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EU back to energy realism?



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Article by Maxeiner & Miersch in "Die Welt": [Unsere Energieträumer verbrennen Geld anstatt Gas](#)

Remember that official EU energy policy aims to increase its input from renewable sources to 20% of total energy consumption in 2020 (some even aimed at 30%); renewable should not be confounded with carbon-free, as for instance nuclear energy does not belong to that category! Well, last winter was a further lecture of reality versus politics in the UK. From 3-9 January 2010 wind turbines rated at a nominal 2.5 GW produced only 0.1 GW, and during the 2th December 2010 their output was between 0.7 to 1.2% of the total 56 GW needed, that is 4 times less than planned; this despite wind energy having the highest priority. Wind turbines are the last to be shut down when production would exceed demand (read [here](#) a Britain Watch comment). It is very difficult to get reliable numbers on the real capacity factor of wind turbines and photovoltaic. For instance UK's Ofgem could not deliver production data of sources subsidized by heavy feed-in tariffs (read this telling story from the Renewable Energy Foundation).

The over generous feed-in tariffs (FIT's) are clearly unsustainable, as the financial crisis bites painfully into the public budgets (as shown by Spain and the Netherlands). More and more ordinary citizen are asking themselves why they should pay big taxes to profiteers who claim to save the planet just to reap large rewards for their investments in wind and solar energy. The German experience in photovoltaic showed that these high FIT's was a hindrance to lower the price of solar equipment, and that a big part of the money went directly to Chinese factories and not to the German solar cell producers.

The Dutch having a new middle/right wing government made quite a splash the last days, when they decided to stop subsidizing the very expensive offshore wind farms and the still more expensive photovoltaics (read article in German in the Financial Times Deutschland). To the horror of the German green movements and party they plan to build a new nuclear reactor in Zeeland, and as such make a comeback to carbon free atomic energy.

On another front, official EU policy seems to awaken to **shale gas**, after stubbornly ignoring this energy revolution started a couple of years ago in the USA and made possible by new horizontal drilling techniques (see excellent youtube [video](#)) . Shale gas may well make redundant many grandiose plans for several decades: new pipe lines from Russia to Europe, the gigantic Desertec plan to install thermal solar facilities in the North African region and the monumental hypergrid said to be mandatory to transport intermittent wind electricity throughout Europe could soon become superfluous for the near future. Shale gas also means the welcome killing of the baroque CSS (carbon storage and sequestration) projects, and not many tears will be shed on the burial of this dangerous and expensive technique.

The official EU did not see the Jasmin revolution preparing in Tunisia, neither that going on in Egypt and probably spreading soon to the whole Arab world. Neither were they open to energy realism, following slavishly the various green movements which dictated the EU energy politics. Now serious cracks start to appear in the once seemingly unanimous energy front. Probably the Eastern countries like Poland and the Baltics will follow the Dutch. France probably just waits for the right moment to leave the world of carbon certificates and Kyoto-style binding treaties without losing face. It could well be that Germany will be the last of the Mohicans planning using exclusively renewable energies, mostly wind and solar, whatever the costs and the benefits.

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One Response to "EU back to energy realism?"

Remi Oval Says:
April 22, 2011 at 21:39 | [Reply](#)



I have been living in the UK for over 20 years and have been gradually paying higher and higher pollution taxes of all sorts to "combat global warming"(i am convinced human has some influence on the process).doing my best for the environment , recycling, saving electricity etc. i recently went on holiday in florida , i soon realised all the taxes in europe were mere excuse to milk the cashcow . fuel at price that does not want to make you give up your 6l v8 gas guzzler. supermarket using obscene quantities of plastic carrier bags , people living in warm climate unable to withstand the heat and setting aircon to freezing made me realise all the efforts in europe are totally useless and the high pollution taxes a con

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