

“According to the European Environment Agency, air pollution costs from industrial sources cost 169 billion euros”.

MEP Claude Turmes said:

“My answer to divergent energy policies at the EU level is binding renewable targets”.

“Eurelectric and BUSINESSEUROPE are stopping the energy transfer”.

“Energy intensive BUSINESSEUROPE member companies have only gained from climate change policies”.

(Published 27 July)

Tom says: “Representatives from the main actors in the European energy scene were present at this exciting two-hour debate in Brussels. There was a frank exchange of views. It was a learning experience for the more than 100 people who attended.”

“Fossil fuel and nuclear energies are heavily subsidised.”

Cutting renewables support to increase competitiveness is nonsense

By Sarah Azau

Those European countries which have cut support schemes for renewable energy, have – just like Professor Butler writing on an FT blog yesterday – jumped to the wrong conclusion.

“Competitiveness is the watchword of the moment. Recession and unemployment are the crises which require attention”, the Professor writes. Yes indeed. Yet withdrawing public support for wind energy and other renewables to boost competitiveness, to tackle recession and unemployment is as illogical as eating an orange a day for your health – and stopping as soon as you get a cold.

The renewables sector employs over 1.2 million people in Europe. Wind energy alone contributed €32 billion to the EU economy in 2010 and employs well over 200,000 people in Europe. Europe is a net exporter of wind energy technology. Support for renewables is support for European jobs; a European industry and European growth.

Removing that support destroys those jobs and industrial leadership – in Spain, over 20,000 jobs have been destroyed between 2008 and 2010 due to the retrospective changes introduced in 2010. Moreover, it means Europe has to get its power from elsewhere: yet more polluting coal and gas; yet more money handed over to Russia, Algeria and other exporters.

“In Germany the mood has shifted decisively against more costly renewables”, Professor Butler claims. More costly than what?

“Renewables will reach cost parity with conventional fuels (including gas) in many parts of the world in the very near term”, says Citibank. Wind energy is already far cheaper than nuclear, coal – if you count the €42.8 billion annual health costs – and increasingly competitive with gas.

Finally, those governments who are changing their support for renewables should bear in mind where public money is really going: OECD figures show that coal, oil and gas in the UK were subsidised to the tune of £3.63 billion in 2010, while onshore and offshore wind received only £700 million in the year to April 2011 – that’s more than five times less than fossil fuels. Moreover, International Energy Agency figures show that coal, oil and gas subsidies in 37 countries received a total of \$409 billion in 2010, compared to \$66 billion for renewables.

Published 24 June

Tom says: “The focus on “recession and unemployment” in the media is justified in these times of crisis, but it is important to point out the economic benefits of renewable energy – it provides jobs and income all over Europe, and the reality of energy subsidies are that fossil fuels receive far more support than renewables.”

What else?

Other stories on EWEA’s blog (www.ewea.org/blog) recently include:

- A discussion of the European Parliament’s vote in favour of removing ‘permits to pollute’ which should help fix the carbon market by making it more expensive to emit carbon.
- Reports on wind energy from countries as diverse as Belgium and Brazil.
- A look at the ‘WindMade’ project label – and how you can get your favourite companies to go green by becoming ‘WindMade’.
- How Vestas, Greenpeace and others are hitting back at anti-wind power campaigners down under.

EWEA’s blog is updated several times a week by different contributors – and you can receive the latest news in your inbox by signing up to the email alerts or RSS feed on www.ewea.org/blog ■

“Wind energy contributed €32 billion to the EU economy”