

# **EWEA Conference, Vienna**

**4/2/2013**

**Anni Podimata**

**Speaking points**

**Check against delivery**

Dear President..

Dear ceo...

Ministers...

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to me to address the annual conference of EWEA, the European Wind Energy Association and be, once again, among friends and colleagues.

People with whom we share the common vision: a Europe that is moving, in an irreversible way, towards a sustainable competitive economy.

And, except for the common vision - which is good but not enough - we do share - despite and above the contemporary difficulties - a strong commitment in the promotion of RES.

Because RES and especially wind energy could and should play key role - as champions - in the efforts for a sustainably growing and competitive EU.

And your conference provides an excellent opportunity for exchange of views and experiences concerning the latest developments and trends in the sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the crisis, renewables remain one of the most dynamic growing sectors globally in all major indicators - installed capacity, production and consumption - and in all major sub-sectors - with wind still playing the leading role, followed by solar energy.

In Europe, although the sector is still growing with significantly high growth rates, data on 2011 indicate a slow-down comparing to 2009 and 2010 - a trend that is expected to continue in 2012 - while global shares in terms of installed capacity reduce comparing to major competitors such as US and China. For example, the share of wind energy installed capacity fell from 43% in 2010 to around 40% 2011 (indicating the fastest growth of the sector in other areas of the world).

These developments are not dissociated with the financial, economic, social and finally sovereign crisis that hit Europe.

Crisis revealed important institutional deficiencies in the construction of EMU. These deficiencies accompanied by objective difficulties, as well as significant delays and failures in decision making deteriorated economic and financial conditions, while induced and expand uncertainty over policies, over economic prospects, even over our common currency.

Had it not been for these delays Europe could have managed to reduce the dramatic consequences of the crisis.

However, Europe today seems to be much more decisive than in the beginning of the crisis Europe. Important decisions in the last two years apparently deliver some results in the right direction. Uncertainty against Euro has been significantly reduced, defeating those who previously predicted the implosion of the euro.

And as the President of ECB, Mr. Mario Draghi, recently said “the darkest clouds over the euro area subsided”.

**Clouds are gone but challenges remain so the reasons why we have to stay alarmed, decisive and determined are still there.**

Economic and social situation is severe.

European economy, although expected to return in slightly positive growth rates this year, it remains practically stagnant.

Unemployment, in particular youth unemployment has climbed to unprecedented levels. Total unemployment in Europe is higher than 11% - with Spain and Greece unemployment rates well above 25% - while in 12 of our 27 member states youth unemployment is higher than 25% - in Spain and Greece is more than 55% of the working population.

Social conditions inevitably affect the already harmed by crisis citizens' confidence for the European project.

Euro-scepticism today has become the kindest expression of mistrust against European policies, while there is an alarming amplification of the power of the extreme voices, including racists and fascists.

In front of these challenges there is a growing consensus that we need "for more Europe". That is very much to the right direction thus not enough:

What kind of Europe we want in the short- medium- and longer-term?  
And –most important- a Europe for whom?

The crisis and its severe consequences provides the answer:

We want :

a Europe of growth and jobs

- a Europe of prosperity and solidarity for its citizens
- a Europe of strength and competitiveness in a globalized environment.

This vision is translated into specific policy targets. Namely:

- economic convergence
- social cohesion
- environmental sustainability
- global competitiveness

**And I strongly believe that all four policy targets can be served through promotion of Renewable Energy Sources.**

RES create –and did so, even in the midst of the crisis - jobs, growth, innovation and leadership on globalised technology markets.

They promote subsidiarity in practice; with national competences complementing one the other in the different levels of RES development (from scientific research to production).

Europe has the potential to be a leader in biomass, sun, water, wind energy production and by investing in and promoting this potential to enjoy significant - economic, social, environmental - gains for local, regional, national and European societies.

### **How far are we from maximizing and enjoying these gains?**

RES is an integral part of “Europe 2020” strategy.

RES Directive provides a robust institutional framework for the development of the sector and for the achievement of our targets.

European energy policy - the third energy package - provides for further tightening of the means and the ends of the European energy production and distribution system.

Next to the above, common energy networks remain in the core of the policies for extending Pan-European networks and of the strategy to promote investment through financing big European projects.

**What is missing for this unquestionably favourable framework to deliver the maximum positive impact for Europe?**

Coordination and commitment around our targets.

Let's be frank. The current situation puts at stake the development of renewable energy sources - especially in countries that face economic difficulties, which (countries) at the same time happens to be among the most competent in some RES production areas and they are more than thirsty for new economic activity.

Capital liquidity problems, disproportionately higher cost of money, high country-specific risks, decreased confidence accompanied with austerity and reduction of the investment budgets for infrastructure, R&D, education, are some of the headlines that summarize the negative environment for the development of RES - and any new economic activity.

But the risk of this one-sided approach to stabilization and competitiveness - which promotes austerity against common policy

priorities - exceeds the borders of the countries under adjustment programmes.

Slow-downs and deficits in implementing key policy priorities, such as the common energy strategy create loopholes that sooner or later will affect European competitiveness as a whole.

Competition globally is fierce and not always fair.

There is no room for Europe to lose momentum in such a dynamic and promising policy area such as Renewables. And there is no room for the European economy to miss the opportunity of staying global leader in this sector.

### **What needs to be done?**

RES need to become integral part of the national and European programmes for stability, growth and competitiveness.

Energy efficiency, energy sufficiency, reduction of energy imports and increase of exports of energy and energy technology and know-how cannot be neglected in the context of policies to enhance competitiveness.

The existing framework for the promotion of RES and common energy policy shall be implemented with strong commitment and without delays.

And to that I could add the challenge to accelerate the effort by imposing a new, clear and directly binding target for renewables by 2030. (I think that the target of 45% of energy consumption in Europe produced from RES is a feasible target.)

Moreover, we need to provide clear signs of commitment around specific directions to all parties involved - including technology developers, project investors, infrastructure institutions, as well as a clear priority to preserve and further develop knowledge society and human capital, within and across member-states in competitive sectors such as RES.

Finally, the EU needs to ensure that European industry, which is the market leader in excellence and with high quality standards because of intense research and development investments, has a fair treatment when competing abroad. Adequate protection of Intellectual Property Rights is a clear pre-condition for knowledge economies, such as the European, which depend on research and innovation for the creation of added value. This is also one of the foundations of our social market economy, which has allowed Europeans us to enjoy the highest social rights.

In the European Parliament there is strong consensus around these directions.

However, we all - both European and national policy makers and the RES community - need to regain confidence on the fact that Renewables can deliver and will deliver in our common project: to drive Europe away from the crisis, in a sustainable growth path.

This is the key message that we all have to spread.

I wish that EWEA conference and the excellent speakers that participate will contribute to strengthen this message.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you fruitful discussions in the conference!