Accelerating renewables and grids permits: The case study of Germany

NVDE conference, 22 October 2026

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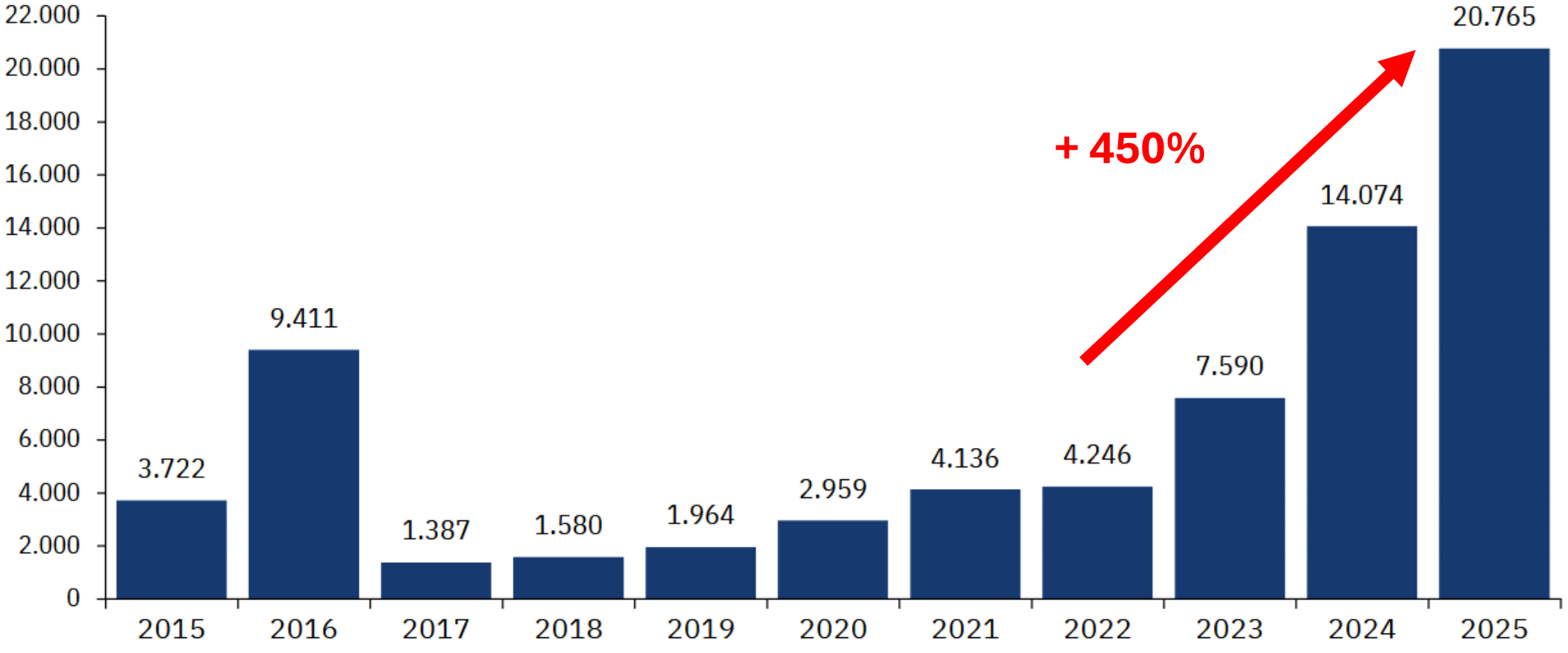
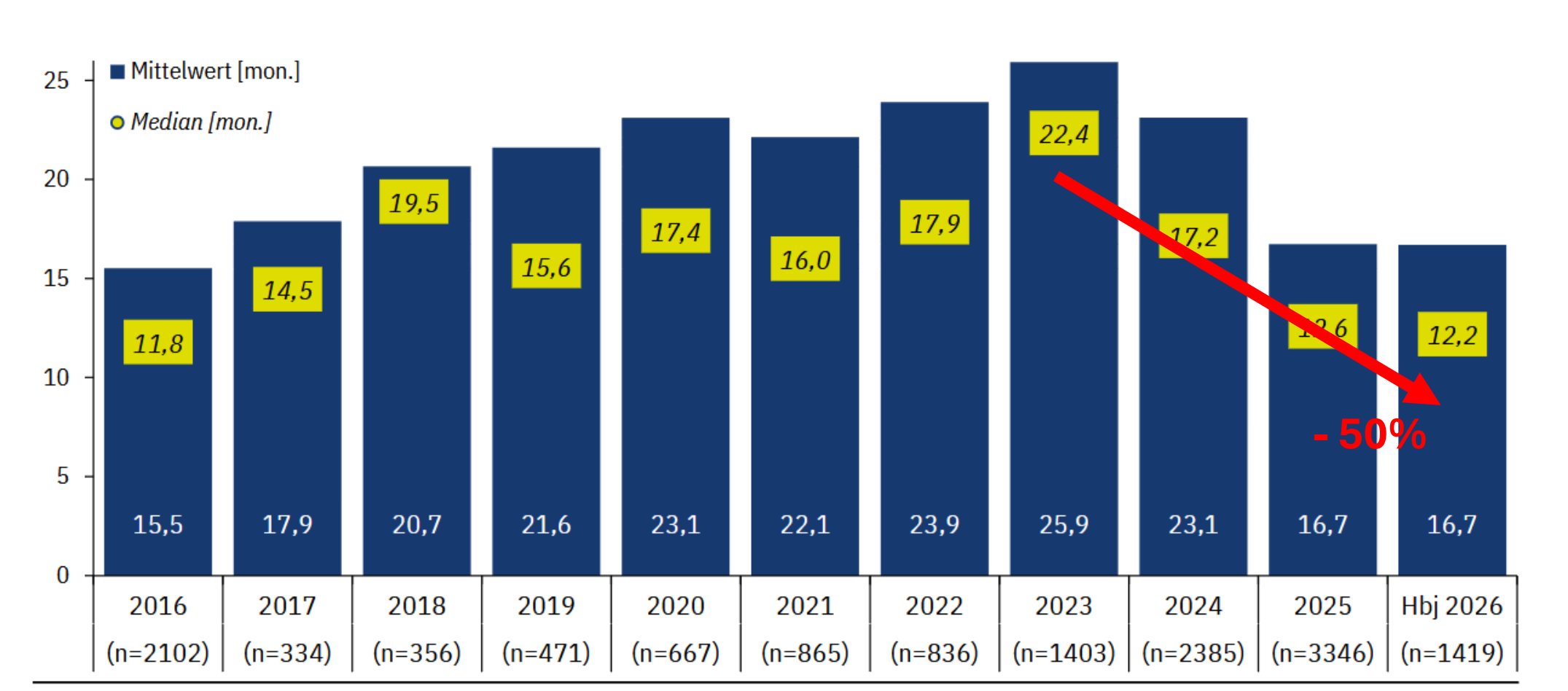
The good news:
Change is possible

Germany increased wind permitting massively...



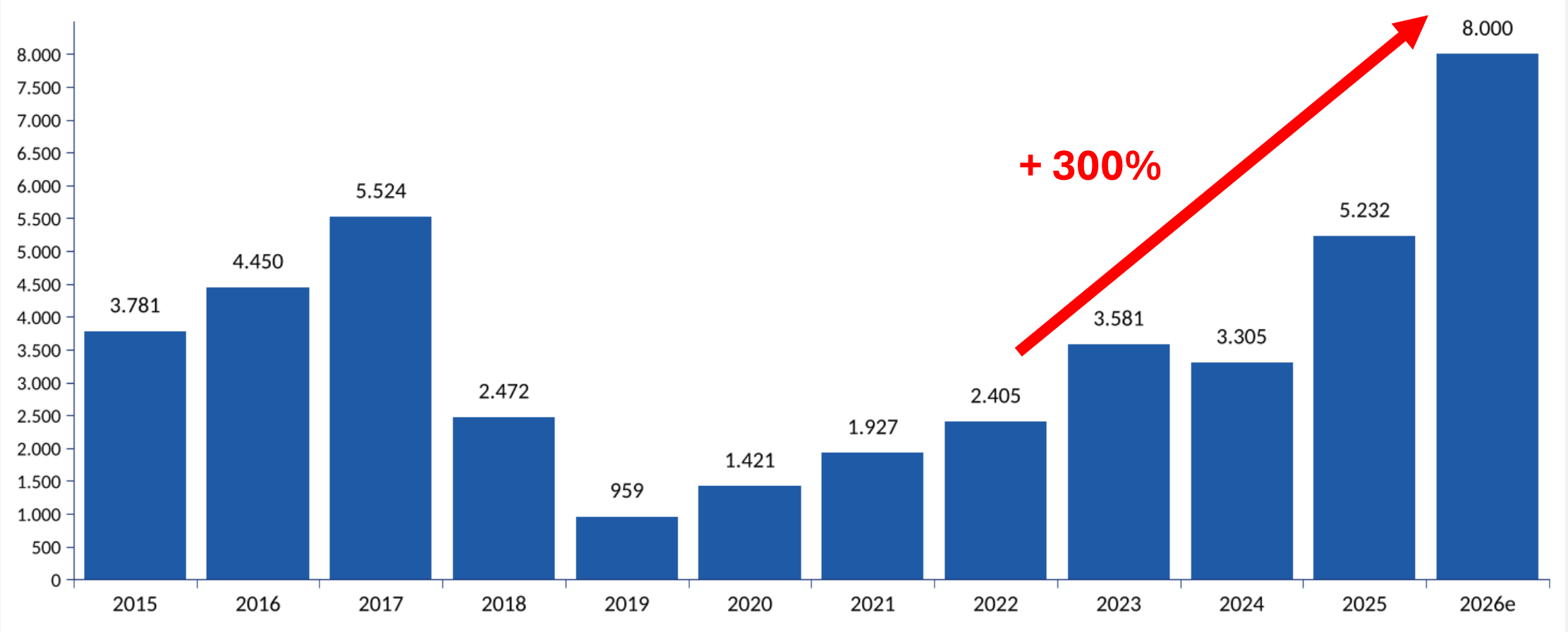
Permits for new wind turbines in Germany in GW, Source: Fachagentur Wind und Solar (2026)

… and cut wind permitting time by half…



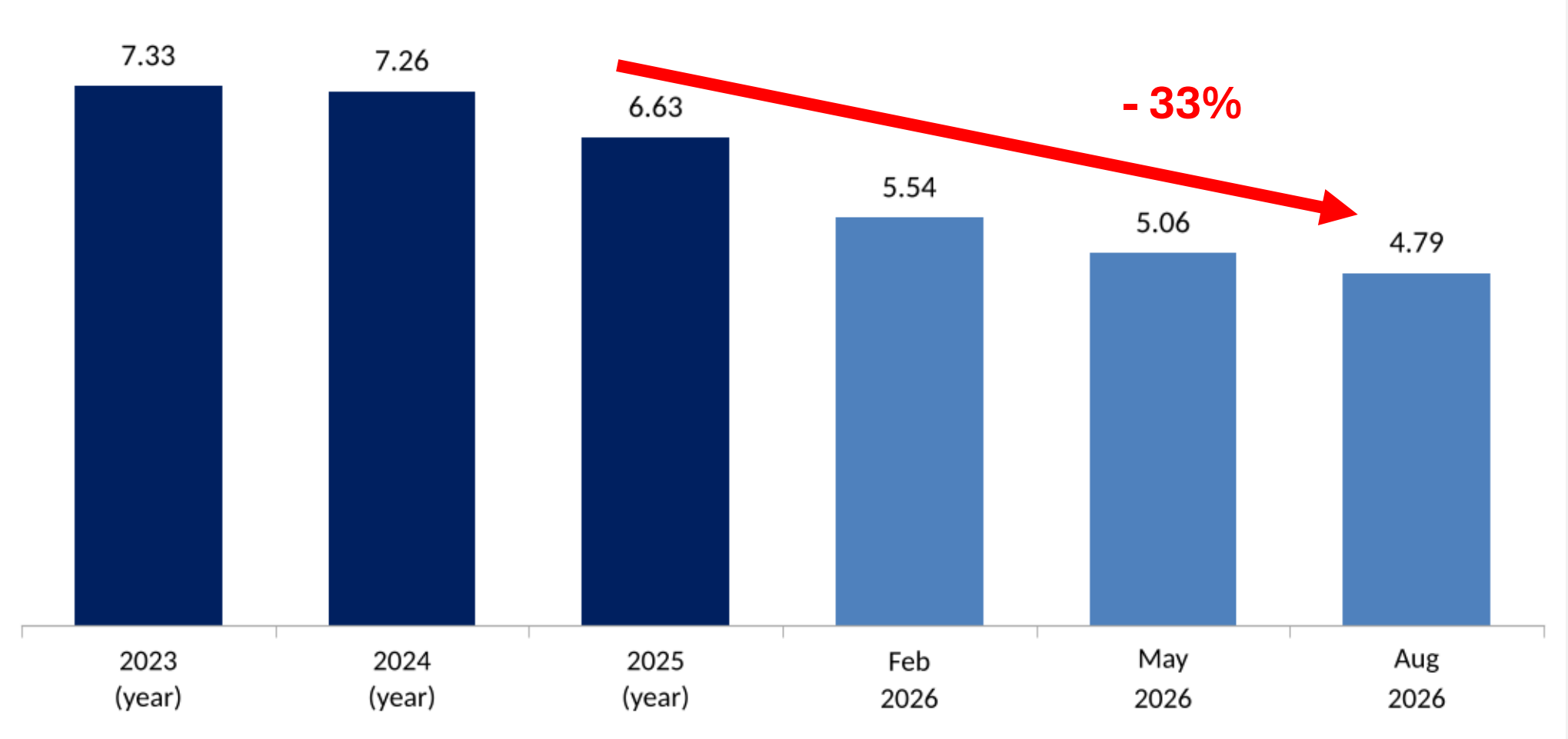
Average and mean duration of wind permitting in months, Source: Fachagentur Wind und Solar (2026)

… which now leads to a higher build-out of renewables.



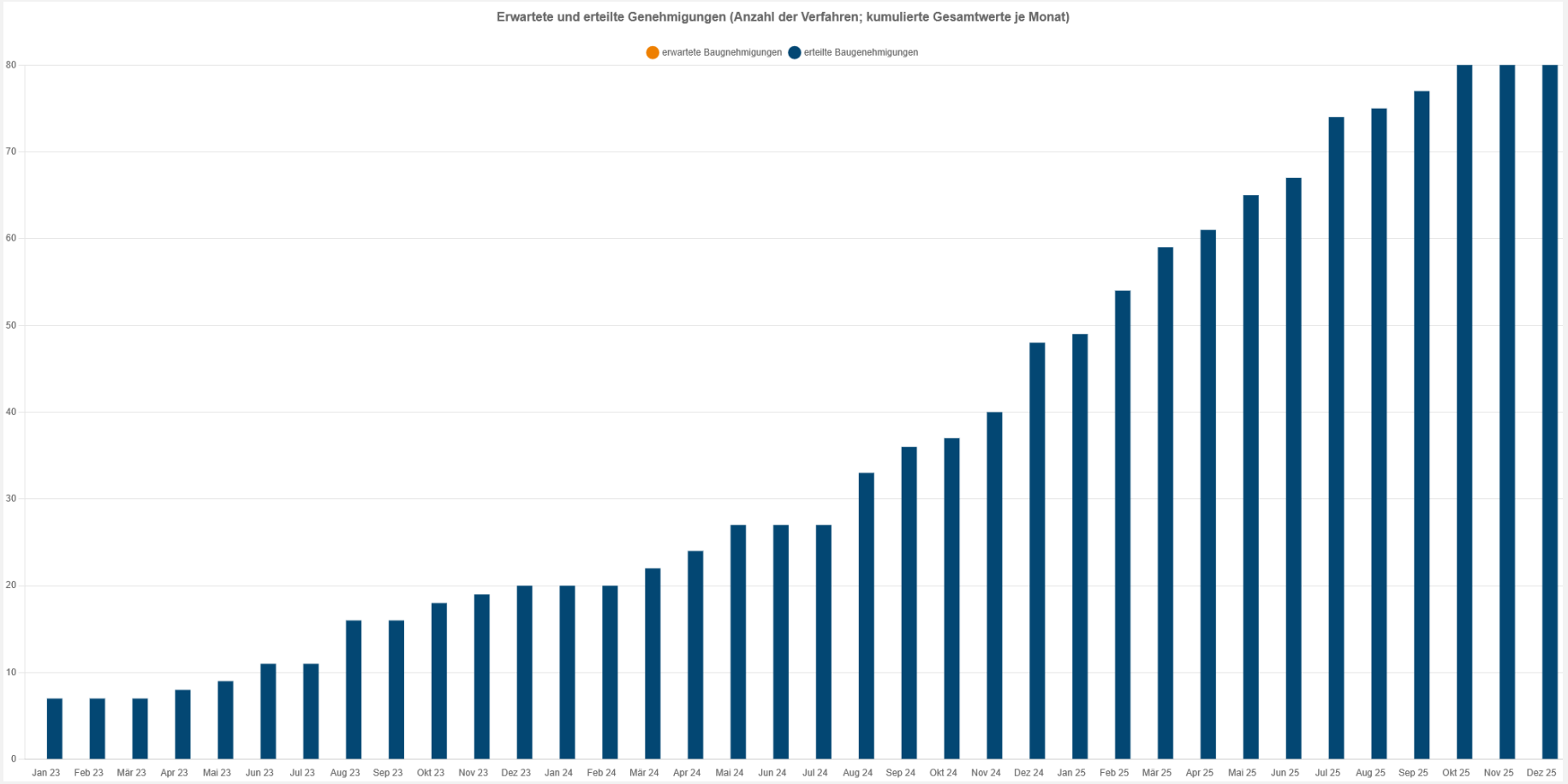
Installation of new wind turbines in Germany in GW, Source: Fachagentur Wind und Solar (2026)

… which leads to lower prices.



Average award price in wind onshore auctions (ct/kWh), Source: Fachagentur Wind und Solar (2026)

Accelerating permitting for grids is possible, too.



Issued permits for transmission grids by the Bundesnetzagentur, Source: Bundesnetzagentur (2026)

How did this come about?
The levers of change

The five levers behind the turnaround

1

Legal priority

By law, renewables and grids are of “overriding public interest”. They get priority when authorities and courts weigh interests.

2

Land targets

2% of national land for wind by 2032, split into binding targets for each state – with a sanction if missed.

3

Nature standards

Fixed rules for birds and bats replace long case-by-case studies. Developers pay into species programmes.

4

Check at plan stage

Environmental checks happen when zones are drawn. Projects inside zones get a short screening.

5

Firm procedures

Deadlines with consequences; no answer counts as a yes; lawsuits do not stop construction.

Enablers: joint federal–state pact (2023) · more staff and project managers
digital procedures · public monitoring of results

Lever #1: The overriding public interest

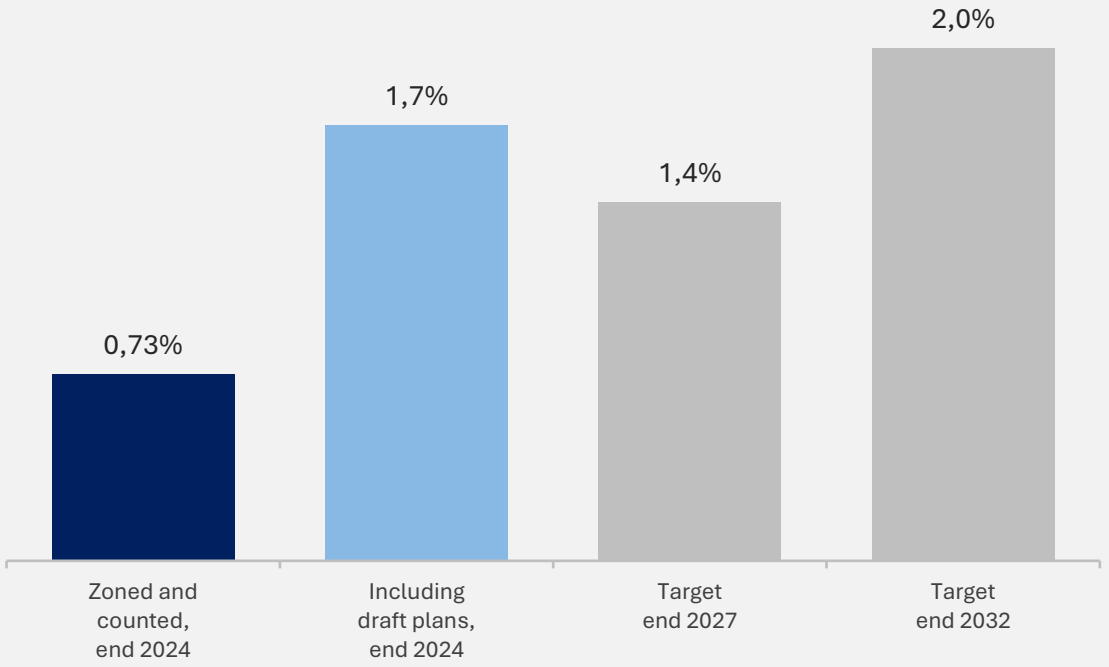
§ 2 EEG („Renewable Energy Act“):

„Die Errichtung und der Betrieb von Anlagen sowie den dazugehörigen Nebenanlagen liegen im überragenden öffentlichen Interesse und dienen der öffentlichen Gesundheit und Sicherheit. Bis die Stromerzeugung im Bundesgebiet nahezu treibhausgasneutral ist, sollen die erneuerbaren Energien als vorrangiger Belang in die jeweils durchzuführenden Schutzgüterabwägungen eingebracht werden.“

Lever #2: a binding land target, shared by the states

- **Evidence first:** studies since 2012 showed that about 2% of land is enough for the wind targets – this became a broad consensus
- **Shared target:** a 2022 law gives each state a binding share – 1.8–2.2% of its land by 2032 (city states 0.5%), with interim targets for 2027
- **Local freedom:** states pass targets on to regions, which choose the sites
- **Sanction:** if a state misses its target, local plans can no longer block wind turbines in rural areas
- **Reward:** once the target is met, wind turbines outside the zones are normally not allowed – certainty for residents

Land for onshore wind (% of national territory)



Sources: Fraunhofer IWES (2012); WindBG § 3 and annex; § 249 BauGB; Bund-Länder-Koop.-Ausschuss (2025); AEE (2025). 2027 value = sum of state targets.

The country-wide target, expressed for each of the 16 states created the basis for securing enough land area for wind.

Lever #3: Protect populations, not single animals – and create a fund that finance it

Before 2022

- Every project: 1–2 years of bird surveys
- Unclear rules, different in every state
- Focus on single nests and animals
- Many permits stopped in court

Today: one national standard for every project

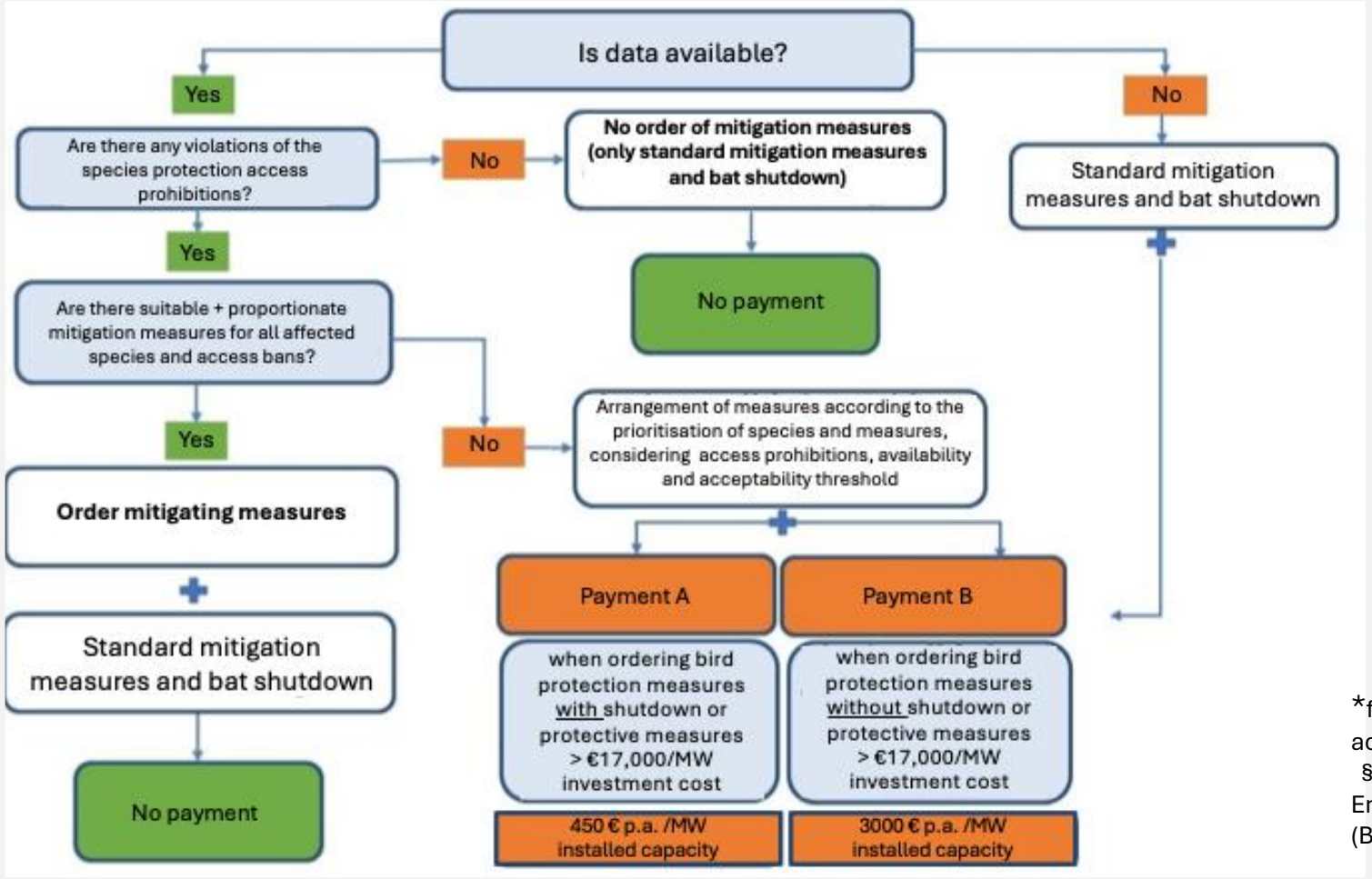
- **Same list** of collision-sensitive birds and the same distance zones around their nests
- **Same measures,** e.g. stopping turbines while fields are harvested
- **Same cost cap:** protection may cut yearly output by at most 6% (8% at very windy sites)
- **Same rule if nothing works:** the developer pays into national species programmes
- **PLUS: A new multi-billion EUR „Fund for Nature & Climate Protection“**

Sources: BNatSchG § 45b, § 45d and annex 1; WindBG § 6b; FA Wind und Solar (2024).

One standard for every project: national rules replace case-by-case studies.

Lever #4: Simplified species assessment

Species protection assessment according to §6 Wind Energy Area Requirement Law (WindBG)*



Source: BfN (2024)

*for birds, bats and species affected according to § 44 para. 1 no. 2 and § 44 para. 1 no. 3 Federal Environmental Protection Law (BNatSchG)

Lever #5: Firm procedures

§ 10/ §10a BImSchG („Federal Immission Control Act “):

- Deadlines for Licensing Decision: 7 months duration for a formal procedure, 3 months in expedited procedure; maximal extension once for 3 months
- Deadlines for Authority Involvement: 1-month deadline for statements, no extensions, no statement means „yes“
- The authority has to confirm the completeness of the application documents within 30 days in acceleration areas (45 days outside)
- Any breach of those deadlines is to be reported to the next higher authority level

Can this be replicated in other countries?

EU law is the toolbox

What EU law already allows

- **Overriding public interest** for renewables, grids and storage (RED III, Art. 16f)
- **Acceleration areas:** assess the zone once, then a short screening per project (Art. 15c)
- **Permit deadlines:** max. 1 year inside acceleration areas, 2 years outside; offshore 2 / 3 years (Art. 16a, 16b)
- **Infrastructure areas** for grids and storage (Art. 15e, optional)
- **One contact point** and digital procedures (Art. 16)
- **Test run 2022–2025:** EU emergency regulation with the same logic

How it has been used so far

- **Germany relied heavily on the emergency rules:** without them, about 41 GW of onshore wind could have been delayed by two years (German estimate, 2023)
- **Germany has written RED III into law:** wind, solar, storage (Aug 2025); offshore wind and grids (Dec 2025)
- **Only Denmark** wrote the RED III permitting rules into law on time (July 2024); the other 26 got warning letters

Sources: Directive (EU) 2023/2413; Reg. (EU) 2022/2577 and 2024/223 (Council doc. 16270/23, recital 12); European Commission (2024, 2025); EREF (2025); CAN Europe / EEB (2026).

Every EU country can do what Germany did.
The tools are already in EU law – but few countries use them yet.

Five lessons to take home

1

Give priority by law

Renewables and grids serve the overriding public interest.

2

Plan first, then permit

Binding land targets; check nature when zones are drawn.

3

Use standard nature rules

Same rules for every project; developers fund species programmes.

4

Set deadlines that bite

Fixed time limits; no answer counts as a yes.

5

Keep grids in step

Otherwise the bottleneck just moves to grids and markets.

Already in EU law (RED III): legal priority, acceleration areas, permit deadlines – you can use them.

Further reading: Fachagentur Wind-Solar has lots of material on its website



https://www.fachagentur-wind-solar.de/fileadmin/Veroeffentlichungen/Wind/Planung/FA_Wind_Solar_Nationale_Umsetzung_der_RED_III.pdf

Thank you for your attention!

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