

E-news update March 27 2006

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POLICY

1.1. New Europe clings to 'old' energy - New EU energy policy undermines efforts to limit climate change

24 March 2006, FoEEurope press release

The EU summit has adopted an energy strategy that will undermine global efforts to drastically cut down greenhouse gas pollution in order to limit dangerous climate change, Friends of the Earth charged today.

The "Energy Policy for Europe", agreed last night, aims at securing yet more oil and more gas imports and fails to make energy efficiency and renewable energies its central priority.

Jan Kowalzig, energy campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe in Brussels, said: "The European leaders missed an opportunity to make history and put Europe's energy on a path towards a sustainable future. Unbelievable but true: The leaders of the new European Union of 25 member states are clinging to an old energy policy."

"Europe's leaders have yet to learn a simple lesson: The most effective way to secure our energy supply is to cut back Europe's huge demand by investing massively in energy saving technologies. Cutting energy waste must be one central pillar of any coherent European energy policy."

The agreed strategy, an "Energy Policy for Europe", largely follows the European Commission's recent Green Paper on Energy and last week's conclusions by the EU industry and economy ministers at the Energy Council meeting. Particular attention is given to new external policies in order to secure long-term oil and gas imports into the EU.

A proposed regular "Strategic EU Energy Review", which is part of the energy policy, would aim to allow a transparent debate on the advantages and drawbacks of all energy sources, including nuclear

power - a technology that Friends of the Earth believes has no role to play in a sustainable energy mix for Europe.

Jan Kowalzig commented: "Common economic sense would send nuclear power finally into the museum if a Strategic EU Energy Review would include all aspects of nuclear power, including the costs of waste storage for thousands of years and the consequences of a serious nuclear accident."

The new strategy also calls for a "Road Map" for renewable energies and suggests raising the share of renewables energies to 15% of Europe's energy consumption by 2015. This is unacceptable because if the current target for 12% renewable energies by 2010 is met, the new target would mean that five years later the share would increase by only 3%.

But Europe can be far more ambitious: By 2020, it could easily meet 25% of primary energy consumption from renewable sources.

Friends of the Earth also criticised that the agreed energy strategy fails to include proposals to phase out perverse subsidies for conventional forms of energy, which according to the European Environmental Agency sum up to more than 20 billion Euros every year.

In addition, the 40-70 billion Euros in hidden costs of producing conventional energy, such as health costs from air pollution, should be internalised into the price of fossil and nuclear energy. This could be done through a dirty fuel tax that could recycle revenues back to renewable energies and energy saving measures.

Conclusions of the 14 March 2006 EU Energy Council are available at:

http://ue.eu.int/cms3_applications/Applications/newsRoom/LoadDocument.asp?directory=en/trans/&filename=88806.pdf.

ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

2.1. UK Power Debate Asks Is Small Beautiful?

23 March 2006, Planet Ark

Britain is at a crossroads as it decides how to supply its future electricity needs -- upgrade the ageing "big power" National Grid or scrap it in favour of decentralised systems such as combined heat and power (CHP).

Both involve heavy costs -- replacing ageing nuclear and coal power plants is expected to cost at least 50 billion pounds (US\$88 billion) and both will leave a legacy for generations.

It is a battle watched closely by the rest of the world as it tries to combat global warming -- blamed in large part on the burning of fossil fuels -- without jeopardising economic growth.

The ideological dispute cuts to the heart of the urgent review of energy sources the government is conducting as it faces the triple challenge of replacing old power plants, securing energy supplies and fighting climate change.

"The choice is obvious: decentralised energy," James Cameron, director of the Climate Change Capital carbon trading merchant bank told Reuters. "The other sums don't add up."

The review is due to report by mid-year but so far has drawn little but scorn from critics who see it as an excuse to back new nuclear plants and miss the chance of an energy revolution.

Energy minister Malcolm Wicks insists no decision has been taken and that localised power has a serious role to play.

On one side is so-called "big power" -- the nuclear and coal lobby that wants to keep the status quo of large power stations supplying a centralised electricity distribution network.

By contrast the decentralised energy advocates want local power generation and distribution networks using CHP, wind and electricity and heat producing microgeneration, leaving only a vestigial national system to balance supply and demand.

They argue that while conventional power stations lose up to two-thirds of the calorific value of their fuel up the chimney, CHP stations capture it to heat water and buildings.

Security of supply

Jim Watson from Sussex University's Energy Group said that decentralised energy sources have the added advantage of bringing power generation into a community and reinforce the need for people to change their lifestyles.

"It makes it easier to approach the behavioural change that has too easily been written off by this government," he said.

The dispute has gained even greater poignancy in Britain as the country starts to become reliant on imported fuels such as oil and gas which -- given upheaval in the Middle East and unreliable geopolitics -- can be held to ransom.

A case in point was Russia cutting off gas supplies over the New Year to punish Ukraine but by the same token choking off supplies to much of Europe. British spot gas prices quadrupled earlier this month as demand exceeded supply due to a cold snap.

The choice of fuel for the future will determine the structure of the distribution network at the time when the country's national grid -- built mostly in the 1950s and 60s -- is coming to the end of its design life.

"Decentralising energy will give us cleaner, cheaper and more secure power," said Greenpeace head Stephen Tindale. "This is the closest thing to the energy silver bullet."

But the British coal industry rejects the argument on the grounds that the numbers don't add up and coal, a major greenhouse gas culprit, could be rendered clean through carbon capture and storage technology.

"You need a solid backbone of power. If decentralised worked we would have done it already," coal industry spokesman David Brewer said, citing capital costs as the major inhibitor.

Britain has 19 coal power plants burning 52 million tonnes a year and supply about 40 percent of the nation's electricity, according to the Energy Saving Trust.

New nuclear power stations

The nuclear lobby wants at least 10 new plants to replace the 11 existing ones that supply 20 percent of the country's electricity. All but one will be closed by 2023.

Shrugging off worries about waste, it says nuclear power is low carbon, safe and secure but needs a centralised network because of the high initial capital costs.

It admits that renewables including microgeneration can complement supplies but says they cannot meet base-load demand for which "big power" is perfectly suited.

But a government advisory group -- the Sustainable Development Commission -- says nuclear power is uneconomic, unsafe and insecure and new plants would cement an inflexible supply system just when the option exists for radical change.

"Nuclear would lock the UK into a centralised distribution system for the next 50 years at exactly the time when opportunities for microgeneration and local distribution networks are stronger than ever," it said in a report.

A study by the World Alliance for Decentralised Energy -- an energy industry-funded non-profit lobby group -- said sources such as CHP were far more efficient than conventional plants.

It noted that Dutch CHP plants ran at efficiency rates of up to 95 percent against average conventional power plants which had efficiency rates of just 38.5 percent.

Not only did the greater efficiency mean lower fuel consumption and therefore reduced costs and more security, but carbon emissions from decentralised power sources were also significantly lower than from conventional plants.

Story by Jeremy Lovell.

2.2. U.S., Japan Partner to Promote Clean Development and Reduce Emissions

23

March

2006,

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/4d84d5d9a719de8c85257018005467c2/cc9f0561fe5746518525713a005ed9b5!OpenDocument>

Representatives of two of the world's largest economies met this week to discuss ways to improve air quality and promote clean energy, energy security, and economic opportunities at home and abroad. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Japanese partners explored options for collaborating on projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally and encourage sustainable development.

"President Bush and the EPA are helping turn strong economic partners into strong environmental partners," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. "By exporting our successes, this U.S.-Japan partnership can help developing countries understand that environmental protection and economic progress can, and do, go hand in hand."

The meeting was supported by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment, Japan-based Institute for Global Environmental Strategies and EPA. Participants agreed to strengthen international cooperation on actions that will simultaneously reduce emissions of global greenhouse gases and other air pollutants, particularly in developing countries. EPA showcased its experience in voluntary programs to

reap environmental benefits, including the Landfill Methane Outreach Program and the Integrated Environmental Strategies Program, among others.

"It is important for the U.S. and Japan to collaborate to help developing countries implement projects to generate co-benefits, such as public health benefits, and better air and water quality, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions," said Japanese Vice Minister for Global Environmental Affairs, Mr. Toshiro Kojima.

The U.S.-Japan partnership supports the recently launched Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate that promotes projects and programs to protect the environment, improve public health, and enhance economic growth worldwide. EPA plays a critical role in the success of the international Methane to Markets Partnership, of which Japan is also a charter member.

For more information visit: <http://www.epa.gov/ies>.

2.3. Renewable Energy Branch wants to invest 200 billion Euros in Germany

20 March 2006, Information campaign for renewable energies

The renewable energy sector publishes an investment package with an amount of 200 billions Euros. The companies of the branch, all in all above 5000, want to invest this amount until 2020. "That is 15 times more than today's announced investments in new coal power plants – just to give an example", said Johannes Lackmann, president of the German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE) on a press conference in Berlin today.

Alone in 2005 the renewable energy branch invested nearly 9 billions Euros in new generation capacity. "In 2010 we can yearly invest noticeable more than 12 billion Euros and from 2015 more than 14 billion Euros", said Lackmann. "To have continuing steady basic conditions are therefore the most important prerequisite. The whole political energy concept must therefore base upon a resolute extension of renewable energies", demands Lackmann with a view to the energy summit conference with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) at the beginning of April.

The BEE bases its prognoses upon the goal to have more than 20% of energy consumption from renewable energies until 2020. This corresponds to the postulations of the European Parliament for the countries of the EU.

"The investments will be more than profitable. Because they will save the German economy invariably more expensive and high hazard energy imports", said Lackmann. Thus year for year oil, gas, coal and uranium amounting to 50 billion Euros are imported to Germany and the proportion is increasing. These resources are therefore one of the most expensive items on the list of all imports to Germany. "Without the renewable energies, the account of the foreign energy suppliers would have been 3 billion Euros higher just in 2005," said Lackmann. Until 2020 the branch wants to help save yearly energy imports amounting to 20 billion Euros.

Lackmann gained support from three leading branch representatives. Ph.D. (Dr.) Klaus Meier, executive chairman of the Bremer WPD AG, announced that his company plans onshore and offshore renewable energy projects with a volume of more than 3 billion Euros until 2020 – further 3 billion Euros shall be invested international. "We need a strong German onshore market for wind power. The large operators, which currently plan global projects, possess all a strong home market – for instance Spain and the USA", said Meier.

The WPD wants to invest 2.5 billion Euros in the extension of offshore wind power. But therefore are rational frameworks necessary, said Meier: "There are political guidelines for the offshore division not to build near the shore and in flat waters because of environmental considerations. But the recent economic basic conditions are not enough for the necessary starting shot for the first projects in the North and Baltic see. Here new initiatives are needed to ensure the leading position of the German wind industry in the offshore area."

Also the bio fuel industry has ambitious targets. That reveals Ph.D. (Dr.) Carlhans Uhle, CEO of CHOREN: "We intend to produce one million tons of sun fuel (SunDiesel) – also called BTL - yearly in Germany in the future. For that purpose five large scale plants, each with a yearly capacity of 200.000 tons, shall be build in Germany until 2014. The investment volume for this project amounts up to billions.

Already in one year one plant, which is located in Saxon Freiberg, shall come on stream and produce yearly approximately 19 million litre synthesised bio fuel. It will be internationally the first one which produces synthesised bio fuel in industrial quantities. The worldwide so far unique plant to produce BTL is located in Freiberg as well.

Also companies which were originally active in other segments rely now on renewable energies. For instance Bielefeld's Schüco International KG, which became known as a supplier of window and facade – systems. "We have introduced a new production facility for thermal solar plants for several million euros", said Thomas Lauritzen, company spokesman of the Schüco International KG. For the next years the company intends to invest annually 30-40 million Euros in the development and distribution of energy saving components and solar plants. "Our task is to make sure that we all can live and act in future as comfortable as we used to, but to consume much less energy than we do today", said Lauritzen.

To the objection that renewable energies are only available to a higher price for electricity, heat and fuels replies BEE president Lackmann decidedly: "The opposite is true. Renewable energies will be substantially cheaper in the long run, instead of the limited conventional energies." This already becomes clear at the Leipziger Energy Exchange: One kilowatt hour base load electricity costs there today about 70 percent more than in the previous year. Whereas the compensation for electricity of wind-, solar-, and bio energy have declined about 2.5 percent on an average in the same time. Thus the price for wind power is more and more often below the price of electricity at the exchange.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

3.1. Sea rise could be 'catastrophic'

BBC News on line

By Paul Rincon

Earth could be headed for catastrophic sea level rise in the next few centuries if greenhouse gases continue to rise at present rates, experts say.

A study in the US journal Science suggests a threshold triggering a rise in sea level of several metres could be reached before the end of the century.

Scientists used an ancient period of warming to predict future changes.

Greenland could be as warm by 2100 as it was 130,000 years ago, when melting ice raised sea levels by 3-4m.

The implication is that Greenland would - eventually - melt by as much in response to present warming.

The findings come from two studies published in Science by Dr Jonathan Overpeck of the University of Arizona in Tucson and colleagues.

Their computer models show that, in addition to widespread melting of the Greenland ice sheet, this rate of warming could also lead to the collapse of about half the West Antarctic ice sheet in 500 years.

Past lessons: Dr Overpeck's team used computer models to simulate the climate 130,000 years ago. Because Earth was tilted slightly more than today on its axis, more solar radiation hit the northern latitudes, driving warming there.

The researchers found that melting of the Greenland ice sheet could have raised sea levels by 2-3.5m. But they also concluded that the rest could have come from the West Antarctic ice sheet.

It was not as warm here, but much of the ice sheet remains below sea level. This, they believe, allowed warming ocean waters along with rising sea levels to destabilise it.

"The simulated climate warming agreed well with the observed climate warming," Dr Overpeck told the BBC News website, "So we had a firm estimate of how much warmth was necessary to cause that much sea level rise."

The researchers then compared this with simulations of future warming to learn how much sea level rise would be expected in future.

They estimate peak rates of sea level rise exceeding 1m per century.

'Danger zone': "These processes of rapid ice sheet retreat are already happening. It just takes a while to get metres of sea level rise. But our study says that if we warm the Earth by more than two times of pre-industrial carbon dioxide equivalent levels, we could be entering the danger zone," said Dr Overpeck.

"The ice sheet retreat and sea level rise on the order of what happened 130,000 years ago is inevitable and irreversible."

Geoscientist Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University, who is not an author on the new paper, told Science: "Palaeoclimate always has a large amount of uncertainty, [but] we should take this as a serious warning sign. You could lock in a dangerous warming during this century."

Other work in the journal Science shows "earthquakes" caused by sudden movement of Greenland's glaciers are rising.

Some of Greenland's glaciers, which are as large as Manhattan and as tall as the Empire State Building, can move 10m in less than a minute, according to Harvard University scientists. This jolt is sufficient to generate seismic waves.

Not only has the frequency of these events increased, but they appear to occur more frequently in late summer than other parts of the year.

When water accumulates at a glacier's base, it acts as a lubricant causing large blocks to lurch down valleys.

"Greenland's glaciers deliver large quantities of fresh water to the oceans, so the implications for climate change are serious. We believe further warming of the climate is likely to accelerate the behaviour we've documented, said co-author Meredith Nettles at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in New York, US.

3.2. Climate Change Threatens to Hamper Development in Poorest Countries

21 March 2006, Associated Press

By Mark Stevenson

Droughts, floods, changing rain patterns and rising sea levels are threatening development in the world's poorest countries, experts and aid workers said Monday at an international water forum.

Regions including Africa and South Asia -- home to most of the 1.1 billion people who live without clean water -- will be among the hardest hit by changing weather patterns, experts at the 4th World Water Forum said. They blamed the threats largely on changes in the global climate.

"Droughts will worsen. We will see deforestation, forest fires, a loss of biodiversity and degradation of the environment," said Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization.

"The least developed countries are the most affected. Often, developing countries don't have the resources to mitigate the impact."

Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide have been increasing in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution, raising fears they are warming the planet's climate by trapping heat from the sun.

Scientists worry that overall warming will melt glaciers and the polar ice caps, raising sea levels enough to damage many low-lying islands and cities around the world. In addition, a warmer climate could lead to changes in weather patterns, agriculture and even allow some diseases to expand into new areas.

Gana Unnayan Sangstha, an aid worker who helps install community water systems in Bangladesh's poor coastal province of Satkhira, has already seen the effects of global warming.

"Bangladesh is the lowest-lying country in the world. There are salinity intrusions into larger areas due to climate change, and a rise in sea-water levels," Unnayan Sangstha said. When salt gets into ground water -- such as in the wells used in many Bangladesh projects -- it becomes useless for drinking or irrigation.

Increasing salinity is also a problem in areas around Karachi, Pakistan, where Tanveer Arif works on a rural-aid project aimed at building ponds that collect water in an arid environment.

He does not blame the increased salinity on global warming, but has noted less rain for his ponds to capture.

"Since about two decades ago, there is some climate change, and the rains are moving to the east," Arif said.

Joe Madiath, of the India-based rural development organization Gram Vikas, said climate change is devastating Orissa, one of the country's poorest states which he calls "the disaster capital of India."

"Floods, typhoons -- you name it, we have it," said Madiath, who installs community water tanks and toilets.

While the amount of rainfall remains constant from previous years, it comes all at once, a problem he said is getting worse.

The head of Mexico's national weather service said much of his country's Yucatan coast could eventually be flooded by rising sea levels.

Jamie Pittock, executive director of the World Wildlife Fund, said major rivers could be affected by global warming.

"Rivers like the Indus and Ganges could see reduced flow," he said. "At the moment, they have a steady base flow from melting glaciers, but when those glacier flows are reduced, the rivers will become more flashy, with greater flows in the wet season and lower flows in the dry season."

"That will be devastating, not only for people, but for the environment," he added. Moreover, developing countries may bear the brunt of the costs of a problem caused in part by industrialized countries whose vehicles and factories contribute heavily to production of greenhouse gases.

CONFERENCES

4.1. Greenhouse gas credits trade versus biomass trade – weighing the benefits

Workshop: Trondheim, Norway 5-6 April, 2006.

For more details see: www.joanneum.at/iea-bioenergy-task38/workshops/announcement.pdf.

Registration form: www.joanneum.at/iea-bioenergy-task38/workshops/registration.doc.

Participation is limited, and priority is given to countries participating in IEA Bioenergy Tasks 38 and 40.

4.2. Linking Schemes: Potential Impacts of Linking the European Union Emissions Trading System with Emerging Carbon Markets in other Countries

International Conference (First Announcement)

29 – 30 May 2006, Brussels, Belgium, Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11

Registration deadline: 15th May 2006.

A conference fee of 30 Euro has to be paid to cover food and beverage expenses. Please register until 15th May 2006. Please note that we can accept only a limited amount of participants.

For further information please contact: www.wupperinst.org/Sites/Projects/rg2/3214.html.

4.3. The Great Wall World Renewable Energy Forum and Exhibition (GWREF2006)

Beijing, China, October 24-27th

For more information, please turn to the website: www.gwref.org.

PUBLICATIONS

5.1. ECN follow-up report on the implications of EU emissions trading for power prices

In September 2005, the Energy research Centre of the Netherlands (ECN) published a report called "CO2 Price Dynamics: The Implications of EU Emissions Trading for the Price of Electricity". On behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands, ECN has conducted some follow-up analyses of this study, including:

An update of the empirical and statistical analyses of the price trends and pass-through rates of CO2 costs in the power sector of Germany and the Netherlands.

An analysis by means of the model COMPETES of the potential effects of CO2 emissions trading on the wholesale market shares of the major power producers in the Netherlands.

An analysis of policy options to cope with certain adverse effects of passing through the opportunity costs of freely allocated CO2 emission allowances.

The report of the follow-up study is now available from the ECN website. For an abstract of the report, please visit: <http://www.ecn.nl/library/reports/2006/c06015.html>.

The publication can be downloaded as a PDF-file from the ECN website: <http://www.ecn.nl/docs/library/report/2006/c06015.pdf>.

5.2. EEA Report 2/2006 - Integration of environment into EU agriculture policy

Published at: http://reports.eea.eu.int/eea_report_2006_2.

Abstract: This report aims to provide a fair reflection of the progress, the achievements and obstacles in the integration of environmental concerns into EU agriculture policy, based on indicators developed in the IRENA operation (see Section 1.3). It also tackles limitations to successful policy implementation at Member State level, and challenges ahead.

Policy examples from some Member States aim to show good practice in agri-environmental policy implementation or design. Due to the scope of the IRENA operation the analysis focuses on the EU-15 Member States.

5.3. Air pollution at street level in European cities

Technical report No 1/2006, published at: http://reports.eea.eu.int/technical_report_2006_1.

Abstract: Traffic-related air pollution is still one of the most pressing problems in urban areas. Evidence of the adverse health effects of fine particulate matter is continuously emerging and it is alarming that most of the traffic-related emissions are in the fine particulates range (< PM2.5). Human exposure to increased pollutant concentrations in densely populated urban areas is high. The improvement of air quality is therefore imperative. Air quality limit values, which are aimed at protecting public health, are frequently exceeded especially in streets and other urban hotspots.

5.4. EEA Briefing 1/2006 - Assessing environmental integration in EU agriculture

Published at: http://reports.eea.eu.int/briefing_2006_1.

Abstract: Farming has a strong impact on the environment in the European Union (EU), both in a negative and a positive sense. The common agricultural policy (CAP) is a major driver of the agricultural sector, and can therefore positively influence environmental management by farmers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

6.1. Invitation for comments – JI project in Russia

Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited is currently making a determination of the 'Switch of Khabarovsk CHP-1 Plant from Coal to Fire Natural Gas' project in Russia.

The purpose of the proposed project is to switch 19 units of boiler in Khabarovsk CHP-1 plant from coal as the primary fuel to fire natural gas so that it can improve the local environment with cleaner fuel and reduce GHG emissions by the lower carbon intensive energy source. Khabarovsk region is an industrial center located in the Far East of the Russian Federation and Khabarovsk CHP-1 plant is one of the main heat and electricity supply sources of the region.

We invite comments from all parties, stakeholders and observers in accordance with the JI rules and modalities.

Comments may be provided within the next 30 days - from March 20 to April 19 2006, on our website:

http://www.lrq.com/comsite/template.asp?name=Khabarovsk_joint_implementation_project.

6.2. Vacancy for a policy officer at CAN Europe

Deadline for applications: 5th April 2006.

Climate Action Network Europe is seeking to recruit a Policy Officer based in Brussels.

CAN Europe is the European co-ordination office for a global network of environmental NGOs working on climate change and sustainable energy issues. Presently, we represent 100 member organisations within the EU and associated countries. CAN Europe is a highly regarded NGO partner in climate and energy policy development in Brussels. As part of CAN International, it also plays an important role within the international negotiations under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Responsibilities will include:

Active engagement (as part of a team) on relevant policy issues at EU level. Lobbying activities with the European institutions as well as think tanks, industry groups and Member States. Provision of information to member organisations on EU and international policy developments. Co-ordination of joint position papers, press statements and letters from the network on relevant policy issues. Participation in the international conferences of the UNFCCC as well as related processes. Active support to the office's fund raising activities.

The ideal candidate will possess:

Minimum 3-5 years relevant professional experience, preferably on EU and international climate and energy policies. Priorities: options and process for the post-2012 international treaty framework,

