



PODIMATA Anny
*Vice Chair of the Committee on Energy, Industry and Research
of the European Parliament*

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ENERGY POLICY CONFERENCE**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to participate to the 3rd European Renewable Energy Policy Conference organised by EREC, in cooperation with the Swedish Presidency. I would like therefore to thank EREC's President, Prof. Arthouros Zervos for the invitation to participate to the opening of this Conference and Secretary General, Christine Lins, not only for the invitation but also for the attention she paid to the gender balance of the Conference's panels.

This Policy Conference is taking place in a crucial period of time: Just 3 weeks before the opening of the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and 7 months ahead of the official

submission of National Renewable Energy Action Plans, in June 2010.

That means that national, European and global challenges lie ahead of us.

In this framework, the 3rd European Renewable Energy Policy Conference provides a unique opportunity to policy makers, energy industry, environmental NGOs and consumer groups to debate on crucial issues, related not only to the future of RES but also on the key-role that RES could and should play on dealing with the current global challenges.

Before going on to the challenges ahead, it's worth looking at where we all, and especially EU, stand today:

A year ago, in **December 2008**, the adoption of an extremely important legislation, the **Climate-Energy Package**, took place, setting concrete binding targets for the reduction of CO₂ and for the share of RES in the final energy consumption and non binding for the promotion of energy efficiency, until 2020.

This was indeed a major achievement.

As Commissioner Piebalgs stated in the Plenary of the Parliament, right before the adoption of RES Directive: “what we are proposing is a *profound change*”. And he added: “ *The binding nature of the target will mean that measures and support schemes for Member States using renewable energy will*

be predictable and long term, which will allow new technologies to penetrate the market."

The main vehicle, in order to achieve the 20% target will be the National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs), which have to reflect each Member State's national choices for RES share in transport, electricity, heating and cooling and describe the specific tools to achieve it.

So, the main challenge ahead is achieving the overall 20% target in 2020?

Today's estimations demonstrate that the extraordinary performance of SOME Member States makes the 20% target for overall EU achievable even before 2020. According to these estimations, if we only keep the existing rate of RES growth in those specific Member States, EU will most probably overcome 20% target by 2020.

So, if this goal is already achievable, I believe that what we should engage to, is not just succeeding in the overall EU target but turning it to an equal footing success, of ALL member states.

The real challenge is making the 20% share of renewables, not just a matter of a few "champion" EU Member States, but a bet that all and each member state has to win.

Through reliable, realistic and ambitious national Action plans, that will make the most and best advantage of own resources

and potential, we can transform RES strategy into a “success story”, not of a limited number of countries but of each and every member state.

But is it all about the fulfilment of a target?

I believe it's much more than that.

-It's about keeping EU in the forefront of efforts to fight climate change.

-It's about increasing energy security and decreasing EU's energy dependence on third countries, since renewables are an indigenous energy source for the EU, providing sustainable power that will never run dry.

-It's about dealing with the consequences but also with the causes of the multidimensional economic, financial, environmental and social -in terms of unemployment rise- crisis we are faced with. A crisis directly linked to our model of economic growth.

-It's about moving towards a new model where sustainability is the key word:

Sustainability not only in terms of natural resources. Sustainability of the market, through new business opportunities, sustainability of employment, through the creation of new green decentralised jobs.

-It' s about combating inequalities at a local, regional, national, and EU level **and promoting economic, social and regional cohesion**, that remains one of EU' s main goals.

We shouldn't forget however, that one of the keys to succeed in renewable energies - and not only- is securing **social acceptance** and that means we have to **explain to and share the benefits of RES with local societies.**

Moreover, the local character or RES and their great potential - that varies form country to country - opens a window of opportunity for a radical transformation of the energy sector and for a much better balance in the energy market, if we take all the necessary measures to assure that small and medium enterprises can also find the place they deserve.

I would even argue that renewables can play a leading role for **the "democratisation of energy"**, not only by **encouraging** the access for small and medium players, but also **by enhancing their massive penetration in buildings.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current multidimensional crisis creates a momentum that can in turn lead to another development model. One that brings new opportunities for the generations to come and creates sustainable living conditions for the future, rather than focusing on safeguarding jobs and business, only for today.

In that framework **rewriting the existing market rules on energy production and consumption** is a condition sine qua non if we want to transit to a new eco-efficient and sustainable model. The current energy model is responsible for the increase of greenhouse gases emissions, for not managing the consumption patterns, for having conflicts with third countries on access to energy sources, for the instability of energy prices and for burgeoning energy poverty.

In that dead end, renewables are leading the way out. Now that they are growing big, they can make the difference!

Renewable energy is a major tool for the transition from an energy-wasting and fossil fuel economy into an energy-efficient economy. And that by providing sustainable sources of electricity, heating and cooling as well as efficient transport fuels.

Specific numbers make that clear. If mankind is to avert the most serious effects of climate change, 50% of global electricity supplies will need to come from renewable energy sources by the middle of the century (International Energy Agency's (IEA) figures published in 2008). Furthermore, even in the current economic downturn, renewable energy industry will contribute with more than 2.7 million jobs by 2030. And even more in the case we do succeed on a strong shift toward renewable energies

the potential will be significantly rising into 8 million jobs in RES and Energy Efficiency sector by 2030.

Additionally, renewables can play a key role for bridging the gap between the developed and the developing world. They can assure a sustainable economic growth in the developing countries, especially the most exposed to the devastating consequences of climate change. Expanding access to modern energy for over two billion poor people is one of the basic tools for reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We have a historic responsibility but also a unique opportunity to help developing countries limit dirty energy and reduce emissions, by transferring renewable technologies and sharing our know-how.

What we need to do is to establish policies and adopt measures that will allow all nations to grow and raise their living standards in a sustainable way. In a way that does not further endanger the planet and future generations.

In less than one month we have in Copenhagen a historic opportunity to prove that we have realised the challenges ahead and that we are ready to pave the way towards a worldwide new development model.

There are challenges for policy makers in the regional, national, European and global level.

But there are also challenges for entrepreneurs, scientists, researchers and for the civil society.

All of us and each one of us, men and women, have to take the challenge and be engaged in order to build a better world and create a future, that is worthy for our children.

In that framework Renewable Energy Sources have a key role to play. They have evolved rapidly from an alternative source of energy, to a mainstream energy option.

Now is the time to make renewables not an option, a notion!