

Portugal energy independence

However, "the solar component continues to grow substantially," REN says. April saw the "highest monthly significance ever recorded" for solar - when it covered 10.5 per cent of the country's electricity consumption.

Remarkably, the 94.9 per cent share of the electricity mix that renewables covered in April isn't a national record. That was set 46 years ago in May 1978, when they peaked at 95.4 per cent. REN has been contacted for more information about this historical record.

It has got serious about decarbonisation in a variety of ways, from phasing out coal-fired generation in 2021, to boosting its large hydropower fleet with added storage capacity.

All this has laid the ground for some milestone moments. For six consecutive days last autumn, for example, renewable energy production actually exceeded the country's electricity needs.

But, as elsewhere, it's no good a renewable leader resting on its laurels. Ember's new European Electricity Review report notes that Portugal has still not moved past the peak in wind generation it achieved in 2019.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Laborat?rio Nacional de Energia e Geologia (LNEG) and The Portuguese Renewable Energy Association (APREN) have forged a groundbreaking collaboration to support Portugal's ambitious energy transition agenda. This strategic alliance brings together environmental expertise, scientific research, and stakeholder engagement to drive sustainable energy solutions for the country.

Under a newly signed Memorandum of Understanding, the organisations will work in close collaboration with all relevant Portuguese stakeholders, including Portuguese environmental NGOs, to identify optimal areas for solar and wind energy projects while respecting ecological and cultural values. The resulting map aims to help Portugal's policymakers, public bodies, investors, and developers to meet the EU's mandate for the designation of Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs) by February 2026.

Building on LNEG's pioneering research released earlier this year, the project will deploy TNC's smart siting methodology already used in the United States, India, Croatia, and across the Western Balkans to meticulously assess Portugal's terrain to pinpoint prime locations for solar and wind energy projects. These acceleration areas will be selected based on environmental suitability, technical feasibility, and alignment with Portugal's ambitious commitment to a 90% share of renewable electricity by 2030.

The project, which will conclude in early 2026, was initiated during a workshop in February to establish objectives and potential barriers. The group highlighted the importance of kicking off this work well ahead of the RAA deadline to enable high-quality public consultation and effectively sequence requirements for environmental assessment and national spatial mapping.



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"Portugal has an opportunity to set the pace for renewable acceleration in Europe, but they must go smart to go fast. We are thrilled to be working with Portugal's leading authorities on renewable energy and environmental protection to help deploy TNC's smart siting methodology and ensure that wind and solar deployment is done in harmony with priorities for nature and local communities."

"Our country has excellent conditions for renewable energy production, but also for (eco)tourism, agriculture, and other economic development possibilities. These are possible since Portugal also has valuable ecosystem services that need to be preserved. We believe this collaboration can contribute to harmonize both and thus accelerate our country's sustainable and just energy transition."

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