

Energy & Climate

France and Europe have made many mistakes These must be corrected as soon as possible

The crises we are experiencing (climate crisis, geopolitical crisis, economic crisis,...) remind those who had forgotten them the stakes of the energy field. The fundamental role of energy in our society is reasserted:

- **Energy is essential to the functioning of our society:** the availability of the energy we need at all times is not a given.
- **Energy is a fundamental issue of national sovereignty:** dependence on external supplies can generate certain forms of submission.
- **Fossil fuels are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and consequently of climate change: we will have to do without them.** The climate crisis is such that the effective reduction of emissions on a global scale must be an absolute priority.
- **The economic impacts of energy are fundamental:** the sustainability of household spending and the competitiveness of our economy are at stake.

In this area, like other countries, France has had to make choices in the past that have proven more or less relevant, but which have led the country, thanks to its electricity production mix, to an advantageous position in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, energy sovereignty, security of supply and the cost of electricity.

We must now admit that, in recent years, we have lost sight of these issues, thinking that many things were definitively acquired. Much has been given over to slogans, partisan posturing, simplistic recipes, short-term calculations and illusions. We will have to assume the consequences.

Many mistakes have been made. They must be corrected.

The security of energy supply has been deeply deteriorated.

The shutdown of reliable and safe power plants is not compensated by the installation of intermittent and non-dispatchable wind and solar generation. The guarantee of continuity of service is seriously impaired. In addition, the abrupt fluctuations in the European grid caused by the sudden surges and the equally sudden disappearances of electricity production from intermittent renewable sources have a major impact on the balancing of the electricity grid.

France's energy sovereignty has been damaged.

France's ability to meet its own needs has been greatly degraded and we are increasingly dependent on electricity imports from neighboring countries.

The materials needed to manufacture wind turbines, and in particular rare earths, are not available in France, and very little so in Europe. We are heavily dependent on Chinese monopolies in this field.

Solar panels and storage batteries are, to date, manufactured almost exclusively in Asia (China, Korea, Japan).

The level of greenhouse gas emissions from our electricity mix has improved very little despite the considerable sums that have been infused. Why have we poured more than 100 billion euros into transforming a power generation system that is already almost completely carbon-free (while making it less reliable) when there is still so much to be done in the transportation and building sectors, for example?

The advantage of low electricity prices in France has been sacrificed on the altar of European doctrines and dogmas establishing an electricity "market". We, in France, enjoyed some of the lowest prices in Europe: we submitted them to the vagaries of the European market and France, which still produces 90% of its electricity without recourse to gas and oil, is seeing its electricity prices soar because of fossil fuels that it uses little or not at all!

The current situation is not circumstantial, it must be analyzed for what it is, i.e. the manifestation of fundamental flaws in the functioning of the electricity market, which passes the extremely high gas prices on to those of electricity.

France must absolutely change its course and learn from the mistakes of the recent past.

The changes to be made without delay are not cosmetic: they must be a clean break with some of the options taken in the past few years. They must be driven by the priorities of security of supply, cost control, sovereignty and environmental protection.

Dogmas and beliefs must be supplanted by scientific and technical facts.

The short and medium term future choices must be based on the technologies available today with their known limits and not on a dream of what could be possible tomorrow. Research and development and innovation must be continued in order to enrich the range of possible options for tomorrow once their robustness and economic viability are demonstrated (and not before).

Europe must be a supportive body that enables solidarity between countries in the interest of energy issues and not a doctrinaire body that imposes its views on the means to be used. European doctrines have considerably weakened France's position over the recent years by destroying an electricity system which, if it had room for improvement, ticked the boxes of sovereignty, reliability, costs and level of greenhouse gas emission.

Priority must be given to an in-depth review of the French Energy Transition for Green Growth law (which was passed in 2015 in a context of electoral demagoguery and tension related to the preparation of the COP 21 and the Paris Agreements) and to a reorientation of European policies (France's determination must be absolute in the face of the countries that have led to the disastrous options of the past).

It is essential to recognize the mistakes of the past, both at the French and at the European level, and to correct them without delay.

