AURORA ENERGY RESEARCH

Capacity remuneration mechanisms in Europe

January 2025

Executive Summary

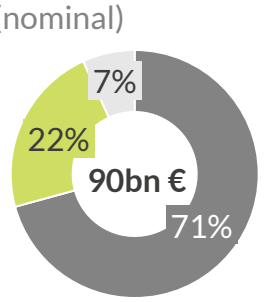
Background:

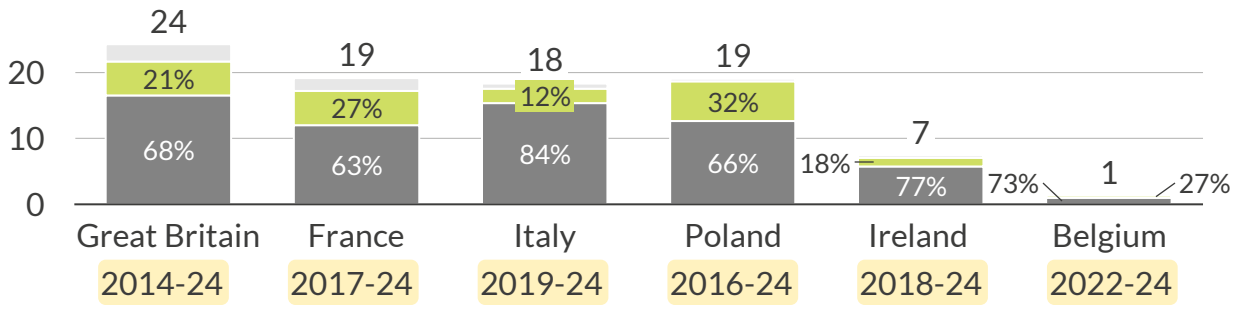
- Aurora Energy Research was commissioned by Beyond Fossil Fuels (BFF) to conduct research on capacity remuneration mechanisms (CRMs) in Europe, with a focus on the contracts and payments allocated to gas-fired assets.
- The analysis resulted in two products:
  - An **Excel database** of gas-fired power plants and projects in Europe for which payments are or have been contracted under CRMs (to be published by BFF).
  - **This report** that analyses CRMs qualitatively and provides a quantitative stock-taking of existing CRMs based on the data collected in the database and other data sources.

- **Strong wind and solar buildout** and **the phase-out of CO_2-intensive power generation** are **essential to meet Europe's renewable energy and climate targets.**
- The **increasing share of variable renewable power requires more system flexibility** to ensure supply security. This can be achieved by **further integrating the European power system**, **leveraging demand-side response**, and **accelerating the roll-out** of **batteries, long-duration energy storage**, and energy efficiency measures.
- **Some European countries use capacity markets** (CMs) to ensure sufficient levels of flexible and dispatchable capacity. **These markets have implications for Europe's climate targets**.
- So far, **thermal technologies like gas, coal, and – mostly in France, nuclear plants have received more than two-thirds of the estimated 90bn € in capacity payments allocated**[1], with gas-fired assets accounting for about half.
- **30GW** of **new gas-fired capacity has been contracted in CMs over the last decade**. Many of these **assets' technical lifetimes extend beyond targets for climate neutrality.** To reach them, these **assets need to be decarbonised**, which may involve early decommissioning. While some countries are considering retrofitting plants with CCS[2] or a fuel switch to hydrogen, this would be costly, require major infrastructure changes, and exhibit other uncertainties.
- **To meet climate targets, capacity markets should be designed to incentivize emission-free options** like batteries and **enforce emission regulations for thermal assets**, even if their primary role is to ensure security of supply.

Aggregated contracted capacity market payments in selected European countries by category from 2014 to 2024

Bn € (nominal)





Thermal generation capacity[1] | Renewable & flexible capacity[2] | Capacity not assignable[3] | First to most recent auction year

1) Allocated payments include payments secured for delivery of capacity in the future, i.e. payments that have not yet been made. 2) Carbon capture and storage. 3) Includes gas, coal, and nuclear. 4) Includes storage assets, renewables and demand-side response (DSR). 5) Technology category not inferable from source data.

Sources: Aurora Energy Research, regional power system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia).

Agenda

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I. What are capacity remuneration mechanisms and how do they fit with climate policy?

II. Stock taking of capacity remuneration mechanisms in Europe

III. Appendix

Rapid decarbonisation of the electricity system is the key to achieving renewable energy and climate targets

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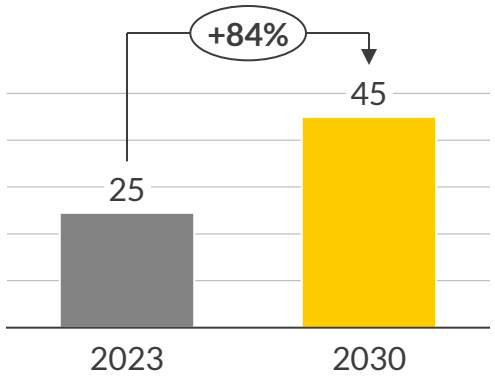
1 The EU targets a 45% renewable share in energy consumption by 2030 and Net Zero emissions by 2050, some countries have set more ambitious goals.

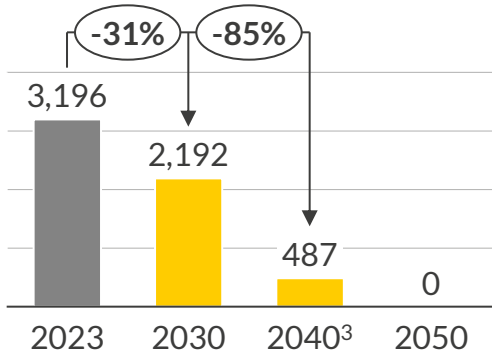
2030 EU renewable energy target[1]

%

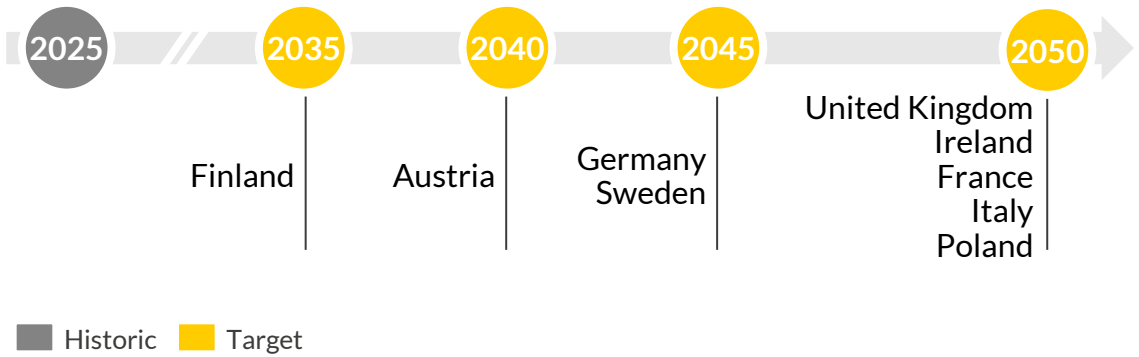


EU emission reduction targets[2]

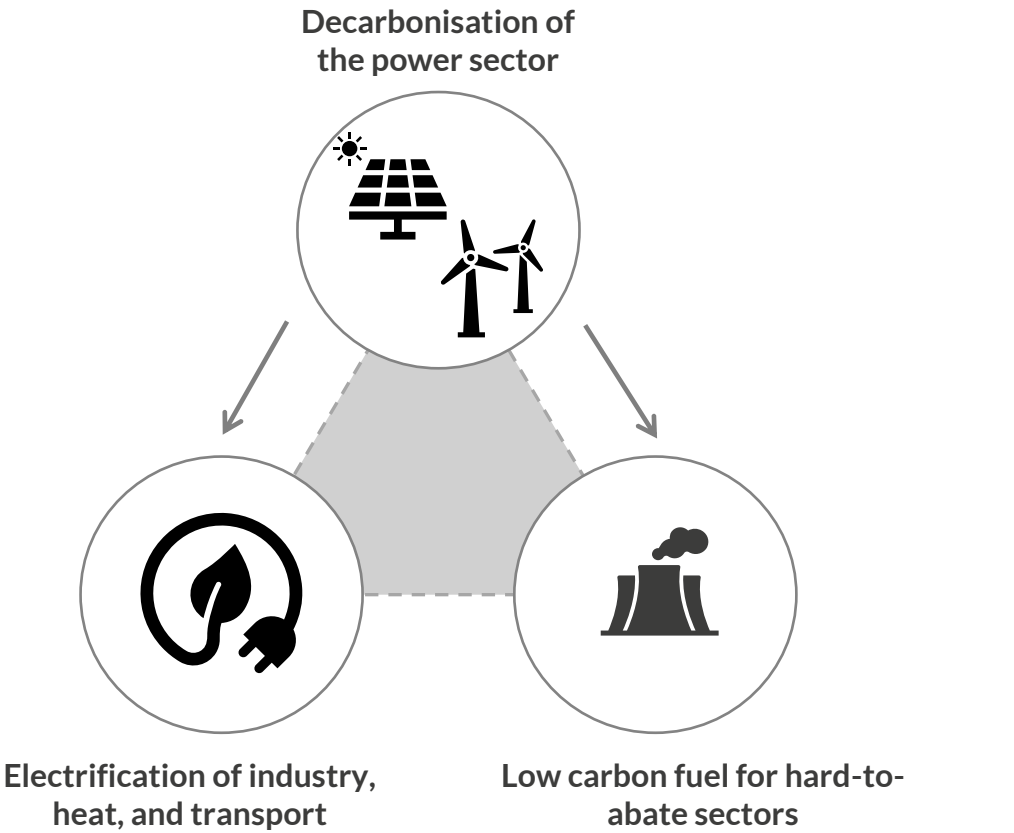
$MtCO_2e$



National Net Zero targets of selected European countries



2 A decarbonised power system is a requirement for achieving emission reductions through electrification of other sectors.



1) Renewable share in final energy consumption. 2) The targets were defined as % reductions compared to 1990 emission levels. The 2030 target corresponds to a 55% reduction to 1990, the 2040 target to 90%. 3) Non-binding recommendation of the European Commission.

´Sources: Aurora Energy Research, European Commission

The decarbonisation of the power system is inherently interrelated with energy affordability and security of supply

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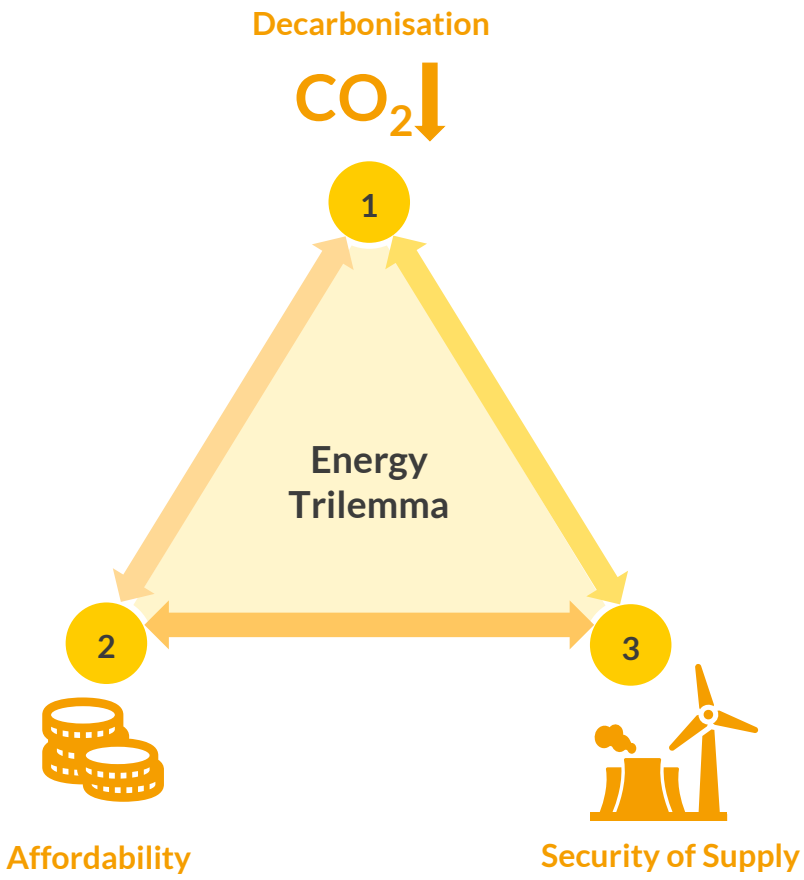
The energy trilemma sets the framework…



…for how decarbonisation policy will affect prices and security of supply

1 ↕ 2

Decarbonisation and affordability

- Renewable energy sources (renewables) like wind and solar are characterized by low marginal costs, **more renewables buildout will thus reduce power prices for consumers** per se.
- **Countries that fall behind in phasing out fossil assets, might be faced with higher power prices**, as carbon pricing increases the marginal costs of carbon-emitting plants.
- Fuel costs are a major part of thermal power plant operation costs, so **commodity price shocks significantly affect power prices in fossil fuel-dependent systems** and can cause **price spikes**. The 2022 energy crisis highlighted this impact.
- **renewables generation costs and power prices are (on average) more predictable** as with fossil generation, as marginal costs are independent from gas, coal, and carbon markets.

1 ↕ 3

Decarbonisation and security of supply

- **More generation from local renewables** reduces reliance on imports of fossil fuels, and can **foster energy independence and energy security**.
- At the same time, the combination of variable renewables and the **phase-out fossil generators requires a high level of interconnectivity between national power systems**[1] **and the deployment of new flexible and dispatchable assets** (e.g. batteries and long-duration energy storage) to ensure power demand can be met in every hour of the year.

1) Power market coupling and the optimal utilisation and buildout of new grid infrastructure such as interconnectors.

Source: Aurora Energy Research

17 countries in Europe have chosen strategic reserves or capacity markets to ensure the provision of dispatchable capacity

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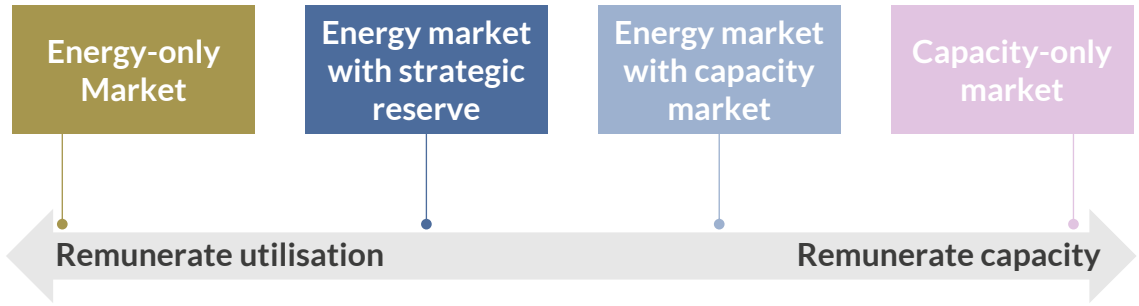
Power market design

- Strategic reserves (SRs) and capacity markets (CMs) are types of capacity remuneration mechanisms (CRMs) through which asset owners are paid to make capacity available for a given period in the future. Unlike in an energy-only market (EOM), producers receive remuneration regardless of whether generation occurs.

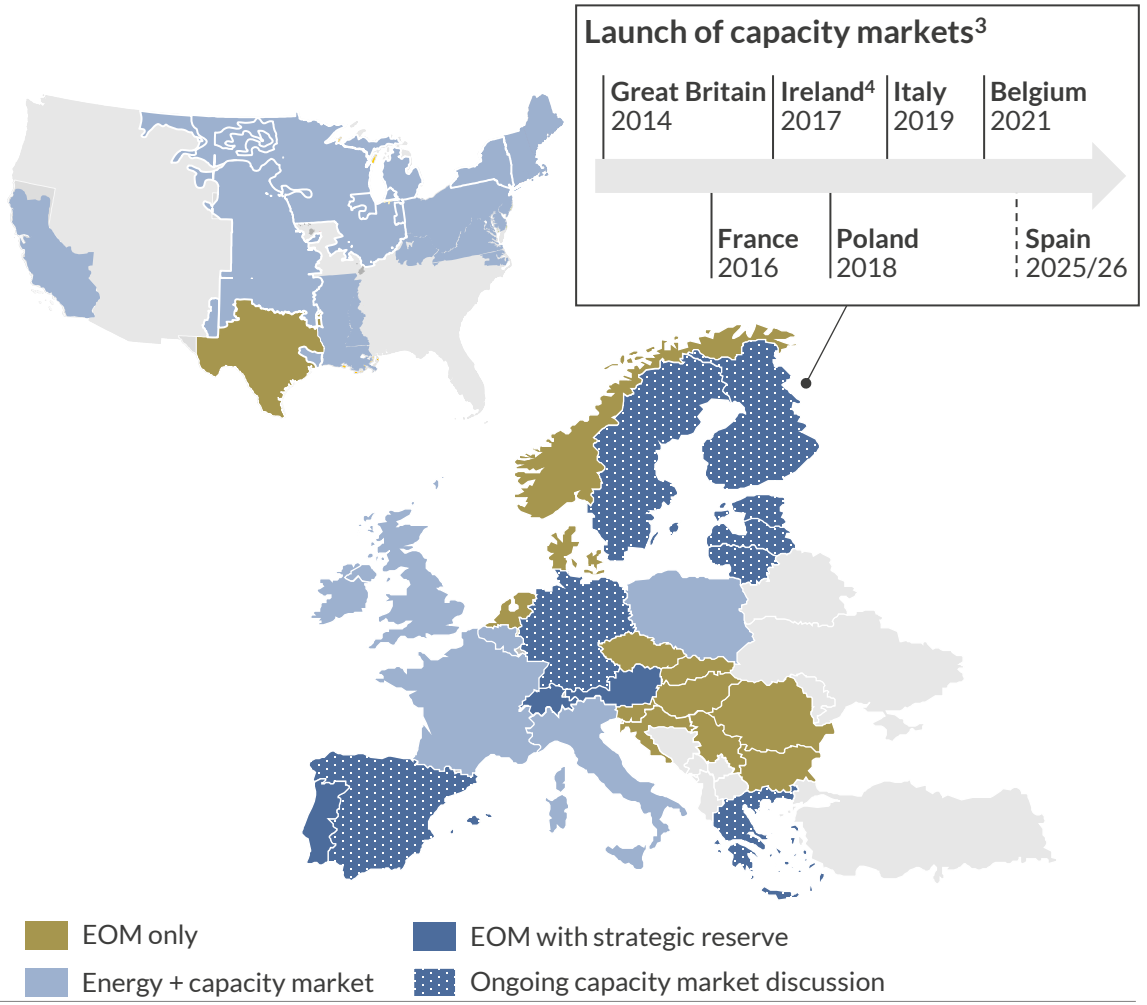


- An increasing number of countries have set up CMs over the past decades:

In Europe, CMs have been implemented in six countries. Eight more countries, including Germany, are currently debating the introduction of a CM[1].

Capacity markets in the US have been in place for longer, most of them were established in the early 2000s and have undergone or are undergoing reforms[2].

Examples of power market designs in the US and Europe



1) Spain is currently at an advanced stage and undergoing consultation of its proposed CM. 2) Due to capacity changes and extreme weather events causing supply issues, several of the US CMs are currently undergoing revisions of their capacity accreditation and procurement target. 3) Refers to year in which CMs became/are expected to become operational and hold auctions. 4) Including the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Source: Aurora Energy Research

Deep dive

In contrast to a strategic reserve, capacity markets allow for plants to participate in wholesale power markets

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Capacity remuneration mechanisms

Can contracted plants participate simultaneously in the capacity mechanism and in the wholesale or other ancillary markets?

No → **Strategic reserve**

Reserve / **Wholesale market**

- So far mostly used to extend lifetime of existing plants, but reserve capacity can in principle also be provided by new build plants.[3]

Yes → **Capacity market**

Who sets the capacity target?

Central authority[2] → **Central capacity market**

- It is ensured that security margins are met for the region

Ireland, UK, Italy, Poland, Belgium

Each supplier → **Decentralised capacity market**

- Power suppliers and large consumers must secure capacity certificates issued by generators and DSR.
- Capacity certificates are then traded on market or bilaterally.

France

Legend:

Reserve plant only receiving capacity payment

Plant only receiving wholesale market[1] revenue

Plant receiving wholesale[1] and capacity market revenue

1) Wholesale market mentioned as this is usually the biggest revenue stream. Other markets like ancillary services or balancing markets are also applicable. 2) In most cases, the TSO is the central authority. 3) One example of a reserve that was created through the buildout of new power plants is the grid reliability reserve (*besondere Netztechnische Betriebsmittel*) in Germany.

Sources: Aurora Energy Research

To comply with climate targets, CRMs need to incentivise the buildout of carbon-free flexibility and contain emission thresholds

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! For CRMs to be compatible with climate targets, two general principles can be followed:
Realising the potential of clean flexibility options and setting emissions criteria for fossil power plants

Principles	Capacity market	Strategic reserve
Openness to clean flexibility options	▪ Currently, it is harder for smaller, decentralised assets like demand-side flexibility to access CMs compared to large thermal assets. – For instance, there is a risk that clean energy solutions like storage, demand-side flexibility and other 'non-standard assets' are derated too strongly, impeding their competitiveness compared to fossil assets. ▪ Barriers to access for clean technologies should be removed to make it easier for these assets to access CMs, alongside other policy measures to boost uptake. – Enabling the self-declaration of de-ratings for non-standard assets is one way of lowering the barrier to entry. This option is already used in the Belgian CM.	▪ Strategic reserves are an out-of-market instrument and therefore avoid the distortion of price signals in the wholesale market. – This is an advantage compared to CMs because such distortions can hinder market-based investments in clean flexibility resources. ▪ Where feasible, SRs should be designed to enable clean flexibility options to participate.
Emissions criteria for fossil assets	▪ While CMs are mainly a security of supply and not a decarbonisation measure, they should be designed in line with climate targets, with tightening emissions rules – pushing fossil fuels out of the power mix over time, and prioritising investment in clean, fossil-free sources of flexibility.[1]	▪ In general, the emissions caused by fossil plants will be lower than in a CM because the plants are only dispatched during scarcity events. ▪ Still, emission limits can help support fossil-free solutions.

Additional incentives and policy support, alongside capacity markets, may also be appropriate to rapidly boost investment in carbon-free flexibility options such as demand flexibility, batteries, long duration energy storage and interconnectors. Additional policies will also be needed to support a managed phase-out of gas plants.

1) In the long term, as long-duration clean and flexible technologies are deployed at scale, unabated fossil thermal technologies could be fully phased out of capacity markets. For example, the UK government's recent 2030 clean power plan suggests that unabated gas plants might eventually be moved to a strategic reserve.

Source: Aurora Energy Research

Agenda

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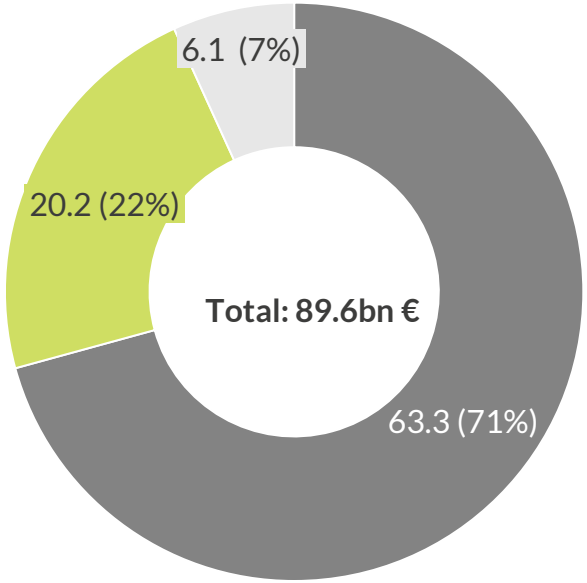
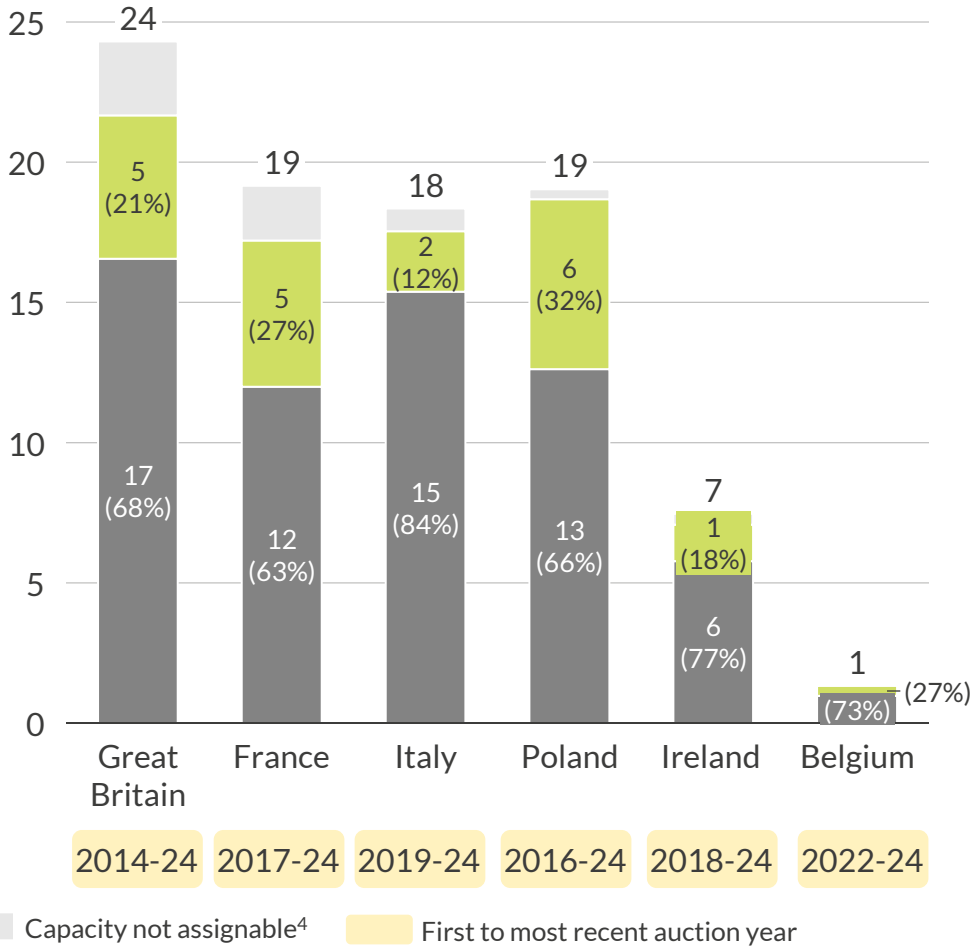
90bn € are estimated to be allocated in European capacity markets to date, more than two-thirds of which to thermal generators

Contracted payments under capacity markets in Europe[1]
Bn € (nominal)



Contracted payments by capacity market region[1]
Bn € (nominal)



Disclaimer

The figures shown were calculated using assumptions and estimations based on available public data. The information available does not always allow a clear allocation of capacity market capacities and payments (see Appendix)

Thermal generation capacity[2] | Renewable & Flexible capacity[3] | Capacity not assignable[4] | First to most recent auction year

- Based on an analysis of capacity market auction results, 90bn € in capacity payments have been contracted in Europe between 2014 and 2024 .
  - We calculate payments by combining data on awarded de-rated capacities with auction strike prices.[5]
- Thermal generators have so far been the main beneficiaries of capacity payments and make up for at least 71% of contracted payments.
- Renewable and flexible assets account for 22% of contracted payments.
- The distribution of payments by capacity category is similar across regions with thermal generators accounting for nearly two-thirds or more in all 6 regions.

1) Not accounting for Strategic reserves. Includes payments secured for the provision of capacity in the future, i.e. payments that have not yet been made. 2) Includes Gas, Coal, and Nuclear. 3) Includes storage, renewables and demand-side response. 4) Technology category not inferable from source data. . 5) See slide 17 in the Appendix for a detailed explanation of the approach.
Sources: Aurora Energy Research, Regional system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia)

Gas-fired assets have thus far been the main recipients, accounting for almost half of all contracted payments

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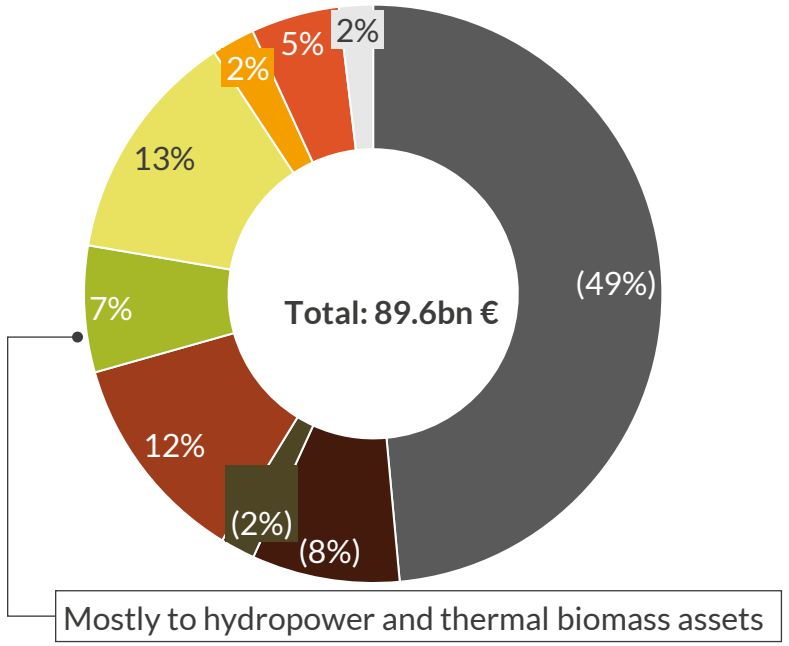
Contracted payments under capacity markets in Europe[1]
Bn € (nominal)



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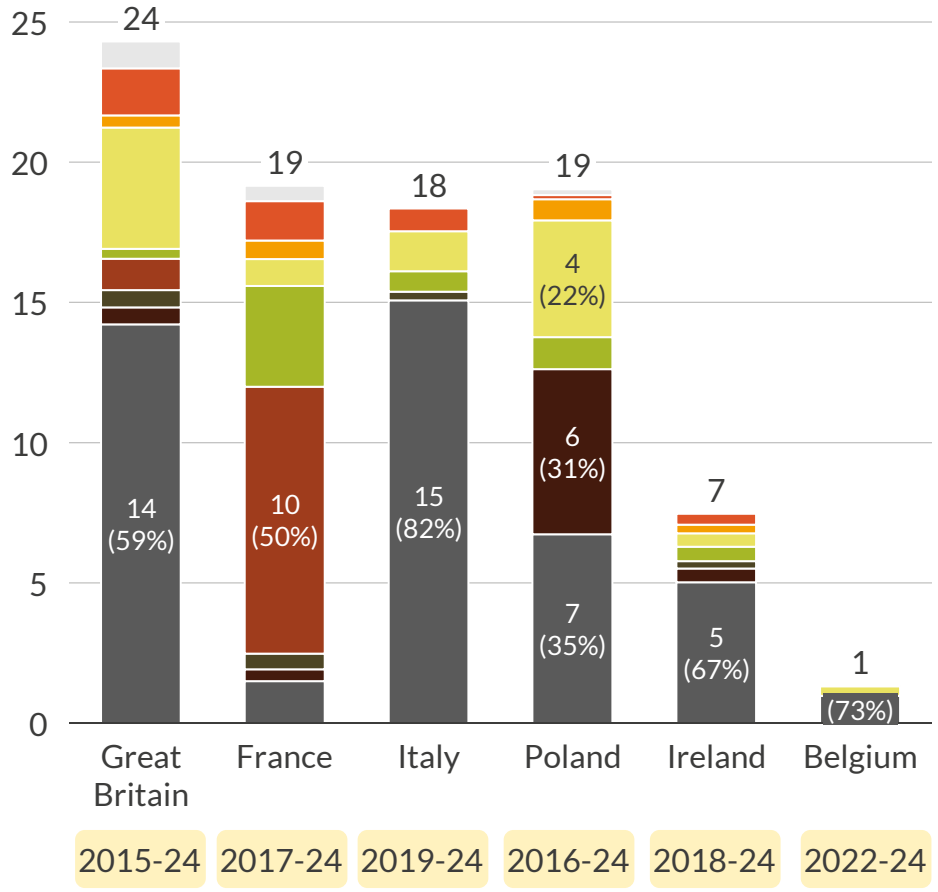


Disclaimer

The figures shown were calculated using assumptions and estimations based on available public data. The information available does not always allow a clear allocation of capacity market capacities and payments (see Appendix).

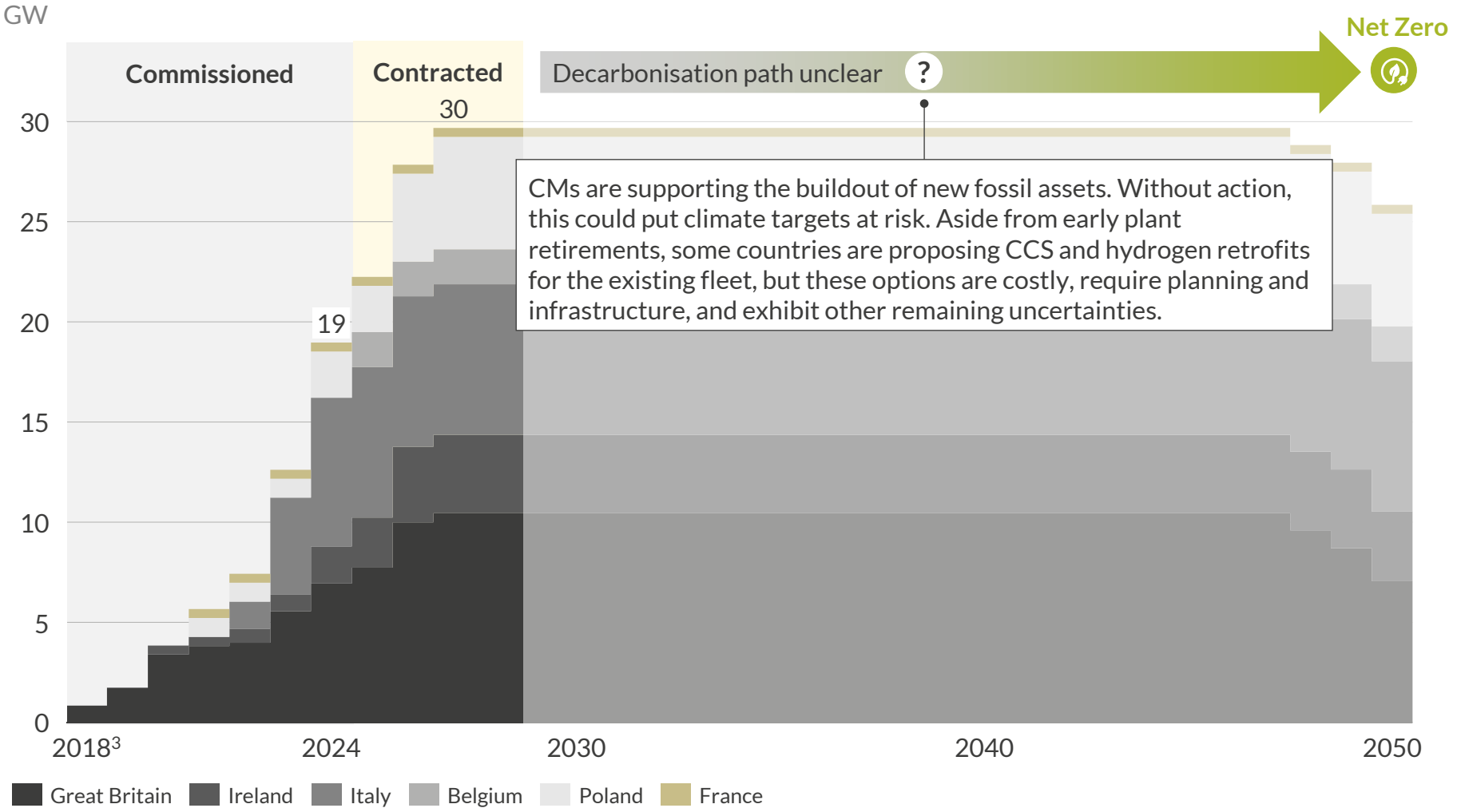
Gas | Other CO2 intensive[2] | Renewable[3] | DSR[4] | Other (not assignable)[6] | First to most recent auction year
Coal | Nuclear | Storage | Interconnectors[5]

- Gas-fired power plants have been the main recipients of capacity market payments in Europe to date, accounting for roughly half of all contracted payments.
- Except for France, gas-fired generation makes up the single largest technology group by payments contracted in all other regions with a capacity market in place.
  - The share of payments to fossil generators is the lowest in France due to its large fleet of nuclear power plants.
- The Polish CM accounts for both the largest shares of payments to coal-fired generators and storage assets. The latter is driven by the two most recent auctions in which batteries secured most of the capacity under long-term contracts.

1) Contracted payments include payments secured for delivery of capacity in the future, i.e. payments that have not yet been made. 2) E.g. oil-fired and waste incineration plants 3) Includes Hydropower, Biogas and Biomass. 4) Demand-side response 5) Capacities procured from neighbouring regions via interconnectors. 6) Technology not inferable from source data.
Sources: Aurora Energy Research, Regional system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia)

To achieve climate goals, actions are required to decarbonise the ~30 GW of new gas power plants that have been supported by CMs

Installed capacity of new build gas power plants that have been awarded in capacity markets, by region[1]



1) Assuming an asset lifetime of 30 years. Assuming that all projects that have received a CRM contract for delivery in future years will be realised. 2) Carbon capture and storage 3) 2018 was the first year in which capacity was delivered under the capacity market in GB.

Sources: Aurora Energy Research, Regional system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia)

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- To date, around 19GW of new build gas-fired power plants with capacity market contracts have been installed in Europe and a further 11GW of projects have been awarded a contract for delivery in the next 3 years.
  - This is a snapshot to date – the capacity could increase further in upcoming auction rounds of existing CMs and as more countries plan to introduce CMs.
- To align with climate targets, capacity markets should enforce emission rules, even if their primary role is to ensure supply security.
- To reduce the need for new fossil capacity, investments in clean, fossil-free flexibility sources should be accelerated both within and alongside CMs.

Great Britain has the longest-standing capacity market, followed by France, Ireland, Poland, Italy and Belgium

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Key facts about selected European capacity markets

	Great Britain	Ireland	Italy	France	Poland	Belgium
Type of CM	Central	Central	Central	Decentralised	Central	Central
First to most recent auction year	2014 – 2024	2018-2024	2019-2024	2017 - 2024	2016-2024	2022 - 2024
First to most recent delivery year[1]	2018-2027	2018-2027	2022-2026	2017-2026	2021-2029	2025-2028
Number of auctions	17	14	5	14	29	5
Total capacity procured across all auctions	492GW	68GW	210GW	919GW	94GW	10GW
Range of auction prices	885 – 86,206 €/MW[3]	40,646 – 147,580 €/MW	56,160-75,000 €/MW	8,090 - 46,410 €/MW	31,628 – 85,691 €/MW	15,694 - 53,402 €/MW
Price building mechanism	Pay as clear	Pay as clear	Pay as clear, price cap for existing units	Pay as clear (EPEX Spot auctions)[2]	Pay as clear, price cap for existing units	Pay as clear, price cap for existing units
Total allocated payments	24.3bn €	7.5bn €	18.4bn €	19.2bn €	19.0bn €	1.3bn €
Share of payments to thermal vs. renewable & flexible capacity	68% vs. 21%	77% vs. 18%	84% vs. 12%	63% vs. 27%	66% vs. 32%	73% vs. 27%

1) Capacity markets are funded via levies and tariffs paid via electricity consumers. These levies are added once payments are made to capacity providers, i.e. from the first delivery year. 2) In addition to the auctions organised by the power exchange EPEX Spot, capacity guarantees can also be traded bilaterally (over the counter). 3) The low price of 885 €/MW occurred in the T-1 auction for delivery year 2019/2020. The lowest price for a T-4 auction in GB was 7,402 €/MW (for delivery in 2022/2023).

Sources: Aurora Energy Research, Regional system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia)

As new builds receive long-term contracts in most capacity markets, some gas-fired power plants are subsidised until the 2040s

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Key information on the role of gas-fired power plants in European capacity markets

	Great Britain	Ireland	Italy	France	Poland	Belgium
Number of identified[1] gas plants with CM contracts	86	21	35	14	15	20
Cumulative capacity of CM contracts awarded to gas-fired assets across all auctions (% of total procured capacity)	293GW (60%)	44.7GW (66%)	162GW (77%)	62GW (7%)	8GW (9%)	9GW (90%)
Nameplate capacity of new build gas plants (incl. plant projects) that have been procured in CMs	10.4GW	3.9GW	7.5GW	0.4GW	5.6GW	1.7GW
Payments allocated to gas plants (% of total allocated payments)	14.2bn € (59%)	5.0bn € (67%)	15bn € (82%)	1.5bn € (8%)	6.7bn € (35%)	0.9bn € (73%)
Maximum contract length for new builds	15 years	10 years	15 years	N/A[2]	17 years	15 years
Range of years that contracts awarded to gas plants cover	2018 - 2042	2018-2037	2022-2039	2017-2026	2021-2043	2025-2042

1) This refers to the number of plants covered in the Excel database on gas-fired power plants with CM contracts. Due to lack of data availability, this database does not capture all existing CM contracts. See here for more information. The French 1-year capacity market does provide long-term contracts for new build assets. Long-term tenders for the development of new capacities were held in 2019, but no gas-fired capacity was procured in these tenders.

Sources: Aurora Energy Research, Regional system operators (Terna, RTE, SEM-O, NESO, PSE, Elia)

Agenda

I. What are capacity remuneration mechanisms and how do they fit with climate policy?

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III. Appendix

A complete matching of CRM contracts at plant level is not possible in all regions due to limited data transparency

Region / data availability	Comments
Belgium	▪ Plant-level data available for procured capacities. ▪ Only the average and maximum bid prices are available per auction, thus payments at plant level can only be approximated based on average bid prices.
Germany	▪ Plant-level data available for procured capacities under the strategic reserve (*Kapazitätsreserve*). ▪ The auctions for the strategic reserve are pay-as-clear, allowing a for a precise calculation of payments at the plant level. ▪ For the grid reserve (*Netzreserve*) and special grid reserve (*Besondere netztechnische Betriebsmittel)*: Data available for procured capacities at plant level, but no data available on payments.
France	▪ Plant level data on certified capacities is only available for plants >100 MW. ▪ Payments at the plant-level cannot be derived at a reasonable level of accuracy because capacity guarantees can be traded in multiple auctions per year and over the counter. The registry tracking all transactions is only accessible to market participants.
Great Britain	▪ Plant-level data published for procured capacities. ▪ The auctions are pay-as-clear, allowing a for a precise calculation of payments at the plant level.
Ireland	▪ Plant-level data available for procured capacities. ▪ The auctions are pay-as-clear, allowing a for a precise calculation of payments at the plant level.
Italy	▪ Plant-level data on procured capacities is only available for new build plants. ▪ Only aggregated data is available for the capacities procured from existing plants, not allowing for an unambiguous identification of plants that received CM contracts. ▪ The auctions are pay-as-clear, allowing a for a precise calculation of payments allocated to new build plants.
Poland	▪ Plant-level data on procured capacities is published, but without naming the respective technology or asset class, which makes it difficult to identify the assets. ▪ The auctions are pay-as-clear, allowing a for a precise calculation of payments allocated to new build plants.

Decreasing data availability

Source: Aurora Energy Research

Due to the lack of data transparency, the robustness of the calculated payments varies from region to region

Region / accuracy	Approach used to compute the aggregate capacity market payments	Limitations
Belgium	▪ Step 1: for each contract, multiplication of the procured capacity with the capacity-weighted average bid price for each auction and the respective contract duration. ▪ Step 2: sum over all auctions and split by technology group.	▪ As only the average price is known, the distribution of payments by technology cannot be calculated precisely. With regards to gas-fired plants, this leads to an underestimation of payments as they generally enter the auctions with higher bids than other technologies.
France	▪ For each year since the introduction of the capacity market: Multiplication of the certified capacities by technology group with the capacity-weighted average price of the EPEX Spot auctions for French capacity guarantees in that year.	▪ As it is not known which and how many of the certificates issued were sold and at what price, neither the total number of payments nor the breakdown by technology can be calculated precisely.
Great Britain, Ireland	▪ Step 1: for each contract, multiplication of the procured capacity with the specific auction price and the respective contract duration. ▪ Step 2: sum over all auctions and split by technology group.	▪ Only minor limitations due to unregistered cancellations of capacity contracts.
Italy	▪ For new builds: multiplication of the procured capacities by technology group with the capacity-weighted average bid price for each auction and the respective contract duration. ▪ For existing plants: split the procured capacity into technology types, then multiplication by the respective auction price.	▪ The published auction results for existing power plants are only roughly broken down by asset type (renewable, flexible, other). The more granular breakdown by technology carried out for the analysis is inferred based on assumptions and own research, which can impact the accuracy of the payment shares by technology.
Poland	▪ Estimation based on a tracker of aggregated contracted capacities maintained by Aurora and auction prices published by the regulator.	▪ The published auction results do not provide information on the asset type. The technology split is inferred based on own research and assumptions, impacting the accuracy of the payment shares by technology.

Decreasing accuracy

Source: Aurora Energy Research

Because of the limited availability of plant-level data, the database of gas assets published alongside the report does not cover all payments

- As a separate deliverable to this report, Aurora compiled an Excel database of gas-fired power plants and plant projects in Europe for which capacity-based payments are or have been contracted under CRMs.
- To create this database, available primary and secondary data sources for CM auction results were matched with the existing BFF database of gas-fired power plants in Europe, using asset names, asset capacities, and operator names as identifiers.
- Due to the missing data at plant level in some countries and the large quantity of individual capacity market contracts overall, it was not possible to match all CM contracts to power plants in the BFF database.
- Therefore, the sum of the capacity payments compiled in the Excel database is lower than the figures shown for gas-fired power plants in this report.
- In total, the database covers 76% of the total estimated allocated payments to gas-fired power plants. The below table provides an overview of the level of completeness per country and the reasons for the shortfall of payments covered.

Country	Level of completeness	Reason for the shortfall of CM payments covered in the database
Great Britain	74% 	▪ Large quantity of small assets that could not all be identified and matched with (or added to) the BFF database within the scope of the project.
Ireland	91% 	▪ Large quantity of small assets that could not all be identified and matched with (or added to) the BFF database within the scope of the project.
France	74% 	▪ Only payments for plants with certified capacities of >100 MW can be matched due to limited data transparency.
Italy	56% 	▪ Only CM contracts of new build plants can be matched due to limited data transparency for existing assets.
Poland	100% 	
Belgium	100% 	

Source: Aurora Energy Research

Details and disclaimer

Public Report
Capacity remuneration mechanisms in Europe

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January 2025

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