engaged in the energy transition is indeed necessary.

Informing people and raising awareness about renewable energy in citizens, but also in the local elected officials and civil servants, is essential. It is a first step to reduce the local opposition. However, it is not sufficient.

For instance, opponents highlight both technical and methodological points in biogas projects. If some of their arguments are not correct or even misleading, some of them have to be heard by public authorities. In some cases an improvement of the project quality is undoubtedly needed.

The Normandy Region has worked with its regional stakeholders and with the APPROVE partners to identify good practices or tools that would be effective to improve the quality and local acceptability of RES projects.

Good practice

A crowdfunding and citizen-focused renewable energy project

A citizen-focused project was launched in Normandy via the social enterprise Plaine Sud Energies to create 3 solar power sites on the roofs of schools in Bourguébus, St Aignan de Cramesnil and Garcelles Secqueville. In a citizen-focused project citizens participate in its funding and are actively involved in its governance.

This practice was triggered by the following objectives:

- › Involvement of citizens and communities - legally and financially - in a local renewable energy project
- › Desire to harness some of the economic benefits of the project for the local area
- › Residents' desire to take ownership of energy production
- › Need for education regarding the ecological transition

When used as a site for solar panels, schools can provide educational support for parents and children: digital signage was installed to inform parents and students about the real-time production of electricity. There was a significant consultation before the project, including some citizens undergoing legal and financial training to ensure proper management of Plaine Sud Energies: the citizens are, in such a situation, involved in the governance of the company, meaning in the governance of the project; in fact, the point of the good practice is that the citizens, rather than traditional developers, are in the heart of energy production. This allows a great participation of the citizens in the project as well as a greater transparency and an appropriation of the financial repercussion for the citizens.



More information :

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/approve/good-practices/>

Good practice

Service unit wind energy & quality label in Thuringia

In 2015, a Wind Energy Service Unit was set up in Thuringia by the state's Energy and GreenTech Agency (ThEGA). The establishment was in part motivated by the political will to restore trust in local wind energy projects by promoting fair and more transparent planning and decision-making procedures.

The Service Unit in Thuringia provides free, comprehensive and neutral advisory and technical assistance services for citizens, municipalities and developers. In addition, in 2016, the Service Unit started to award a voluntary fair quality label for wind energy project developers committing themselves to adhere to certain standards concerning involvement of different interest groups, transparency and fair participation of the local communities.



Furthermore, the measures help to bring together developers and communities/citizens and improve the active and passive financial participation of citizens and communities in wind energy projects. For the award of the label, it is required that planners and developers fulfil transparency and participation criteria also including the development of direct financial participation opportunities for citizens and municipalities in Thuringia.

More information : <https://www.interregeurope.eu/approve-good-practices/>

A big work has also been done at the regional level to share the APPROVE project progress and to collect and discuss ideas throughout the phase 1 of the project. The Normandy Region gathered numerous and various regional stakeholders within the APPROVE's Normandy regional group (e.g. state services like the Regional directorate for the environment, planning and housing, energy unions of the Eure, Calvados and Manche departments, ADEME (the National agency for environment and energy), the Normandy energy cluster, companies in the field of energy like ENGIE or GRDF, municipalities unions, a sociologist of the

University of Caen, associations and organizations involved in the renewable energy field like Biomasse Normandie, Enercoop, 7 vents cooperative). Many APPROVE regional stakeholder meetings have been held. A thorough analysis of regional gaps, needs and challenges in the development of RES was shared.

All the work done in the framework of APPROVE has led the Normandy Region to set up its action plan which focus on citizen involvement and leverage for a better acceptability of RES projects, which will be implemented during phase 2 of the project.

7 Vents cooperative/enercoop study

Analysis, identification of tools and actions, recommendations for the development of participatory and citizen-led renewable energy projects in Normandy

This study was developed in APPROVE with the purpose of identifying tools and actions and issuing recommendations for the development of participatory and citizen-led renewable energy projects in Normandy. This type of project is promoted in particular with a view to encouraging local ownership of the energy issue, and therefore a greater willingness to accommodate renewable energies in the territory. First, the potentials of renewable energies are presented, along with an analysis of the Normandy context, and the advantages of a participatory and citizen-led approach are underlined. A presentation of cases from other regions of France then gives a detailed overview of the various types of possible organization. Finally, the study focuses more specifically on Normandy.



More information : <https://www.interregeurope.eu/approve/good-practices/>

The action plan has been built thanks to the work done during the APPROVE project and the inspiration by both regional stakeholders and project partners. The two actions planned are expected to contribute significantly to the regional policies tackling the issue of increasing local oppositions. Indeed, the two actions focus on what has been identified within APPROVE as barriers to the development of RES and on what the Normandy Region has experienced during the last three years regarding the RES projects to be funded. The action plan aims to take into account some of the arguments of the opponents and also to ensure the better involvement of citizens.

Inspiration was taken from some good practices like those presented in the boxes of this policy brief: “Collaborative planning for improving social acceptance of forestry practices in state-owned lands” (identified by the Lapland Region, APPROVE lead partner), “A crowdfunding and citizen-focused renewable energy project” (identified by the Normandy Region itself), or “Service unit wind energy & quality label in Thuringia” (identified by the advisory partner Poliedra). The exchanges done during the project. And especially in bilateral meetings with the project partner EREN, the Regional public energy entity of Castilla y Leon have also provided useful insights. Two actions are planned:

› **Action 1.** **IMPROVED BIOGAS PROJECTS CRITERIA AND CHARTER/PROTOCOL ABOUT THE PROJECT’S ENVIRONMENTAL AND PARTICIPATORY ASPECTS**

This action aims to set up new criteria for biogas projects to be funded by ERDF and other public funds. These criteria will address technical, environmental and social issues and more generally the design and implementation method for the new projects. Therefore, criticism from opponents will be taken into account as much as possible and hopefully lawsuits or legal proceedings will decrease.

The work on criteria will essentially be done by ADEME (the National agency for environment and energy) and the Normandy Region. The regional stakeholders will be involved and will

also be engaged in the preparation of a charter or a label regarding the characteristics of biogas production plants to promote and support. The fulfilling of the principles of this charter/label would be a priority condition to have access to public funding for the project holders. This label would also be a communication tool to promote biogas production.

The action started in September 2020 and will have a first assessment at the end of APPROVE in November 2022. Some uncertainty about its implementation is due to the fact that it is directly linked to the building process of the next ROP and its schedule.

› **Action 2.** **DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NORMANDY FRAMEWORK AND ANIMATION FOR A CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN ENERGY PROJECTS**

This action focuses on citizen involvement in RES projects. It aims to engage citizens with two-years activities of information, sensibilization and promotion of participatory and citizen-led renewable energy projects. This action includes also trainings for both citizens and local elected officials and civil servant. A first level of support is planned for local communities who want to manage energy projects. The intention is also to structure the stakeholder network within 2-3 years, accelerating a process that without the support of the Region would definitely take longer. This will allow to disseminate the approach, create links among regional stakeholders, and help citizen groups to be set up and mature with the support of the network. This will finally facilitate concrete projects.

This action will be led by regional stakeholders with the support of the Normandy Region. This action has started in and will last till the end of 2022

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#1

Regional **policies for renewable energy should include the question of the acceptability of the projects** as integral part of their strategies and plans. It is often easier to implement such a public policy with this attention rather than set up actions in reaction of oppositions. The citizens' information, awareness, participation and general involvement in the energy transition is a key point for reachable objectives.

#2

The development of **quality criteria or quality labels** seems to be a good way to prevent the assignment of public funding to poor quality projects which could hurt public opinion and ruin the regional policy. Communicate on the kind of project public funds can support is a useful complementary action.

#3

Develop actions to mobilize citizens but also all the stakeholders. Providing data and trainings to local elected officials or civil servants improves their capacity to appreciate RES benefits and be a first level of support for the projects.

#4

Within France and Europe **the sharing of experiences** about the promotion of citizens RES projects **should be expanded and strengthened.** It allows to be more efficient and effective building on the lessons learnt.

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Junta de Castilla y León

