

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



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When I received the Programme of the Conference, I discovered in it a picture which appeared very familiar to me - as most probably to all of us: It is the picture of the illuminated world at night. Only some months ago I published a brochure with exactly the same picture. The illuminated Europe at night on the front cover with the - translated - title: "ray of hope for Europe". It symbolized for me two main things: First of all, the hope that also in the future Europe will be illuminated and secondly, that one day these lights are energy saving lamps and powered by renewable energies. And I am confident that Europe is on the right way towards a sustainable energy policy. So, these ideas fit perfectly to your conference which is designed as an international campaign in defence of the quality of the night sky.

So, we all know: We are confronted with huge challenges. And these are global challenges. We have to combat climate change and save our environment. And, time is short, we have to act now. Otherwise these kinds of pictures will look very differently in the future. We have to combat climate change to save not only the quality of the night sky. No, we are in danger to lose a lot more. Every part of the world would be seriously affected by natural disasters. These challenges are now finally rightly recognised as a strategic priority by the European Union and, increasingly, elsewhere.

The recent published reports by Sir Nicholas Stern and the Intergovernmental Panel for climate change are very clear and opened up the world's eyes: The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response. There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change if strong collective action starts now. The EU's starting point is that climate change must be limited to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. To have even a 50/50 chance of keeping within this 2 degree limit, global emissions will need to peak around the year 2020 and then fall by 60 to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050. So the turnaround must be reached by 2020.

But besides this evidence also something else is now even clearer than ever before. Particularly Stern confirms what we have always stressed out in the debate on a sustainable energy and climate change policy: The benefits of strong, early action on climate change outweigh the costs. The Stern report talks about annual costs around 1% of GDP versus 5-20% of GDP if we do not act. Moreover, combating climate change opens up

great opportunities for companies and countries through the development of sustainable and efficient technologies.

The energy production contributes with 80% the largest part on the increase of CO<sub>2</sub>. So we have no alternative as to change our energy policy. We have to switch towards a sustainable - renewable and efficient - energy society. This is our most different challenge we have urgently to tackle. But the necessity to change the current energy production is not a burden, it is a chance. Therefore I am very happy that after the European Parliament and the Commission finally also the Council endorsed an ambitious and binding CO<sub>2</sub> reduction- and “energy-switch”- policy. Heads of States decided some weeks ago to reach in the EU by 2020 - binding! - a 20% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, a 20% share of renewables and a 10% share of biofuels. Furthermore 20% of energy should be saved by 2020. The potential of energy efficiency and savings is indeed much higher and can easily be reached without reducing standards of living. If Europe now is as good in the implementation as they are in target setting, I am positive that we will reach these targets and furthermore: that many other countries, developed and developing, will follow this lead. And we strongly need a global and comprehensive new agreement. The still existing ignorance of some countries is unacceptable and needs to be overcome. And what is also important we must increase our cooperation with the least developed countries to help them minimise the negative impacts of climate change. They are the most vulnerable to climate change!

The group of industrialised countries must reduce its emissions to 30% below 1990 levels by 2020. And therefore I would have loved to see an unilateral EU target of 30 %, independently from other global agreements. Because this commitment would definitively be the best argument to others also to accept 30% and moreover, with a share of 20% renewables and energy savings of 20% we would have reached already more than 20% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction. The European Parliament asked for this kind of ambitious and coherent policy and will do that also in the future.

So, our task over the next months is to convince others to follow our example and to implement the necessary measures properly. It will not be easy but I believe the prospects for success have never been better.

The awareness of the energy challenges is raising but also the awareness of the success stories on renewable energies and energy efficiency. We know, it is possible to change the energy mix as we have a high potential of Renewable Energies - we just have to utilise it. The technical potential is many times over the global energy consumption. Europe is the leader in research, technology and implementation in the field of renewable energies. This also contributes to fulfilling the Lisbon Strategy, which aims at turning Europe into the World’s most competitive and dynamic economic area. More renewables means: innovative technologies and new jobs! Especially the development of wind energy is a European success story! Let’s only look to Spain and Germany with its enormous growth rate of wind power.

As a central part of a sustainable energy policy, every Member State must show the political courage and determination in order to send a strong political signal regarding its long-term commitment towards an environmental friendly and increasingly energy-independent society.

We have to prepare the ground for a future energy supply coming mainly from renewable energies. All three sectors: electricity, heat and transport can be driven mostly by renewables. We have to act in all sectors. A main concern I have is the transport sector: it is the major sector in Europe whose emissions are constantly rising. For example, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from aviation have grown almost 90% since 1990, much faster than any other transport sector. But we also need strong legislation for cars to reach the long-standing goal of cutting average emissions to 120 grammes per kilometre by 2012. Here, a huge renewables and efficiency potential has not been exhausted at all yet.

To reach all these developments, further significant stimulation has to come also from research and technology developments. This will always be very important as technology is the key for the penetration of renewables and efficiency. Still, worldwide research budgets for fossil and nuclear energy are much higher than for renewable and efficiency technologies. Unfortunately also still in the EU. Even though European Parliament reached, that the major part on the non-nuclear energy budget goes towards renewables and end-use efficiency, still 60% of the overall energy budget is foreseen for nuclear energy.

Still a lot of work is ahead of us. First steps have been made yet, but much more is needed: an ambitious global policy on climate change and sustainable energy and the support and willingness of every country and every citizen. Climate change is made by human beings, so human beings have to tackle it. We have the responsibility to conserve our natural heritage.

*Wouldn't it be infinite sad, if future generations can not see  
the beautiful starry sky over La Palma...?*