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HYDROGEN ECONOMY IS DIRTY WITHOUT RENEWABLES

Brussels, April 24th, 2003 --- The European Wind Energy Association (EWEA) warned that a premature push towards the hydrogen economy could have a serious environmental downside. (1)

EWEA submitted its policy position to the “High Level Group on Hydrogen and Fuel cells” (2), which is developing a vision document to define a “sustainable energy and transport system for Europe”

EWEA argues that the environmental case for developing hydrogen and fuel cell technologies is flawed without large-scale renewable energy production.

“The perception that hydrogen and fuel cells are inherently clean is not true. Hydrogen is only as clean as the technologies producing the hydrogen. Today 98% of hydrogen is generated from fossil fuel sources. Without constructing large amounts of additional renewable energy production that share is unlikely to change”, said Christian Kjaer, policy director at EWEA.

In its response, EWEA writes that the vision more or less assumes that hydrogen is inherently clean without examining the total hydrogen cycle. EWEA recommends that the vision report takes on a full “well-to wheel” approach by including the hydrogen production technologies and their environmental and carbon effects in its vision.

“It is a backwards argument that hydrogen opens access to new and renewable energy sources. It is the other way around. Large-scale renewable energy production, such as offshore wind power, is an essential precondition for the credible deployment of a sustainable hydrogen economy. Without renewables, hydrogen is dirty and it will simply be another energy carrier that is set to increase traditional polluting energy sources”, said Kjaer.

EWEA points out that renewable energy technologies with vastly unused potentials, for example offshore wind power, are available today. However existing barriers such as unfavourable grid codes, limited grid access and other regulatory requirements put them at a competitive disadvantage with conventional power sources and distorts competition.

“A full ‘well-to wheel’ approach, including the production of hydrogen, is needed when debating the hydrogen future. By ignoring the existing renewable energy potential, both early action benefits and the long-term credibility and environmental integrity of the future hydrogen system are put at risk”, said Kjaer.

Notes

1. The EWEA policy submission is available at www.ewea.org.
2. More information on the High Level Group on Hydrogen and Fuel cells is available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/nn/nn_rt_hlg1_en.html
3. The European Wind Energy Association is the world’s largest renewable energy association. EWEA members include manufacturers representing 98% of the world market, research centres, national associations, developers, owners, utilities and financiers.