

The European Energy Policy: an Absolute Failure for the Climate

Faced with the massive reduction of Russian gas deliveries, Europe finds itself in a situation of energy insecurity as of now: gas storage facilities must be filled at all costs before November 1. This is a legal obligation, whose purpose is to ensure that winter peak demand can be coped with. In France, these storage facilities represent a little over a fourth of the annual consumption so that even if they are filled, imports will have to continue at a significant rate during next winter and beyond.

The reaction of several European countries has just been released: they are turning to... coal, and are about to reopen electricity production capacities using this fuel, which is by far the biggest CO₂ emitter and the most polluting of all. Such is the case in Germany, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and soon in other countries; Italy too is in a very precarious situation and will have to increase its electricity production from coal and fuel oil. As for France, the likelihood is that its last two coal-fired power plants are not about to shutdown.

The result is catastrophic for the climate: the targets set for the reduction of CO₂ emissions are definitely called into question for 2030 ("Fit for 55", an objective that is already largely unrealistic) and very probably for 2050 (carbon neutrality) because it will be very difficult to bridge the gap. The current gas crisis is likely to last at least until 2025, with considerable uncertainties beyond that.

But the root cause of this situation lies elsewhere: it is the result of the Commission's ideological and illusory "all wind and photovoltaic" policy, inspired by Germany and other anti-nuclear countries. The corollary of this policy is the massive reliance on gas, in this case Russian, to ensure the stability of the networks given the intermittence of wind and sun. How could anyone believe that Europe could do without the least CO₂-emitting of all dispatchable electricity sources and the only one capable of continuously and massively producing electricity, nuclear power? The Commission and its advisers who promoted this policy have had full control, their failure is total, it testifies to their abysmal strategic incompetence.

Will this object lesson at last make Europe wise up? In the short term in particular, at the beginning of July, the Members of the European Parliament, will cast their vote to validate or reject the complementary delegated act on the inclusion of nuclear and gas in the Taxonomy? The outcome of the vote appears uncertain, as the lobbying of anti-nuclear countries is still at work to have this act rejected.

Such a rejection, which would amount to forging ahead with an illusory magical policy that ignores facts, would definitively disqualify the European institutions concerning energy issues, and would add to the fiasco of the European electricity market. The latter is seriously dysfunctional for purely artificial reasons, as it indexes the wholesale price of electricity to the price of gas, without taking into account the rest of the electricity mix: the last straw for a market that is supposed to lower prices... but in fact makes them skyrocket. It is imperative to reform the rules of this market in view of its devastating effects on Europe's economy and on its consumers.

The Europe of energy, really Europe as a whole, given the climate urgency and the vital nature of energy, must undertake a complete aggiornamento of its energy policy and return to science and reality, far from the illusions that have led to the current situation. It has its back to the wall of realities, ignored for years despite the warnings of many scientists, those of *Save the Climate* in particular.

A continuation of this policy whose main purpose is to exclude nuclear power from the European landscape would be the continent's suicide regarding both energy and climate change: there would be a massive shortage of electricity well before the middle of the century, and the latter would be very expensive. Plus, massive imports of "green" hydrogen from sunny countries, the latest avatar of an uncertain and ruinous utopia, that would lead straight to extended recourse to fossil fuels. This is totally unacceptable for the climate and for the future of Europe.

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