

World Energy Council Austria calls for cooperation in the energy transformation

This year's digital "Vienna Energy Strategy Dialogue" was organized by the World Energy Council Austria, OSCE, Federation of Industry and Ernst & Young under the title "Implications of a global energy transition". A total of more than 120 participants were able to discuss the energy future with top representatives from international organizations and energy companies. According to the participants of the digital event, the current COVID-19 crisis must be used as an opportunity to sustainably decarbonise energy systems. Opinions are divided how this can be accomplished.

COVID-19, climate change, geopolitical tensions. These are the questions that currently occupy the energy world most intensely. COVID-19 is causing demand disruption in the energy sector. At the same time, our energy systems have to be decarbonised due to advancing climate change. However, this requires cooperation on an international basis, which is currently being thwarted by geopolitical tensions. These questions were also the main topic of this year's digital "Third Vienna Energy Strategy Dialogue". WEC Austria, OSCE, Federation of Industrialists and Ernst & Young invited top-class experts from the energy industry and politics to discuss these issues in more detail.

Under the working title "Implications of a global energy transition", 14 leading people in the energy sector could be won for discussion. International organizations - World Energy Council, OPEC, IAEA or IEA, to name just a few - found a place in the discussion, as did leading companies, including Austrian Power Grid and Siemens Energy. "The challenges we are currently facing can only be solved together. Without cooperation on an international level and with stakeholders such as the private sector, our goals will fail. It was therefore important to us as the organizer that we bring precisely those people to the table who will play a decisive role in shaping our energy future," said the newly elected President of the World Energy Council Austria Dr. Michael Strugl.

Due to the wide range of topics, two separate discussion panels were set up. In the first panel, the socio-economic effects of the energy transition were examined. COVID-19 has caused a drop in the price of oil. Nevertheless, the OPEC analysts project an increasing demand for crude oil. The reasons for this lie in the increasing economic growth in the coming years and the need for a secure energy supply. A dramatic decline in investment in conveyor systems is currently seen as the greatest hurdle. In addition to the price of oil, access to electrical energy will also play an important role in the future. Due to the increased use of renewable energy sources in the power grid, grid expansion is urgently needed. Gerhard Christiner, CTO of Austrian Power Grid, is convinced that Europe can only meet the Paris climate goals together. "With the Green New Deal, cooperation in a united Europe becomes more important. The most important thing here is that society is always at the center of all considerations, so that the transformation of the energy systems can succeed." In addition, increases in efficiency and the increased use of artificial intelligence are of increasing importance in the future energy system. In order to be able to meet the Paris climate goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, the current state financial aid and investments must flow to those companies that are taking measures to advance the energy transformation.

In the second panel of the event, geopolitical relationships and security issues in the future renewable energy system were explained. According to the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook, the current pandemic will have a major impact on the energy world for years to come. The question remains whether the current situation is a setback for safe and

sustainable energy systems or is accelerating them. One scenario by the International Energy Agency assumes that renewables will account for 80% of growth in the electricity sector by 2030. Cyber security will play a bigger role in the energy world of the future. Intensified digitalization is changing the entire value chain in the energy sector. In addition, according to the analysts from Ernst & Young, all areas of life, including energy systems, will be digitally connected in the future. The use of a wide variety of new technologies leads to an increased risk potential in security issues, as no case studies and regulatory guidelines exist yet. In addition, digitalization is not just a security issue for energy systems, but an integral part of energy transformation. The benefits of innovative digital technologies cannot be compared to possible costs, e.g. due to increased energy consumption in data centers. Future technologies such as the Internet of Things or Blockchain will play an essential role in our future society and make many processes more efficient, which will result in net energy savings despite energy consumption.

The future development of the energy sector is fundamental for meeting the Paris climate targets. The “Third Vienna Energy Strategy Dialogue” highlighted some important facets of energy transformation. Holistic ways of thinking and technological progress are just as important as international cooperation and intelligent investments. Whether or not the goals can be achieved also depends on political decisions and social acceptance. As an independent NGO, it is therefore important for the World Energy Council to promote the discussion and to shed light on all possible ways in the pursuit of sustainable, safe and affordable energy. Dr. Robert Kobau, Secretary General of World Energy Council Austria, and Mag. Daniel Kroos, Senior Program Officer OSCE, assured that the fourth “Vienna Energy Strategy Dialogue” will take place again next year so that experts can discuss questions of the future of energy together.

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About World Energy Council Austria:

The World Energy Council Austria is the Austrian representative of the worldwide international organization World Energy Council, which has existed since 1923 and is based in London.

The World Energy Council is an UN-accredited non-governmental organization (NGO) and is represented in nearly 100 countries in national committees.

The goal of the World Energy Council Austria is a secure, resource-efficient, economically, environmentally and socially compatible energy supply of Austria as a partner in an international environment.