

The objectives of the European energy policy should be to ensure the well being of its citizens, the proper functioning of the economy, the uninterrupted physical availability of energy products at an acceptable price for all consumers while respecting environment concerns and securing sustainable development. If the European Union approved a program, "Energy for a Changing World", defining its energy policy, it still has to face many challenges and contradictory issues. The author of this tribune, Jean-Pierre SCHAEKEN WILLEMAERS, a specialist of energy resources in the academic as well as the industrial fields and a member of the Advisory Board of the Belgian Committee of the Thomas More Institute, points out the inconsistencies of this policy: the lack of consensus among EU Member States which limits the Commission's scope for action, the competition and environmental concerns, the environment/ investments and energy prices, and the place of energy demand and regulation. He also provides reasonable potential solutions concerning coal, nuclear power or renewable energies which could be integrated within a more coherent policy according to their characteristics.

## Inconsistencies in European Energy Policies

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The objectives of the European energy policy should be to ensure the well being of its citizens, the proper functioning of the economy, the uninterrupted physical availability of energy products at an acceptable price for all consumers while respecting environment concerns and securing sustainable development. To meet these goals, the European Union will have to face many challenges and reconcile contradictory issues, among others the lack of consensus among EU Member States which limits the Commission's scope for action, competition and environmental concerns, environment/investments and energy prices, place of energy demand and regulation.

The next twenty years will inevitably be a transition period between conventional energy and energy of the future.

However short and medium term security of supply leaves Europe and the world with no choice but using the current energy sources while investing in new technologies and improving existing ones.

It is increasingly obvious that these objectives cannot be reached without taking into account the world energy situation.

# 1 World Energy Demand

## A. Power

The world power demand is continuously increasing. According to the IEA (International Energy Agency), it will grow from about 14,400 TWh<sup>1</sup> in 2004 to about 28, 000 TWh in 2030.

2030 projection is broken down into approximately:

15,000 TWh in developing countries (vs 5,400 TWh in 2004, an increase of 178 %)

13,000 TWh in OECD countries (vs 9,000 TWh in 2004, an increase of 44 %)

US electricity consumption ranked first in 2005 with 3800 TWh, followed by China and the EU with about 2800 TWh each. The rank order is however very different in 2030, as China will be by then the first electricity consumer. Seventy-eight percent of the world power demand increase between 2004 and 2030 would be originated in India and China.

The coal contribution to power generation would be 44% in 2030 whereas the gas would cover 23% of the fuel needs and renewable power would increase to 7%.

## B. Gas

Gas consumption is increasing worldwide however at a lesser pace than coal. According to BP, world gas production increased 2.4% in 2007, the USA being the major contributor of that growth with 4.3% while European production diminished by 6.4%.

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<sup>1</sup> TWh : terawatt-hour (= 10<sup>12</sup> watt-hours)



With proven reserves of natural gas of more than 172 trillion m<sup>3</sup> (2006) and annual consumption of 2,500 billion m<sup>3</sup> (a little less than 500 billion m<sup>3</sup> for the EU),

**there is no risk of scarcity in the coming decades.**

Today Algeria is the source of more than 20% of EU gas imports while Russia provides 45%. Because of the depletion of its own gas reserves, Europe is expected to import 75% of its needs by 2015.

It is urgent for Europe to diversify its sources of supply to avoid a too large dependence on Russia.

The North Stream 155 billion m<sup>3</sup>/year pipe project under Environment Impact Assessment is one additional link between Russia and the EU with Gazprom holding a controlling 51% stake in the joint venture, BASF/Wintershall and EON/Ruhrgas holding 20% each and Gasunie 9%. More coordinated efforts should be dedicated to developing pipe projects between central Asia fields and Europe.

Gazprom concluded in 2008 a partnership agreement with Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary for supplying gas to Europe through the South Stream Pipeline coming from Tuapse (Russia) and crossing the Black Sea. This project is competing with Nabucco (3,300 km pipeline), a project designed to transport gas from Central Asia to the EU through Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. The Nabucco project, supported by the EU and the USA to reduce the energetic dependence on Russia, is lagging behind pending the financial side that is subject to availability of a sufficient volume of gas to make it profitable.

## C. Oil

Today, oil supplies 96% of the world's energy devoted to transportation.

The world proven oil reserves are estimated at more than 1.2 trillion barrels

of which about 2/3 are in the hands of Middle Eastern governments and less than 5% are located in Russia. Russia ranks seven in proven oil reserves. In the future the Middle Eastern producers will have a bigger piece of the pie than ever before.

The current oil consumption in the world is greater than 31 billion bbl/year  
or 86 million bbl/day

China is the world's second largest oil consumer after the USA and its oil demand is among the fastest growing in the world. The country is likely to use an average of 8 million bbl/day in 2008 or about 9% of the world consumption. In the next two decades China oil consumption is expected to grow at a rate of 7.5% p.a. and India 5.5% compared to only 1% for the industrialized western countries, according to IAGS (Institute for the Analysis of Global Security).

This implies increasing tension between the USA/UE and China as a result of likely growing Chinese intervention in the Middle East, Africa and even Latin-America to secure its own access to oil.

According to BP, oil consumption in the exporting countries of the Middle East, Central and South America, Africa and others contributes to 2/3 of the world oil demand increase. In the OECD countries, oil demand declined by 0.9%.

There are substitutes for fossil fuels like synthetic fuels (oil, gasoline and diesel produced from coal) which processes might not be too expensive in mass production, or also bio fuels.

Bio fuels, although reducing the dependence on oil imports may not be a solution for the long term and possibly not even for the medium term because of their drawbacks like displacement of crops for fuel, lower vapour pressure, lower energy content per unit volume and so on.



## D. Coal

British Petroleum, in its annual report 2007, estimated that the proven coal reserves at 2006 year end amounted to 909 gigatons<sup>2</sup> with about 27% located in the USA, 17% in Russia, 12% in China, 10% in India, 8.5% in Australia, 5.5% in South Africa. These figures do not include exploration drilling programs particularly in under-explored areas.

Coal has the most widely distributed reserves. It is mined in over 100 countries and on all continents.

World coal consumption is about 6.2 billion tons/year of which 75% is used for the production of electricity.

China produced 2.38 billion tons in 2006 and India about 447 million tons in 2006. The USA consumes about 1 billion ton/year, using 90% of it for generating electricity.

Europe's coal import will reach 59% of its needs by 2020 against 40% in 2005.

# 2 Inconsistencies of the European Energy Policies

## A. Competition and Member States

The Commission is very keen to enhance competition in all areas of activities and in particular in the energy sector. In its program "*Energy for a changing world*" approved by the European Council in March 8 and 9, 2007, the EU aims at:

- Unbundling energy supply and generation activities of energy companies from transmission and distribution networks to further increase market competition;
- Improving energy relations with EU's neighbours, including Russia;
- Developing a European Strategic Energy Technology Plan for renewable energy, energy conservation, low energy buildings, fourth generation nuclear power, clean coal and carbon capture; an Africa-Europe energy partnership;
- Cutting by at least 20% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all primary energy sources by 2020 (from 1990 level) while pushing for an international agreement to succeed the Kyoto protocol aimed at achieving a 30% cut by all developed nations by 2020;
- Cutting up to 50% carbon emissions from primary energy sources by 2050, also from 1990 levels;
- Bringing the share of bio fuels to 10% by 2020.

However some of those objectives have been adapted to cope with some EU Member States policies. This is a typical situation within the European Union where big companies usually from large countries are in a position to impact the legislation according to their own interests. EDF refused to release information on plant operation that its big competitors, EON and RWE began reporting in 2007.

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<sup>2</sup> One gigaton = one billion tons



Because of the French opposition against the forced break up of power and gas companies or the removal of their network management role, the UK-lead European group dealing with this issue accepted a compromise. The energy Ministers of the EU approved in July 2008 a looser agreement under which power and gas producers could retain ownership of the grid. Nevertheless this option includes conditions aimed at guaranteeing the independence of the network operator by, among other things, requiring the appointment of an in-house “compliance officer” to enforce non-discrimination on grid access and requiring that network business be financially independent.

This is not necessarily a setback from a pragmatic perspective, because examples exist around the world of competitive markets with integrated network businesses where alternative structural models with grid regulation are sufficient. The problem is that there is a discrimination between the largest members of the Union and the smaller ones, the former being in a position to impose their views.

Complete transparency is not yet achieved. As long as electrical companies for instance are not publishing data broken down by plant, those with information about outages can anticipate jumps in prices to the detriment of the others. Increased transparency would bring savings for consumers by increasing competition in wholesale markets.

Unbundling which is supposed to increase competition leads to measures of protection of the European market. Indeed to prevent non EU Members to take control of European transmission companies without being themselves subject to rules on unbundling in their own countries, a “Third Country Clause” or a reciprocity clause was adopted.

Finally one may question the effectiveness of the electricity market liberalisation under the EU conditions. Cap Gemini points out that the electricity retail prices are higher than the European average in the Member States where markets have been open to competition for more than 3 years.

## B. Competition and environment

Does the EU target of sourcing 20% of its energy from renewable by 2020 fit with the Union’s aim of boosting competition?

The electricity industry worries that this decision on renewables could shelter a large chunk of electricity generation from competition as utilities and generators will be allowed to operate outside the scope of the single market through national support schemes for renewables.

Such support schemes, potentially overgenerous, trigger investments in renewables (the objective of such programmes) but they are also progressively boosting electricity price, which is in contradiction with competition targets.

Italy experienced such a situation although under different conditions, with the law known as CIP 6 offering investors in cogeneration power plants such attractive tariffs on a long term basis ( PPA) with the obligation for ENEL to offtake all the available electricity at that tariff that the government had to stop the scheme.

## C. Competitiveness and environment

The Kyoto protocol will expire in 2012. The most difficult problem to solve in the following round of climate change negotiations will be how to divide up obligations among countries. The developing countries (and in particular the G.5: India, China, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa) consider it essential that developed countries take the lead in achieving ambitious greenhouse gas emission reductions. They make it clear that they expect larger contributions to emission cuts from the wealthiest



developed countries. They claim that the latter got a free ride on emissions for decades and should pay for historical emissions. Consequently, they are demanding that rich nations commit themselves to an 80 % cut of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. This would allow poor countries to continue increasing their emissions for an extended period.

The generally agreed figure (sofar) by most of the developed countries is a reduction of emissions by half in 2050 from 1990 level (in order that CO<sub>2</sub> does not exceed 550 ppm).

On the other hand China, India and other developing countries will unlikely sign up any treaty that obliges them to make commitments that limit their future economic growth.

For instance Mr Singh, Indian President said that "ecological sustainable developments need not to be in contradiction to achieving our growth objectives". India also argues that it cannot commit to emission caps when people are living in total deprivation.

The UK economist Nicholas Stern estimated that China emissions would double by 2050 from current level. Yet, given the growth rate of Chinese economy and the heavy investment in energy intensive industries, such estimates could be over-optimistic. A study sponsored by the Australian government predicted that Chinese emissions would double by 2030. About 80% of its electricity needs are fuelled by coal and account for half of the world planned new coal fired power plants in the next decade.

Whereas the developing countries stick to their economic programs with limited concern, for the environment, the EU is strengthening its environmental rules.

Is it wise for Europe to push forward CO<sub>2</sub> emission rules beyond what competitors are prepared to do? Is it consistent to promote job creation schemes, a social policy and a purchase power protection and simultaneously increase the production costs in the European Union, henceforth at a disadvantage to its main competitors?

There is definitely a conflict between the priorities of trade and the ones of climate change policy. In this context, following considerations should be addressed:

- Business stresses the necessity of clarity and of sound regulation. They are also expressing concerns over the issue of competitiveness. The rising price of oil, food and other commodities and the worsening economic outlook will make it difficult to propose, adopt and implement policies that would probably raise the price of energy further as most climate change measures do.
- Without significant improvements in energy efficiency in developing countries, the CO<sub>2</sub> reduction programs of the "rich" world will be meaningless. China current CO<sub>2</sub> emission is almost 7,000 (Mt) million tons/year, more than the approx. 6,000 Mt of the USA and the approx 4000 Mt of the EU. How can a climate change conference produce anything effective without the world biggest polluters? It is also obvious that emission reduction achievements by developed countries should be matched by business rivals otherwise environmental risk would put the former at a serious competitiveness disadvantage. The post-Kyoto agreements must be considered to be fair by all players in order to be successful.
- Global warming is not necessarily a problem for all nations. Russia may even benefit from it as its colder regions may become suitable for agriculture for instance.
- Could "top-down targets" for emission cuts lead to credible and balanced measures to curb pollution while addressing business competitiveness concern? The industry would prefer a bottom-up method of calculating targets: industry by industry calculations should form the basis of what is feasible.
- Is 1990 level a good basis year for emission cut? That reference year places the developed countries at a big disadvantage vis à vis countries like Russia for instance which is allowed to increase its emissions and profit from the carbon markets because of their industrial reshaping



after the fall of the Berlin wall. Japan is advocating the choice of current level of emissions as a reference year.

## 3 Inconsistencies of Renewable Energy Policies

### A. Power

The 20% cut criteria implies that:

- Coal and gas fired power plants must reduce their production when renewable energy is available. This leads to lesser efficiency of these power plants and increased pollution
- Renewable power, in case of lack of wind, sun..., is balanced by fossil fuel power, an inconsistency. Renewable power should be balanced by hydropower and limited until further technological development as power storage is achieved.
- For renewable energy to become efficient processes must be developed to store it for example in the form of hydrogen.

It is important to keep in mind that “renewable” energy is intermittent. The sun is not always shining, the wind is not always blowing, water is not always flowing when there is a drought and agricultural yields vary. When electricity generated at times of abundant renewable energy can be used to extract hydrogen from water, and the latter can be stored for later use, society will have a continuous supply of power. Other storage technologies including batteries, pump hydro, flywheels, ultra capacitors and the like provide only “niche storage”.

In any case, wind power cannot be extended beyond a certain level without grid destabilisation. Denmark stopped installing new wind mills since 2005 because its grid cannot cope with the intermittent wind production beyond the current level without efficient storage solutions. Other countries could follow suit, like Germany. In this country the wind power capacity of about 25,000 MW exceeds its nuclear capacity whereas the load factor is 16% against more than 80% for nuclear.

On top of above limitation, suitable land availability is another limiting factor.

Nuclear power should be fostered instead of being banned at least during the transition period. How would Germany have faced the 2006 power failure had France developed wind power instead of its nuclear program? In any case relying on neighbouring countries is not a solution.

Instead of deterring coal consumption (with hundreds of years of proven reserves) which appears to be favoured by power companies because of diversity of supply, large reserves and fairly low price volatility, the EU would be better off to support developments of clean coal technologies such as CCS (carbon capture and storage). It would be cheaper and safer in terms of security of fuel supply.

### B. Bio fuels

One of the main arguments put forward to encourage bio fuel production is that it would decrease dependence on fossil fuels and would be a reliable source of energy. Is this decrease really



significant? How much biomass can the world produce without harming the environment and without depriving people from the food they need?

According to *Agriculture and Agrofood Canada*, if 100% of the total US corn output were used for the production of bio fuel, it could replace 20% of its annual fuel consumption with bio fuel.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) reports that the rising demand for ethanol derived from corn is the main reason for the decline in world grain stocks during the first half of 2006.

Some sources have mentioned that a World Bank report has concluded that bio fuels forced food prices significantly up. This unpublished assessment is based on a most detailed analysis of the crisis carried out by a senior economist of the Bank.

It argues that production of bio fuels has distorted food markets in three main ways:

- First, it has diverted grain away from food in favour of fuel with over a third of US corn now used to produce ethanol and about half of vegetable oil in the EU going to the production of bio diesel;
- Second, farmers have been encouraged to set land aside to bio fuel production;
- Third it has sparked financial speculation in grains, driving prices higher.

Rising food prices have led to riots in several developing countries. The world is flat.

What is the point of taking unilaterally environment friendly measures (and are they really?) without involving India, China and Brazil if these decisions destabilize the rest of the world?

Did Europe and the USA act thoughtfully when promoting bio fuels from corn wheat, rape and so on instead of investing in the development of hydrogen technology?

In order to ensure that biomass production always complies with good agricultural and labour practices and ensures a good and responsible balance between food and non-food crop production, it has been suggested to encourage European legislators to establish a certification system for sustainable production and use of bio fuels.

A way out would be to find feedstocks that are less demanding to produce: ethanol from non-food crops and from other biomass containing cellulose. The development of an efficient cellulose-to-ethanol technology may promote the use of raw materials such as agricultural residues, straws and wood chips.

In the meantime, to mitigate the consequences of the Commission's target of 10% bio fuels by 2020, the members of the European Parliament have limited the bio fuel share of renewable energy for transportation. Indeed bio fuels of the first generation (from food crop) cannot be greater than 60% of the renewable energies. Moreover the MPs decided to limit to 4% the use of bio fuels by 2014 with a reassessment of the 10% target.



# 4 Regulators and Regulations

## A. Power

Although there is a unified power network, there is no European central Authority. Transmission of power over long distances is a natural monopoly. Regulating this market is still a national privilege. To control the security and the quality of supply as well as the costs of transmission services, regulators are concerned with maintenance, capital investment and operating cost allowances, investment returns and lifetime. They have to maintain acceptable standards for stakeholders and prevent abuse of dominant position by operators.

Unfortunately regulatory environments are very different from country to country in Europe and too often focused more on local interest than on the European security and quality of supply and fair costs. As Mr Prodi put it, "there is a contradiction between having European networks but not having a central European Authority". Without such an Authority, improving of cross border connections and reduction of congestion on national grids (partially due to loopflows) and at the major interconnections are problematic.

The Authority could also better weigh the economics of investment in new long distance transmission infrastructure against the alternative of building new generating capacity. However to make decisions and implementations efficient, the permitting procedures should be improved. Indeed the lengthy consent process for new lines could make it more attractive to build new power plants even it is not the optimum solution.

Through adequate control congestion could be avoided by spike streamlining and by fostering new investments in electrical networks. A central Authority could have prevented the September 2003 Italian blackout after a tree struck a power line in Switzerland. It was said that the blackout may have been exacerbated by Swiss grid operators failing to warn Italian utilities on time. In addition National Regulatory Authorities should be entitled to enforce new legislation and to impose sanctions.

A united Europe of electricity cannot be built without coupling national energy exchanges. Solid market infrastructures are as necessary as transmission systems. It implies harmonizing procedures, defining an algorithm for central coupling and common rules of governance. But things are changing in the right direction. Indeed the Commission proposed to set up a new central body with formal decision-making authority. Some European countries have reservations about the proposal.

On the other hand, the European Parliament approved new laws on June 18, 2008 designed to create a network of European transmission system operators. Its task will be to improve the electricity markets, partly by requiring the release of more information. National governments will have to approve the proposal. To what extent the proposal will be amended?

A merger between European Energy Exchange and Powernext, the power exchanges in Germany and France, may facilitate the harmonisation of procedures and rules.

## B. Gas

A level playing field must be created for all companies operating in the gas market. The current situation where sharp differences in Member's States legislative frameworks distort competition in the energy markets is problematic. For some countries like the UK, gas is a major source of energy and



comes still largely from national reserves. Their gas market is competitive. In countries like Sweden, gas is marginal in the energy mix. In Poland gas is supplied only by Russia and is little used in power plants which are still coal fired to a large extent.

The European gas policy has still to cope with the large diversity of concerns among Members States. In that context, de-construction of the sector should be dealt with caution.

In case of ownership unbundling the operators specializing in supply and transmission in countries without gas resources would be considerably weakened whereas large oil/gas companies would be hardly concerned. Indeed the bulk of the revenues of the supply/transmission operators come from their infrastructure activities. This not the case for the big oil and case conglomerates.

An adequate regulation of gas transmission and distribution is required including a coordination at both European and local levels to assess the long term investment needs from a supply/demand and common European perspectives and taking into account that gas is a more local business than electricity.

Nevertheless it is not sure that ownership unbundling is an appropriate solution to competition. Important failures have heavily disturbed the UK de-concentrated gas market because of lack of coordination and anticipation.

## C. Investments

The electricity and gas sectors are facing under-investments in a number of European countries. This is the case for instance in Germany for HV transmission lines which is at the origin of loopflows and as a consequence congestion in the neighbouring countries and increased blackout conditions. Germany is also facing under-investments in power generation. The construction of about 25 coal fired power stations have been postponed because of Greens opposition which forces the State to authorize longer lifetime of old power plants more polluting than new ones.

Is a central coordination Authority for investments feasible under current European political structure? In any case this would imply stable and consistent laws on the medium and long terms as well as cooperation of local political Authorities delivering building and operating permits. Indeed lengthy permitting procedures and the NIMBY effect deter many investors.

Of course some investors prefer investing where the return on investment is higher instead of strengthening their production and transmission capacity. What about the European nuclear policy? In spite of a clear European position, two EPR power plants are under construction in Europe: one in France and one in Finland and others are announced.

## D. Investments and environment

The European utilities investments in infrastructures to ensure the security of supply and meet the increase of electrical consumption are conflicting with climatic challenges. Indeed 80% of power plants new or under construction are fossil fuel fired implying an increase of CO<sub>2</sub>.

There is a lack of global investment planning at European scale. How to find the right balance between CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction and impact on the kWh price? The stricter the reduction is the higher is its impact on the electricity price. Long term rules established within the framework of institutional agreements are essential. The market will then fix the prices through supply and demand law mitigated by compensation for the most vulnerable consumers.



# 5 Conclusions

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Scarcity of energy resources in the medium/long term requires to improve technologies and to develop new energy sources.

It also implies changes of behaviour of people. This should not be a problem as experience proves that people (and nature to some extent) adapt over time. In any case the world has decades to adapt.

During this transition period from conventional energy to the energy of the future, a number of new technologies or improvement of existing ones will have to be developed like the hydrogen path, CO<sub>2</sub> capture, power storage, nuclear fission and fusion, renewable energy cost reduction and the like.

In the mean time the world will have to secure and make the best use of existing energy sources, diversify supplies and secure shipping routes. By-passing major energy player countries could be necessary to achieve this latter goal, but this is not sufficient without protecting the by-passing routes.

For instance linking the Caspian gas fields to Europe through the Nabucco pipe must be combined with measures aimed at securing the transportation. Indeed it would be useless to build a long gas pipeline crossing Azerbaïdjan, Georgia, Turkey to Europe if Russia could control the Georgian section of the pipe. This is probably one cause of the Russian/Georgian conflict.

Above changes and improvements can be motivated less by ecological considerations than by economical reasons and well-being of people.

Financial incentives are not always necessary to reduce energy consumption. Increasing energy prices are a self-acting regulator.

The USA is a good example in that respect. Americans are increasingly using low gasoline consumption vehicles just to save money and to keep a sufficient well-being standard.

The EU energy policy to achieve its goals of securing energy supply at acceptable prices, limiting the energy dependency on countries outside EU boundaries and mitigating its impact, reducing pollution and enhancing competition is questionable.

The targets of obtaining 20% of its energy from renewables by 2020, cutting by at least 20% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all primary energy sources by 2020, using 10% bio fuels by 2020 are not only likely to be missed but have counter-productive effects on competition, energy prices and even on pollution.

Furthermore under ecological pressures, the EU is not sufficiently supporting its coal and nuclear businesses although they contribute to self-sufficiency and mitigate energy dependency on risky countries.

More money should be invested in clean technology as CO<sub>2</sub> capture or in energy storage for example in form of hydrogen.

On the other hand, if over-legislating is to be avoided, coordination at the European level ( in particular in the gas and electricity sectors) is essential for an efficient energy system. There is for the time being no European central Authority to improve cross-border connections, reduction of congestion on national grids and at major interconnections and to weigh the economics of investments.



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