

Sustainable Euro-mediterranean Energy Policy

The European Union's White Paper has clearly stated the strategic dimension that renewable sources of energies will have in the share of the Union's future electricity production. Various causes are pushing for such developments amongst which, the depletion of fossil fuels, the heavy dependency of the European Union on their supply and the consequences of global climate changes aggravated by a growing need for electricity worldwide.

In its Energy Roadmap 2050 released in late 2011, the EU commission has predicted that by 2050 wind power will provide more electricity than any other technology in the "High Renewables" scenario. Based on technological innovation and the development of new energy infrastructures with storage capacities across Europe and its neighbors, this scenario lays out broader policy frameworks envisioned for 2050. The EU Energy and Transport Directorate predicted in January 2003 (Trends to 2030) that in the year 2030, Wind Energy alone would represent 135 GW of electric capacity generation or 12% of overall EU capacity. In 2013 however, 106 GW of wind energy were already installed in Europe from under 13 GW in the year 2000 (2% of EU capacity). These earlier predictions were made assuming that NO specific new environmental policies and measures aimed at meeting Kyoto targets in 2008-2012 and possible more severe ones in the future are implemented over the projection period. This, they claim, would be a rather unlikely scenario to happen. In fact, the International Energy Agency has already predicted in its ' World Energy Outlook 2010 ' New Policies Scenario for 2035, that wind power in the European Union will account for more than 40% of cumulative capacity additions and supply more incremental electricity generation than any other source.

Since both scarceness of fossil fuels and threatening climate changes represent global problems, an international cooperation is required. EU regulations already provide a legal framework for the integration of the Trans-European electricity supply networks. The extension of these networks, to neighboring countries outside of the EU would be of mutual benefit in enabling broader economic returns while providing additional sources of supplies to the EU's grid.

Several EU directives, programs and incentives are aimed at diversifying, enhancing and optimizing the EU's energy security of supply. Financial guaranties may be even obtained for such projects that are similar to natural gas pipelines, which have created productive economic linkage between different partners.

The German-Russian natural gas tube business built at the end of the cold war, has set a constructive example for that matter. Today, wind energy could enable us to go way beyond this model and develop a sustainable energy industry, something that the Russian gas example -which has since shown its limits- has not been able to achieve. As energy security, diversification, sustainability and the safeguarding the environment represent fundamental issues; current circumstances suggest that a cooperation framework with the states of North Africa is established. Such a framework would open the possibility of a new form of development policy; enabling partners to operate in supporting a locally integrated green manufacturing industry. Due to the exceptional resources, the development of a wind industry could expand and gradually feed into a lasting sustainable energy supply network. In opening the euro-Mediterranean energy market to renewables, the industrial developments induced could lead to a new, comprehensive dynamic generating employments. This could represent a significant asset for the security and the stability of the region that is currently faced to large social uprisings due to its limited economic prospects.

This policy option was clearly stated in the Union for the Mediterranean Solar Plan presented by France in 2008. The Mediterranean Solar Plan seeks to establish an effective renewable energy collaboration framework on both sides of the Mediterranean. The objective of the Solar Plan is to focus on concrete projects such as the Sahara Wind Project to support capacity building measures aimed at integrating renewable energies locally. Through a shared Euro-Mediterranean vision in the field of renewable energy developments, the Mediterranean Solar Plan provided a new dimension to the European Union's Neighborhood policy.

Historically, the European Union's MEDA and now EUROMED programs funded parts of the existing 700 MW undersea cable interconnection linking both continents through Spain and Morocco. This electrical interconnection run by bilateral agreements in place, has already been doubled (1400 MW) since and it is currently being expanded even further. This could at present time enable some wind generated electricity to be transported from the Sahara desert. The existing grid infrastructure that extends to the Saharan region will prevent any larger transfers of electricity from this region to occur. Hence, the dedicated High Voltage Direct Current power line envisioned in the Sahara Wind Project is likely to make this sustainable energy source more accessible.