

# RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS ON SÁMI TERRITORY



PHOTO: Jason Blackeye, @jeisblack / Unsplash

The Sámi people are recognized as the indigenous people of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and also recognized as one of several small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation. An intrinsic link to an identifiable traditional territory is the characteristic that most clearly distinguishes indigenous peoples from minority groups.

The Sámi people have traditionally relied on hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping, or a combination of all. Reindeer husbandry is one of the cornerstones in Sámi culture. The major threats for contemporary Sámi reindeer husbandry is loss of habitat due to direct or indirect impact from competing land use. The loss of grazing land is accelerating due to the destruction of foraging areas, obstruction of migrations routes, and disturbance of reindeer. Loss of grazing land can also be caused by climate change, for instance by the change of seasons, changes in vegetation, including greening and increase of undergrowth, warming of the winters, and other weather conditions.

## RESEARCH INDICATES SEVERE IMPACTS ON SÁMI TRADITIONAL LAND USE BY RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

The demand for renewable energy is rapidly increasing and placing an expanding pressure on land use in Sápmi. Research<sup>1</sup> shows that wind farms established on Sámi land add to the impact of already on-going human activities

such as roads, forestry, hydropower, and mining. Together, such activities fragment the landscape creating a complex pattern of cumulative impacts.

Further, studies<sup>2</sup> show that human activities and infrastructure have a negative impact on reindeer's choice of grazing range. In some of the studies, a zone of avoidance around the disturbance ranging from 1 to 12 km depending on the type of human activity and infrastructure, could be identified and estimated.

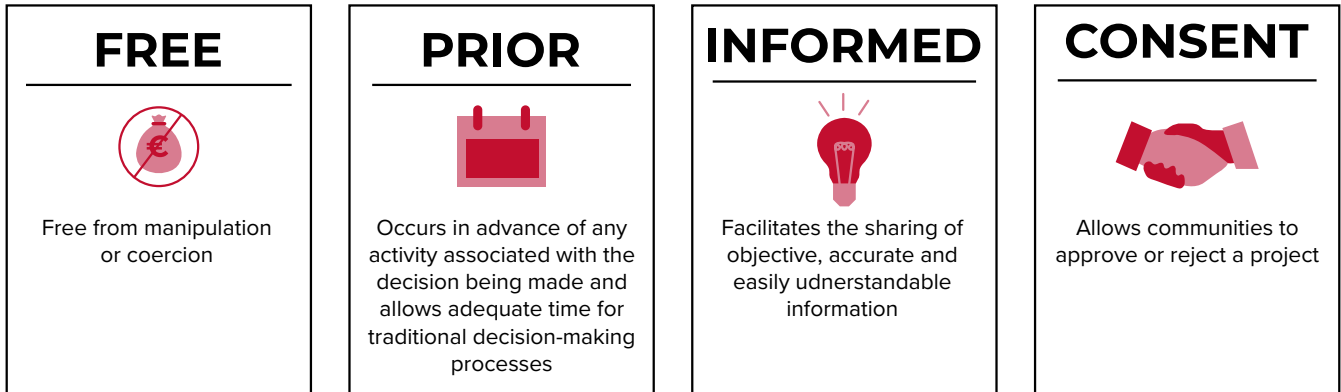
In Sweden, 80 % of all hydropower plants are situated on Sámi traditional land. Hydropower has a negative impact on pastures for reindeers and on traditional Sámi harvesting areas.

<sup>1</sup> Skarin A, Sandström P, Alam M. Out of sight of wind turbines—Reindeer response to wind farms in operation. *Ecol Evol*. 2018;8:9906–9919

<sup>2</sup> Skarin, A., Åhman, B. Do human activity and infrastructure disturb domesticated reindeer? The need for the reindeer's perspective. *Polar Biol* 37, 1041–1054 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00300-014-1499-5>

## IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL MUST RELY ON FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT (FPIC)

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a principle enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), agreed and adopted by member governments on 13 September 2007. UNDRIP establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples.



FPIC defines both a process and an outcome. The process involves (I) good-faith consultation; (II) mutual and cross-cultural understanding with dialogue that is ongoing and open; (III) inclusive and participatory engagement, including during the assessment of issues and the identification of mitigation measures, with clarity on the level of participation of Indigenous Peoples throughout the consultation process; (IV) provision of adequate resources to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples representatives can participate in the FPIC process equitably, including the services of independent technical or legal consultants; (V) mutual agreement on the process and desired outcome from the outset of the consultation; and (VI) documentation that is evaluated on an ongoing basis, is verifiable by a mutually agreed methodology and made publicly available. The outcome is the agreement and the evidence thereof (including thorough documentation of how the agreement was achieved).

According to the European Green Deal, Europe will be the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050. The green transition will rely on rolling out renewable energy projects, including wind, solar, and hydrogen economy in Europe. European energy policies and investments in renewable energy projects on Sámi territory must be developed in understanding with and participation of the Sámi people, which is the indigenous people of Europe. All European institutions must respect and use FPIC in the dialogue with the Sámi people.



**SÁMIRÁÐÐI**  
SAAMELAISNEUVOSTO  
SAMERÅDET  
COIO3 CAAMOB  
SAAMI COUNCIL

### ABOUT THE SAAMI COUNCIL

The Saami Council, the first pan-Sámi institution, was established in 1956 as a coalition of Sámi national organizations in the various countries. The Saami Council is one of the oldest, still operating, indigenous peoples' organizations in the world. The Saami Council has nine member organizations from Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. The Saami Council is mandated to promote Sámi peoples rights both in Sápmi and internationally. The Saami Council headquarters is located in Karasjok, Norway, but has regional offices in all four countries. For more information, please visit [www.saamicouncil.net](http://www.saamicouncil.net)