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EU governments did not do their homework on wind energy

It now appears that wind farms may have no benefits at all

According to the European Platform Against Wind Farms (**EPAW**), which represents over 500 associations from 23 countries, the National Renewable Energy Action Plans adopted by EU States in June 2010 have failed to answer two essential questions: how much will be saved in greenhouse gas emissions by the EU target of 20% renewable energy by 2020, and how much will it cost Society to implement this policy (1). The Platform argues that it is a violation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Aarhus Convention on Human and Environmental Rights, which is a mandatory part of EU law. (2)

From a political point of view, remarks EPAW, it is nothing short of irresponsible that billions upon billions of euros of public money would be spent on “green investments” without first conducting feasibility studies showing the expected results in terms of CO2 saved. “After all”, says its CEO **Mark Duchamp**, "using less fossil fuels is the whole purpose of this pharaonic investment which, on the negative side, destroys 2 - 5 jobs for everyone it creates (3), stalls the recovery of the EU economy, threatens the existence of the euro, destroys the tourism potential of countless natural and cultural assets, causes losses in property value in the billions of euros, affects the health of wind farm neighbours (noise + infrasounds), is driving many species of birds and bats to extinction, etc."

What is happening now, according to EPAW, is that the public is slowly awakening to the fact that wind farms may not be saving anything at all in terms of fossil fuels burnt and CO2 emitted. That's mainly because the wind farms' erratic production force fossil-fuel power plants, which are needed to back them up when wind is not optimal, to spend much more fuel working in stop-and-go mode - much like a car in city traffic as opposed to highway. "As a matter of fact", recalls Duchamp, "in 2010 the Spanish government paid a little over 1 billion euros to these plants, to compensate them for the impact of wind and solar on their operation."

The Platform draws attention to **"the Bentek report"** (4), which shows that wind farms, when increased emissions from back-up plants are considered, save much less CO2 and other gasses than what is claimed by the wind industry, governments, and green activists. Says Mark: "if you deduct from this much smaller quantity of savings the additional emissions caused by fossil fuels burnt to manufacture, transport, install, and maintain wind turbines and their power lines; if you consider that these come on top of fossil fuels burnt to build gas-fired or coal-fired power plants to regulate and back up the erratic and unreliable production of wind energy; if you deduct the CO2 released

into the atmosphere by the oxidisation of peat in countries like the UK or Ireland; if you also deduct lost CO2 savings resulting from the vast quantities of natural carbon sinks (peat, forests, vegetation in general) that are being destroyed by the large footprint of wind farms; if you deduct the transmission loss of electricity produced far away from where it is consumed (about 9%); if you deduct all this from the meager savings evidenced by the Bentek study, then it is quite possible that the overall savings in CO2 and other gasses may in fact be negative - i.e. wind farms would cause overall use of fossil fuels, and CO2 emissions, to increase by a few percentage points. Indeed, a European study by Dr Udo concludes on this possibility (5)."

It is noteworthy, stresses EPAW, that the massive build-up of wind farms in countries like Denmark or Germany has not caused any measurable reduction in CO2 emissions or use of fossil fuels. In Europe, the Irish grid operator EIRGRID shows on its website real data on wind energy production and CO2 emissions, from which similar observations may be drawn. **Dr Fred Udo**, a distinguished engineer from CERN in Geneva, now retired, did a study based on Eirgrid data. His conclusions put in doubt the very usefulness of wind energy (5).

The North American Platform Against Windpower (**NA-PAW**) coincides. "In North America" comments her CEO, **Sherri Lange**, "studies on the efficacy of wind energy are notoriously absent from policy documents on that form of energy. As in other matters, our governments blindly follow influential lobbies, in this case Green Activism and Big Wind. This is not a proper way to determine policy."

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References:

(1) - EU National Renewable Energy Action Plans: 19 of the 27 countries have left in blank the assessment of estimated costs and benefits of their renewable energy policy support measures, including expected GHG reduction and job creation (Article 5.3). The others have been fudging the issue.
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/doc/nreap__adoptedversion__30_june_en.pdf

Here is the case of Belgium:
"No such assessment was carried out in the framework of this plan."
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/transparency_platform/doc/national_renewable_energy_action_plan_belgium_en.pdf

And the case of Scotland:" Table 4.1 lists those environmental topics for which data has not been practical to obtain and provides a summary of the approach taken to address the issue.
Box 4.1 SEA Objectives
- Biodiversity, fauna and flora: Avoids damage to, and seek to enhance, designated sites and protected species?
- Conserves and enhances Scotland's natural heritage?

- Population: Safeguards or enhances the living environments of communities?
- Protects the noise environment of communities?
- Human health: Has no adverse impact on human health?
- Soil: Protects or enhances the quality of soils?
- Water: Protects the water environment?
- Air: Reduces pollution or emissions to air generated by the energy sector and protects air quality?
- Climate factors: Reduces emissions of greenhouse gases, including CO2?
- Material assets: Reduces the proportion of wastes disposed of to landfill?
- Protects Scotland's assets of economic and recreational value, including those of importance for the tourism industry?
- Reduces/minimises the use of natural resources in the energy sector?
- Cultural heritage: Protects, conserves and enhances, where appropriate, Scotland's historic environment (including the setting of listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments)?
- Landscape: Respects and protects the character, diversity and special qualities of Scotland's landscape?"
http://scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/08/14102833/9

In the words of **Pat Swords**, Fellow of the Institution of Chemical Engineers and a Chartered Environmentalist: **"All that expenditure and impact on the landscape and biodiversity for a question mark!"**

(2) - Pat Swords takes the EU energy plan to the UNECE Compliance Committee for violations under the Aarhus Convention http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/compliance/C2010-54/Correspondence%20with%20communicant/toCommC54_invitation2discussion.pdf
(copy and paste the link)
Next step in the procedure is to take place in December 2011.

(3) - Green jobs destroy other jobs: http://brunoleonimedia.servingfreedom.net/WP/WP-Green_Jobs-May2010.pdf

http://www.juandemariana.org/pdf/090327-employment-public-aid-renewable.pdf

http://www.thegwpf.org/press-releases/3773-top-economist-warns-green-jobs-creation-will-undermine-recovery.html

(4) - The Bentek Report: "The research in this report, however, suggests that wind energy, as it has so far been developed by PSCO in Colorado and by numerous utilities in ERCOT, has had minimal, if any, impact on CO2, yet has lead to a significant increase in SO2 and NOX".
http://www.bentekenergy.com/documents/bentek_how_less_became_more_100420-319.pdf

(5) - The (Dr) Fred Udo study: "*The consequence is that an investment of billions of Euros in wind turbines produces not more than a few per cent reduction in CO_2 output.*
This analysis does not take into account the energy necessary to ramp the conventional generators up and down nor the energy to build wind turbines nor the extra transmission lines with their additional losses.
It is highly probable, that taking all these effects into account will show, that the few per cent gain in CO_2 will revert to a loss (i.e. an increase in CO_2)."
http://www.epaw.org/documents.php?lang=es&article=backup11