

Press Release

23 November 2010

Politicians to acknowledge urgency and importance of major grid investments

The EU and Member States need to acknowledge the urgency and importance of major grid investments, according to a joint statement by the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E), the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA), the German Engineering Federation (VDMA Power Systems) and the German Wind Energy Association (BWE).

The statement was issued to mark the start today of a major conference organised by EWEA together with ENTSO-E, VDMA Power Systems and BWE in Berlin on Europe's electricity grids, GRIDS 2010. It comes just one week after the European Commission proposed a blueprint for an integrated European energy network which will now be considered by the Member States and the European Parliament. The blueprint proposes a new financial instrument and faster permitting procedures for 'electricity highways' of European priority.

The four organisations say that the EU and Member States should:

- speed up permitting for grid investments,
- support speedy integration of wholesale electricity markets in Europe, and
- help finance new infrastructure through adequate and stable regulation and, when needed, EU funds and European banks.

The statement goes on to underline: "the European Union, Member States, and regulators must make it a priority to set appropriate regulatory and financial frameworks to facilitate cross-border interconnection capacities, key European corridors for electricity trade, offshore grids, and even a future supergrid."

Christian Kjaer, Chief Executive of EWEA, said: “Grid operators, the wind industry and power system engineers are sending a clear message to Europe’s politicians. A quarter of a century ago Europe’s leaders agreed on the Single European Act, creating the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, to the benefit of European citizens everywhere. It is about time that Europe’s current leaders add a fifth freedom: the free movement of electricity throughout Europe.”

Daniel Dobbeni, President of ENTSO-E, said “All concerned parties agree about the urgency and importance of grid investments. Generating a common understanding of the gap between the present and future situations in terms of integration for wind energy, EU-wide transmission capacities, offshore grids or supergrids is a major step forward towards achieving the 2020 objectives as well as for policy initiatives like the Commission’s blueprint for an integrated EU energy network.

Hermann Albers, President of BWE, the German Wind Energy Association, said: "Wind energy will contribute significantly to the achievement of the ambitious renewable energy targets set by the European Union for 2020. For fully exploiting all benefits derived from the growth in wind power, grid integration and grid extension are essential prerequisites - both at the national and at the European level.”

Thorsten Herdan, Managing Director VDMA Power Systems, said: “For the future success of manufacturers of wind turbines and all other power systems on the European market the optimisation, reinforcement and extension of the power grid has to keep up with the speed of the change of the power mix. Modern turbines, engines and storage are part of the solution. Without major grid investments even the most modern power systems will not secure supply.”

For more on GRIDS 2010: www.ewea.org/grids2010

Conference statement:

http://www.ewea.org/grids2010/fileadmin/documents/reports/Grids_Conference_Statement.pdf