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The European Solar Value Chain Raises Concerns over Lack of Positive Signals for the Industry in the Green Deal

Brussels/Freiburg, May 5, 2020 The coalition ‘Solar Europe Now’, which has been officially launched today, is calling for the recognition of solar energy as a key driver to deliver on the European Green Deal ambitions. This coalition which gathers currently over 90 actors from the European solar value chain is concerned that the current lack of financial and R&D impetus in the sector will hinder its development, halt the EU’s industrial sovereignty in strategic technologies and limit the EU’s effectiveness in achieving decarbonisation throughout the continent.

Sun-generated energy is widely-recognised as crucial to build a secure and sustainable energy system for the future, at both European and global level. All future energy scenarios developed by the EU to achieve climate objectives by 2050 foresee a key role for solar photovoltaic energy. (*Commission Communication ‘A Clean Planet for All: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy’* (COM(2018) 773), 28 November 2018 and *‘In depth analysis in support of the Commission communication’* 28 November 2018.)

Yet, the communication from the European Commission on the Green Deal, which constitutes the roadmap for EU authorities to encourage energy transition in the coming years, mentions the crucial role of renewable energy in the phasing out of coal and the decarbonisation of Europe, but does not mention solar energy, contrary to offshore wind energy which is recognised as a key driver.

There is however a rich potential in Europe for the development of a strong solar industry. Photovoltaics currently cover 3% of total EU electricity demand, with an estimated potential of 15% by 2030. European research centers are dedicated to developing cutting-edge industrial solutions along the photovoltaic value chain. These new cutting-edge solutions provide the ground for a renaissance of globally competitive European industrial PV production. The overall annual global turnover of the European PV industry is currently estimated at 5 billion euros, but much of its potential remains untapped with high capacity for economic growth and job creation.

For Roch Drozdowski-Strehl, CEO of IPVF, a world-renowned photovoltaic research institute based in France and initiator of the coalition, the scaling-up of research and innovation investments in the sector will be key to fostering the development of this strategic industry and release its full potential. *“Together with the world leading research centres in Europe, Europe can lead the market of high-end PV cells and*

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modules. In Europe, major institutes have positioned themselves strongly in the competitive race for new technologies. European institutions should support this by any means possible”.

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Prof. Andreas Bett, Director of Fraunhofer ISE, Germany adds: *“Some of the world’s most advanced technologies, such as tandem solar cells surpassing the efficiency values of silicon solar cells as well as sustainable production technologies including cradle-to-cradle and recycling, are currently being designed in European research centers. Encouraging investments in these key technologies at EU level will provide unique opportunities for innovation breakthroughs and intellectual property developments while opening up space for newcomers”.*

Stimulating R&D in the sector would not only reinforce the EU’s industrial sovereignty in the face of China which still produces 97% of the world’s solar panels, and strengthen its leadership in key strategic technologies, but would also represent a positive signal to manufacturers.

Edyta Witkowska-Grzeškiewicz, Managing Director of Bruk-Bet Solar, Polish manufacturer of photovoltaic modules, testifies: *“Thanks to advances in process automation and industry 4.0, it could be possible today to manufacture materials, solar cells and modules in Europe at a competitive cost. Such a European manufacturing industry will benefit from the technological innovations developed by the world-leading European research ecosystem, and it will deliver high-quality and low-carbon footprint solar panels to the fast-growing European market”.*

Members of the Solar Europe Now coalition are calling on the European institutions to better recognise the strategic value of solar PV in upcoming climate, research & innovation and sustainable finance initiatives. The development of solar capacity is necessary to achieving the EU’s 2050 climate neutrality objective, and Solar Europe Now is committed to working alongside European decision-makers to discuss opportunities to shed some sunlight on the Green Deal and stimulate Europe’s solar PV production capacity.

Roch Drozdowski-Strehl concludes: *“Such a dynamic market provides the basis for reviving the European solar manufacturing industry as well as creating more than 100,000 jobs across the value chain. The European Green Deal offers an opportunity to expand sustainable and job-intensive activities in the areas of low-emission technologies, thus compensating for the reductions in employment in the fossil fuel sector and in carbon-intensive processes. It is essential that we develop a tailored policy and financing framework to revive European PV manufacturing capacity”.*

About the ‘Solar Europe Now’ coalition

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The Solar Europe Now coalition brings together more than 90 actors of the European solar photovoltaic value chain from 15 European countries. Convinced that solar energy is critical to reach climate-neutrality by 2050, the coalition includes research centers and industry representatives from all over Europe, calling for a better integration of solar PV into climate and energy policies at the European level.

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Consult the call-to-action of 'Solar Europe Now' here: <https://www.ipvf.fr/sen/>



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