

## **THE FUTURE OF GREEN POWER: ACHIEVING AN ENERGY REVOLUTION IN CHALLENGING TIMES**

**With more than 170 experts from 20 European countries and the USA, the 6<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Green Power Marketing 2009 on 1 and 2 October in Geneva has proven once again to be the key European forum for market players and decision makers in the renewable energy (RE) industry. But it was more than a mere gathering of experts. Above all, the conference was an attempt to index the different approaches and contributions to green power marketing currently afloat and redirect them towards one clear and shared objective: achieving a true energy revolution. Participants were all but unanimous: the transition to a new energy era is feasible and already well under way, and all stakeholders are fully engaged in being part of it.**

However, the path into the green future is not a smooth one; “business as usual” will hardly suffice to attain the targets set by the European Commission. Several challenges need to be tackled first: (i) in policy, through effective support schemes; (ii) in infrastructure, through grid integration and extension; (iii) in finance, through extensive but stable funding; (iv) in supply, through more transparent disclosure; and, finally, (v) in demand, through more ample consideration of social issues. For a real revolution to take place, a change of perspective is needed, with the present national and regional points of view on energy embedded in a wider global framework.

One crucial factor in all scenarios for increasing green power flows throughout Europe is the grid. Flexible generation is not sufficient, and must be complemented by flexible transmission. The grid has to keep pace with innovations in generation technology and the development of cooperation mechanisms, offshore plants and decentralised production sites. Expanding the transmission grid for cross-border transfers and increasing its flexibility are keys to balancing the different generation sources, and represent one of the most urgent tasks facing the industry.

In this respect, the creation of a European “supergrid” is both ambitious and critical for the future of Europe’s green energy network; particularly so because cooperation mechanisms between member states, and between member states and third countries, as foreseen in the new RES Directive, have been identified by all key players as a viable instrument to fulfil national RES targets. Two constraints yet remain for the modernization of the grid: investments and regulation.

The role of this latter, not only with regard to grid infrastructure, was a subject of frequent mention in debates at the conference. Indeed, sound and stable energy policies and effective support schemes, together with the ambitious targets fixed by the EU (20% renewables in electricity mix by 2020) and the Swiss Government (efficiency and renewable energy action plans) are the cornerstone of RES

development. RES, this was the echo of all sessions, must be at the heart of national, regional and international energy regulation.

Transparency in RES certification was raised as another key challenge for the energy sector; speakers did not tire of pointing out its critical importance for building up interest and confidence with customers of green power. Clearer coordination between compulsory statements and voluntary certificates – and between green power labels in particular – is needed to safely steer the market through the energy revolution ahead.

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