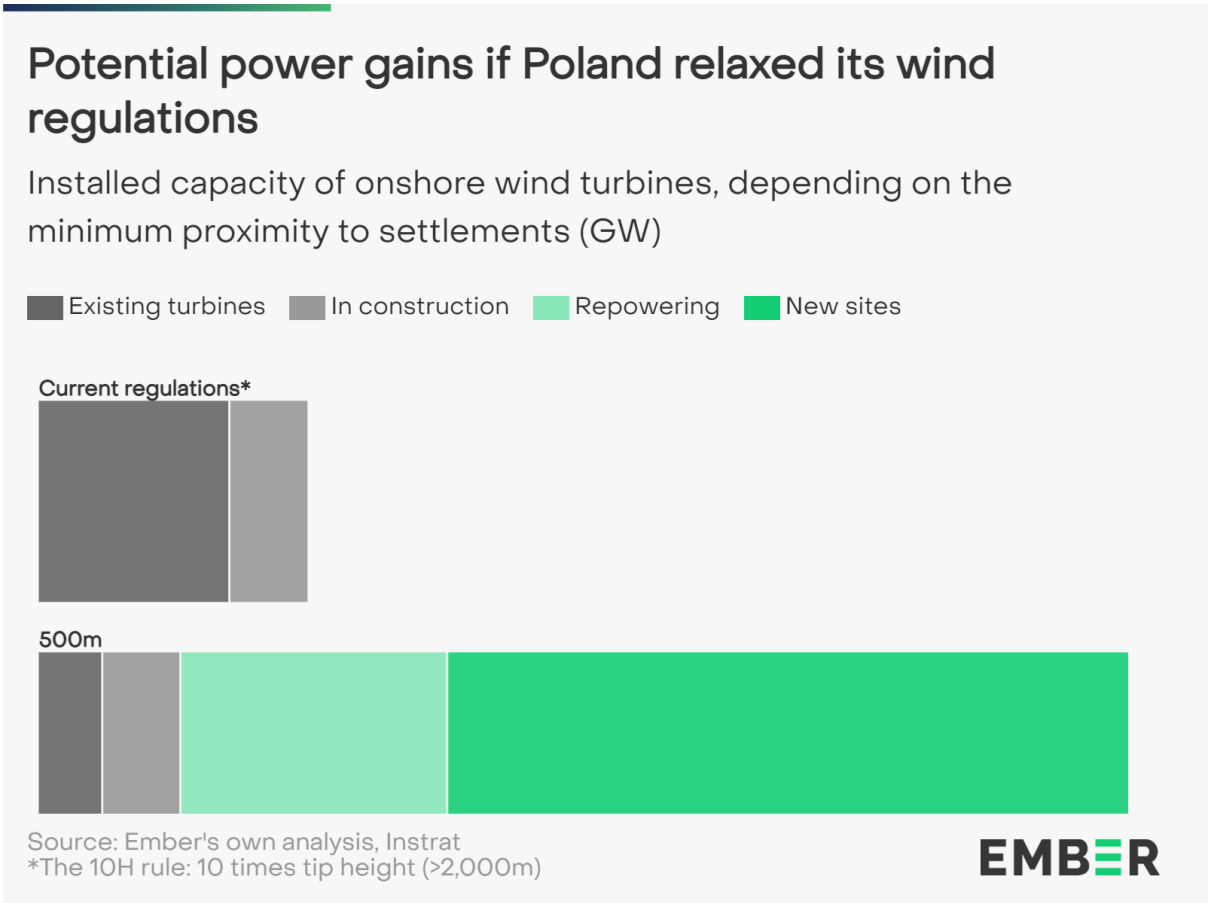
Failure to remove barriers to Poland's onshore wind risks blackouts and higher bills

[London, 28th November]

Analysis by energy think tank Ember reveals that Poland could **quadruple** its onshore wind capacity after lifting its extremely restrictive spatial planning regulations. If the setback distance is lowered to 500m, in line with the EU average, then onshore wind capacity can reach 44 gigawatts. Failing to do so will expose the country to power shortages and put a massive **100 billion zloty** of recovery funding at risk.

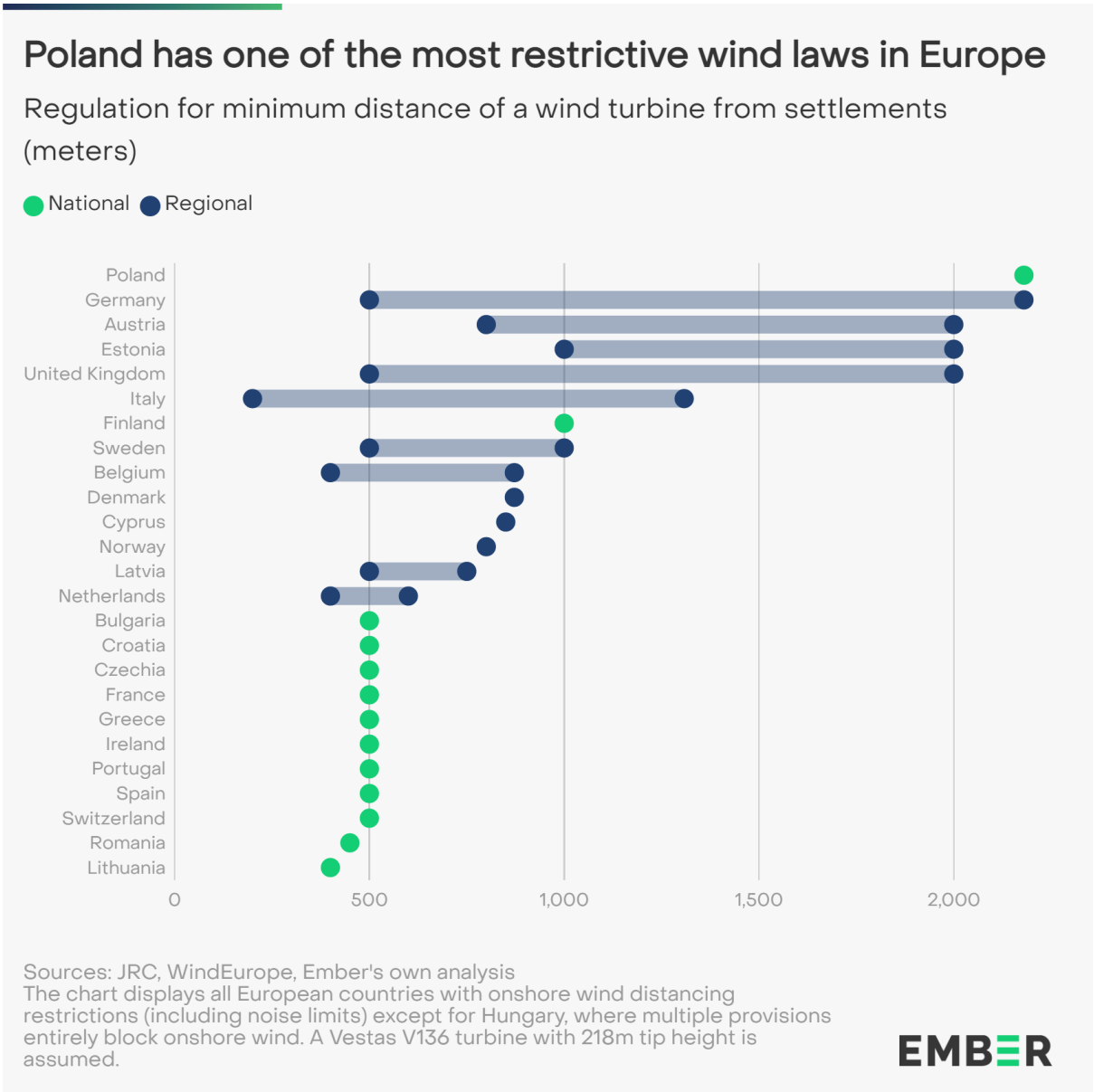
Poland's controversial '10H' onshore wind placement rule is awaiting a vote in the parliament on the 30th of November. Since its introduction in 2016, the regulation blocked 99.7% of the country from onshore wind investments, according to analysis by Instrat, bringing the booming industry into halt. The '10H' rule imposes a minimum distance of over 2000 metres between wind turbines and settlements - 4 times more than the typical value of 500 metres in most European countries.



Paweł Czyżak, senior analyst at **Ember**, said:

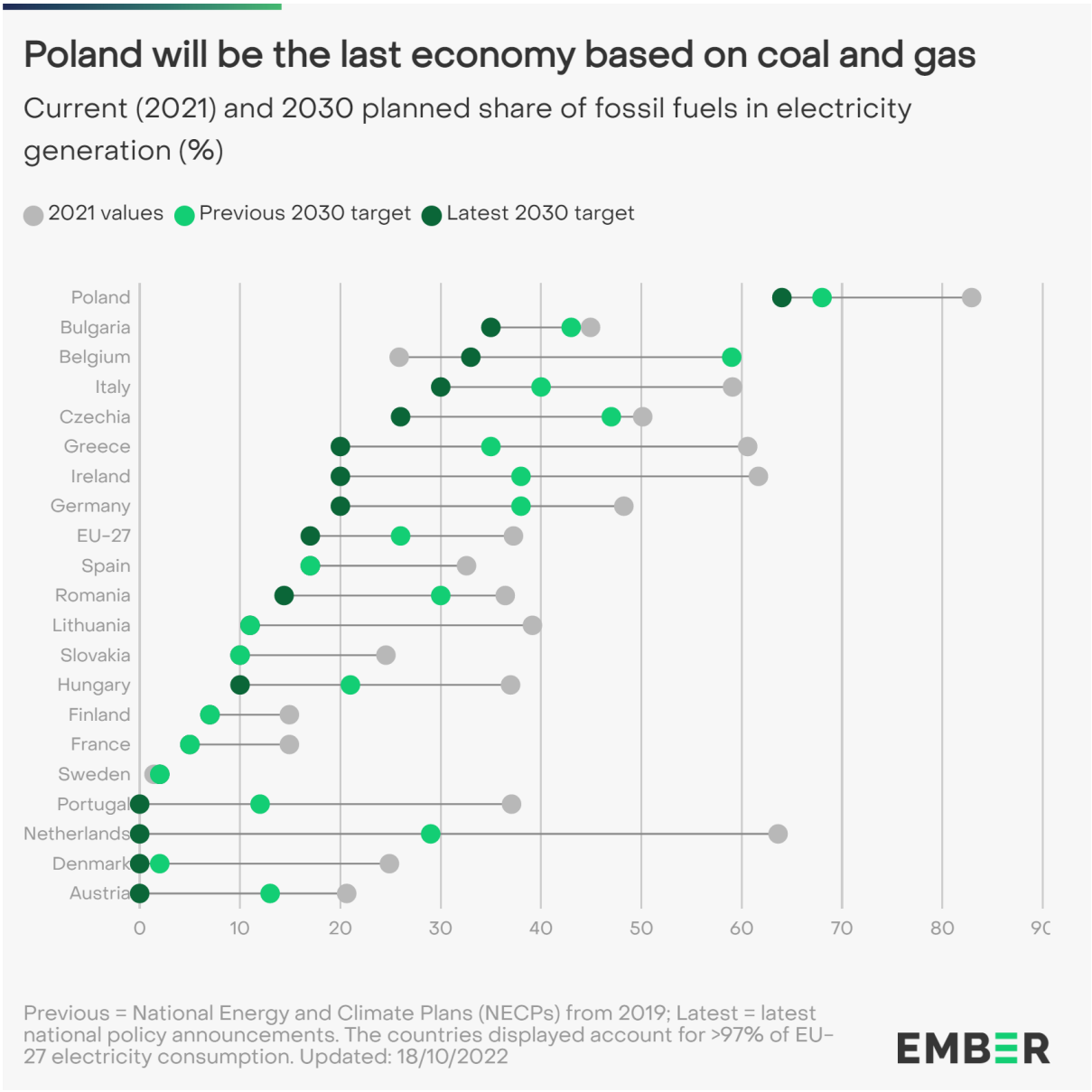
> *Unlocking the full potential of Poland's wind power is the only way to keep the lights on and put a halt to the skyrocketing costs of coal-based electricity. We need wind turbines right now and reducing the buffer zones to 500 metres is the only way to achieve that. By tinkering with the agreed upon consensus Poland will shoot itself in*

the foot, risking the loss of billions in EU funding. The government needs to realise that without cheap power from renewables and financial support from the European Union, Poland's economy will collapse - which is the last thing the ruling party should want during next year's elections.



Urged by investors, NGOs and the wider public, the government has been working on an amendment for over a year, having also promised it to the European Commission in its Recovery and Resilience Plan. The loosening of the onshore wind restrictions will pave the way for over a **100 billion zloty of recovery funding**, desperately needed at a time of crisis. Inflation and rocketing energy prices have been putting pressure on citizens just months before the upcoming elections and without the EU's money the ruling party will struggle to stay in power.

Amending the 10H rule means that the onshore wind capacity can reach **44 gigawatts** in the 2040s - over 4 times more than under the 10H regulations (10-11 gigawatts). If the setback distance is lowered to 500m, new wind farms can appear within 2 years - right on time, because in 2025 a whopping 8 gigawatts of coal plants will face closures due to the ending of capacity payments. According to the Polish TSO, such a scenario will lead to significant power shortages, potentially resulting in blackouts or involuntary saving schemes.



The far-right party ‘Solidarna Polska’ is now proposing a setback distance of 1000 metres. However, according to Ember’s analysis, this will both reduce the potential for new sites, but also the potential for the much quicker retrofitting of existing turbines (repowering) from 11 gigawatts under 500 metres to just 4 GW - by a significant 64 percent. A distance higher than 500m also means that new gigawatts of wind will only appear within 7 years time - because the existing project pipeline was designed for 500 metre buffer zones. This means it will be too late to fill the gap left by coal plants. It will also further endanger Polish

enterprises that are already losing competitiveness on European markets due to the shortage of cheap and clean electricity.

Poland's onshore wind vote can be a decisive moment - the country is among the last ones that haven't significantly accelerated the deployment of renewables after Putin's invasion of Ukraine. This poses a threat to the country's security, opening it up to fossil fuel shortages and price volatility. Without further action, Poland will be the only country in the EU except Malta generating above 50% of its electricity from fossil fuels in 2030. Poland also needs to build 17-27 GW of onshore wind turbines by 2030 to align with the EU's climate targets , a value impossible to reach without the 500 metre amendment. Unlocking onshore wind investments is therefore not only the quickest way to enable a secure future and lower electricity bills, but also a must under the European Union's legally binding commitments.