

European Action Plan: New Energy for Europe

2013



An initiative of Robert Bosch **Stiftung**

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The *Young Ideas for Europe* European Action Plan 2013

We, the *Young Ideas for Europe* participants, believe that people should change their lifestyles and their way of thinking on all aspects of energy – from its production to its consumption. Today we act as if we have another earth to go to – but the truth is, plainly, a very different one. Consequently, we should start living in a more environmentally friendly way, keeping in mind that energy resources are scarce and the unrestrained use of energy has consequences both for humans and for nature. By creating a new energy paradigm today we want to secure equal opportunities for us and for future generations. As young people from across Europe, we are the key stakeholders in decisions on energy and climate protection. After all, we will be the ones directly affected in future by the decisions made today. In this context, we ask: Can Europe do better?

This European Action Plan 2013 has been drawn up in the course of the “*Young Ideas for Europe*” project, implemented across Europe. During project weeks we spoke with experts and debated with politicians the ideas we have developed on energy supply, CO₂ reductions and energy use in everyday life. We are delivering these ideas – the ideas of Europe’s youngsters – to key decision-makers who have the ability to take on our proposals and to give us a voice in the issues of European energy and climate policy.

Europe faces enormous financial instabilities. In the face of this unique situation, we need to develop the European economy in a way that allows sustainable growth for all European countries, and that ensures resilient markets – even in tough economic situations. This development includes a transformation of the European energy market towards a stronger co-operation between EU countries in their energy supply. The European market needs an energy mix that ensures its global competitiveness. When it comes to energy policy we therefore expect responsible decisions from all actors within the political system of Europe and the EU.

Objectives

1. Renewable energy

The renewable energy supply should be considerably expanded, especially solar, wind and hydro energy. Within the next 15 years, each European Member State is called upon to adapt their energy mix. Concretely, we call for raising the recent renewably energy share in national energy mixes in each country by an additional 20 per cent. We see this additional 20 per cent as a minimum and encourage Member States to go beyond this goal.

2. Energy supply

We believe that a reasonable combination of nuclear power and renewable sources is the solution to a more efficient, environmentally friendly and economically logical power generation mix.

3. Strong markets

Our aim is to strengthen European markets in favour of healthy competition. Locally-driven energy markets with regionally produced energy will prove more efficient than subsidising specific energy technologies. Our priority lies in the comprehensive support of investments in potential businesses, including new businesses in the energy sector.

4. Energy security

Here the overarching aim is to reduce dependency on fossil fuels in favour of renewable and local energy sources. Strengthening the co-operation of countries in the EU to coordinate their energy supply should become a central part of EU energy policy. Ideally, local regions would be self-sufficient in their energy supply.

5. Coordination of financial resources

In the face of limited financial resources the European Union should coordinate its financial efforts effectively and should ensure that monies are well used. We also suggest that national financial activities are coordinated closely with European and global initiatives.

Measures

1. Establishment of a “Green Fund” to promote renewable energy infrastructures in public and private contexts.

So as to finance new ideas and initiatives surrounding the use of renewable energies, the EU should set up a so-called “Green Fund”. This fund can rely on various financial sources such as the revenues from the Emissions Trading System (ETS) or a payment by the Member States according to their GDP (0,5 – 2 per cent would be realistic). The fund would aim to finance the development of renewable energy infrastructure of buildings – especially in those areas where the most vulnerable social groups live. The organisational structure of the fund should consider the local as well as the European perspective of this topic. Local offices can be set up in the each country’s region with the intention of promoting and coordinating green energy development in that area. Those plans would then be sent to a dedicated EU body for review, which would coordinate the efforts all over Europe.

a. 1st Green Fund project: Provision of renewable energy infrastructure to domestic users

One of the first projects for the “Green Fund” could focus on the promotion of renewable energy infrastructure in domestic households – including for example autonomous biofuel heating, solar panels and collectors, small wind power plants and geothermal heating.

b. 2nd Green Fund project: Promote the use of green electricity in public institutions

Another project idea focuses on public institutions: By increasing their use of renewable energy sources, public institutions can act as a role model. Consequently, citizens can follow their example by seeing that a switch to renewable energy is possible and affordable. This project could, in a next step, be expanded to companies, who might be offered financial incentives for the use of renewable energy sources.

2. Provide high safety standards for energy production

Safety standards are especially important in the case of the nuclear power plants. These standards need to be enhanced and all EU countries need to agree on these standards for nuclear energy production.

3. Build new energy infrastructure

The expansion of renewable energy requires new energy infrastructure – both for generation, such as wind mills, and for distribution, such as electricity grids. Building this infrastructure is often a very slow process because of public scepticism or even opposition. European countries should, none the less, promote the expansion of the infrastructure needed for renewable energy, facing the possible scepticism of local citizens by informing them and engaging them in these projects.

4. Reduce bureaucracy

The processes of building new energy infrastructure or founding a new energy business are often very bureaucratic. EU Member States need a framework that provides the basic rules for such steps, but does not limit the market activities in the energy sector.

Reducing carbon dioxide emissions is essential in order to strengthen the shift towards a more sustainable Europe. Since CO₂ is a greenhouse gas and as such a critical cause of global warming, the European Union needs to consistently reduce and minimise CO₂ emissions. Promising ways in which to do this include new mobility concepts, visible information on the carbon footprint of everyday products, and further research. The raising of a public awareness of the consequences of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as providing information on measures like deforestation which has a significant effect on the CO₂ balance, are important tasks that lie within the EU's competencies. The EU should step forward with a new, ambitious attitude towards the reduction of CO₂ and, in doing so, should act as a global role model.

Objectives

1. Promote sustainability

A clear commitment to reducing CO₂ and, therefore, to contributing to a more sustainable way of living in Europe is a central first step. Slow changes and successive progress rather than short-term measures are key to sustainable development. A comprehensive sustainability programme by each EU Member State, which demonstrates the national sustainability strategies over the next 20 years, can show a strong commitment and should be prepared by all EU countries.

2. Reduce greenhouse gases

The motivation to reduce CO₂ emission needs to remain strong – both for European citizens as individuals, and in the institutions, policies and decisions of the EU.

3. Reforming the public transport and mobility sectors

As one step to reduce the national (and thus Europe's) CO₂ balance it is necessary that the EU promote new means of transport and new ways of moving around – even across borders. These new mobility strategies need to take into account the financial situation of the people in a given country and need to be adjusted to local mobility needs.

4. Create jobs

The energy sector contributes to job creation in Europe, including in offering new research opportunities. Supporting the development of new alternatives and innovations in climate protection and energy can be a way to boost the job market. Specifically, it is a way to integrate young Europeans in particular into the European job market.

Measures

1. Create eco-cities

The European Union should develop a concept of "eco-cities", which encourages cities to further develop environmentally smart and sustainable solutions. Step one should be to develop common sustainability criteria for all aspects of city life. The criteria could include transportation (use of electric cars and public transportation), banning polluting industry in the city area, water (lakes, rivers) should be clean and fresh, the city should have a lot of green zones, and catering institutions and food stores should provide only ecological and organic food.

One important aspect of city development is housing and urban city design. Here we would encourage cities that want to be eco-cities to look for creative solutions that include ideas to increase sustainability and the quality of life in cities. Interesting concepts here are, in our opinion, ideas that bring nature back into cities like rooftop gardens.

Step two should involve a communication of the sustainability criteria as well as a promotion of already existing support and policy programmes like the EU's Smart Cities programme. The exchange between European cities should in particular be encouraged so they can learn from each other how to find green and eco-friendly solutions.

2. Ban deforestation

An undisturbed terrestrial ecosystem naturally develops into a dense forest. Factors like humidity, temperature, rainfall and soil types etc. determine the nature and composition of the biotic community within a forest – consequently the forest is utterly important to keep a balance between pollution and fresh air. As a result, industrial deforestation has to be banned. Companies who would do not comply with this ban should be penalised with fines, and a percentage of this should go into the “Green Fund”. Re-forestation programmes to recover forests lost in the last 10 years need to be implemented.

3. Promote research in biotechnologies

The EU should invest in the development of biotechnologies. These prove to be useful to naturally reduce CO₂. Intensified, coordinated research, for example in the formation of artificial seaweed plantations, could represent a valuable opportunity given their natural CO₂ absorption.

4. Measures concerning the mobility sector

a. Promotion of electric transportation in public transportation

Public transport systems need to be expanded so that their use is more attractive to European citizens. An additional measure could be the complete change of all public vehicles, including for example garbage trucks or school busses, to electric vehicles. Public transport should also become subject to tax benefits: If prices for public transport are kept low, more people will use it.

b. Promote research into electric vehicles

Over the past couple of years electric vehicles have been developed and have come onto the market. The technical development in this sector has made impressive progress. However, research on e-mobility needs to be further promoted to raise the distance ranges and to find more sophisticated ways for recharging. This will make electric mobility more attractive for citizens and a viable, environmentally friendly substitute to current mobility technologies.

c. Improve train travel

Cross-border train travel in the EU should be made easier. The closer integration and the expansion of EU-wide cross-border train lines would promote European cultural exchange in a sustainable way. A project of a “European Train Network” that connects all European capitals with fast trains can be a first step towards a more connected Europe. Opportunities for young people to travel across Europe with cheap seasonal tickets should be expanded and promoted, helping young people to get to know Europe through an ecofriendly form of travel.

C. Energy in Everyday Life

Energy is a substantial part of our everyday lives: We consume energy with every step we take. This also means that looking at the energy use embedded in everyday routines and activities can be a valuable step towards improved energy performance. We believe that reducing energy consumption is a crucial step in fighting climate change and, in the long-term, to improving the quality of life for all citizens of the EU. For us, as youngsters of Europe, this means that we ourselves have to re-think our current lifestyles and consumption habits. Recycling – Repairing – Reusing instead of throwing away or rebuying should become a guideline of our actions. We want to encourage all other generations to follow this path of change with us.

Objectives

1. Promote energy efficiency

Reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency in industries as well as in households. Every individual should contribute to the overall objective of reducing energy consumption by changing their daily habits. One of the most important energy sources is efficiency. The European Union should raise its own goal to decrease the domestic use of energy to up to 30 per cent.

2. Encourage education on energy efficiency

Despite the fact that the European Union does not determine the education policies of its Member States, the EU should encourage every country to implement a wide range of educational campaigns which would promote energy efficiency of domestic users.

Measures

1. Build technology valleys

European Union institutions, together with businesses and the science sector, have to build and develop technology valleys which would gather the best natural scientists, energy scientists and new technology specialists. Such a valley could, for example, be built in Lithuania because the country has both the suitable infrastructure and a wide range of highly qualified biologists, biochemists, physicist, engineers and IT specialists. In such a technology valley scientists would develop energy efficient technologies, new-age batteries, TLED light technologies (which are much more efficient than LED technologies), and solar and wind power technologies.

2. Recycling

Incentives for EU citizens to recycle their waste should be strengthened and increased. Recycling in public spaces should become increasingly common and, eventually, standard, in all European countries. By setting up recycling systems in public in all European countries, European citizens become increasingly aware of the usefulness and can take on this behaviour in their everyday lives.

3. Avoid packing

In a drive to further the lifestyle changes we advocate, unnecessary packaging should be avoided and decreased, going beyond existing EU legislation on eco-design where applicable.

4. Encourage creative concepts of energy

A new attitude towards energy use also needs new, creative ideas that open possibilities to change traditional mind sets. We want projects that empower the citizens of Europe to come up with new ideas on energy production and energy consumption that can be applied in everyday life contexts.

In Conclusion

In less than ten years we, the youth of Europe, will become the foundation on which the social and economic welfare of Europe will rest. Therefore it is fundamentally important to us to already now start shaping the future of Europe with our ideas. We – Europe's youngsters – will be the people directly affected in future by the decisions taken today and so we ask Europe's decision-makers to take on these proposals and give us a voice in shaping our common future.

As adopted January 2013 – January 2014 by *Young Ideas for Europe* participating schools:

Budapesti Külkereskedelmi Szakközép Iskola	Budapest / Hungary
Camilo Castelo Branco	Lisbon / Portugal
Etelä-Tapiolan lukio	Espoo / Finland
Gymnázium Grösslingová	Bratislava / Slovakia
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Secondary School of Economics "Georgi S. Rakovski"	Varna / Bulgaria
Šolski center Postojna	Postojna / Slovenia
VBS Mödling	Vienna / Austria

About the Project

Young Ideas for Europe is an initiative of the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

For more information on *Young Ideas for Europe* please visit: www.young-ideas-for-europe.eu

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