

Opening of the REH, 22.03.2006

Dear Monseigneur,

[dear President]

Dear Vice-President,

Dear Comissioners,

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear members of the European Parliament,

Dear friends,

[Thanks to previous speakers]

First of all, I would like to give a very special thanks for the outstanding support for this project from Prince Laurent of Belgium who is not only the initiator of this project, but one of the driving forces who made this project reality.

I would also like to use this opportunity to say a few words...
but don't worry I will keep it short.

Firstly, I would like to express a special thanks to a person without whom this renewable energy house project would probably not have been realised. I want to thank and express my gratitude to Christine Lins who dedicated so much time and effort to this project, far above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you Christine.

This house is not just a showcase for renewable energy technologies, it is a showcase for how the future energy policy of the European Union should be shaped, in view of energy efficiency and renewable energies. This should be the way forward.

With the discussion on the “Greenpaper for a European Strategy for sustainable, competitive and Secure Energy” the Council meeting tomorrow will have energy policy and the Lisbon strategy high on the agenda.

To guarantee security, stability and prosperity in Europe and the region, a real energy policy is a crucial requirement for the

European Union. Within the framework of the treaties, the Union has to respond to security of energy supply, economic growth, sustainable development, climate change, employment and technological development.

Only renewable energy technologies in combination with energy efficiency have a positive effect on all of these goals.

Changing the European energy policy towards a sustainable future, would go a long way towards fulfilling the Lisbon strategy.

The time to act is now. We already know what we don't need: We don't need more and more papers describing and analysing the situation of renewables, as we already know what is necessary to accelerate the development of renewables in Europe.

The heads of states should act now and set ambitious new long-term targets for renewables. A minimum share of 20% by 2020 is more than feasible.

We need a European directive for heating and cooling from renewables. This missing pillar in European renewables legislation needs to be proposed as soon as possible, according to the European Parliaments recent demand.

We need a substantial increase in R&D spending for renewables, including a single dedicated budget line in the upcoming FP7.

We need to strengthen the existing legislation on renewables electricity. Member states have to implement the directive not only in words, but in spirit.

A true level-playing field for renewables in all areas should be created, including the polluter-pays principle for conventional and nuclear energy. This alone would go a long way towards levelling the playing field.

Real competition in European power markets needs to be achieved. For example, we have member companies from

different countries, such as Ireland, Spain or Denmark who wanted to provide us wind power for our electricity needs in the house. In the grey theory of the internal electricity market this should be possible, but in fact it is not. The limitations for choosing an electricity supplier lie at least at country borders. This is not what I call a European power market.

We know today that renewables will be substantially cheaper in the long run than finite conventional energies. If the true costs of energy supply were calculated most renewables would already be competitive today.

Taking this and the necessary measures into account, I urge the decision makers to visit this house, look at what is possible and then implement the necessary legislation for the creation of a real sustainable energy supply for Europe and not only for this outstanding showcase project of the renewable energy house.

Now I wish you a nice evening, interesting conversation and
some good wine.