
POLICY UPDATE

“Energy secessionist” Vermont

Vermont’s new governor, Peter Shumlin, is paving the way for a new energy future for the New England state. The 2011 [Comprehensive Energy Plan](#) addresses policies and measures for electricity, thermal energy, transportation, and land use. The Plan aims to meet 90 percent of Vermont’s energy needs from renewable sources by 2050. As [the governor stated](#) in December, this plan will help reduce the state’s carbon footprint, partly in response to increasing extreme weather events affecting Vermont. As Stephen Lacey wrote in an article on [Climate Progress](#), the program could “put it on a path toward ‘energy secession’”.

Renewable energy use reaches 20 percent share in Germany

Renewable energies now account for 20 percent of German electricity supply. At the same time, about 5 percent less energy was consumed in 2011 compared to the previous year. These are only a few of the statistics published by [“Arbeitsgemeinschaft Energiebilanzen e.V. \(Working Group Energy Balances\)”](#) in late December. The reduced need for heating due to a relatively mild winter, as well as higher fossil fuel prices, contributed to energy savings. The consumption of oil went down by 3 percent, gas by 10 percent, coal by 0.7 percent and nuclear energy by 23 percent. “The solid growth of renewable energies is a great success and confirms the German government’s energy policy. We have been resolutely and reliably supporting renewable energies for almost a year now. The investment security this entails is now paying off,” Norbert Röttgen, Federal Environment Minister, [commented](#) on the new numbers.

Divided: Gearing up for further tension on aviation emissions

The European Court of Justice has [upheld](#) a previous [finding of the Advocate General](#) that inclusion of aviation emissions, including those of foreign airlines, in the European Union Emissions Trading System is compliant with European and international law. The finding follows on the heels of the passage of bills in the [US House of Representatives](#) and

[Senate](#) that prohibit American airlines from participating in the system. As the clock ticked to January 1, 2012 when [aviation was included in the EU ETS](#), US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood objected to the court’s decision and said that the US would be “compelled to take appropriate action” in response.

Motion for expansion of transatlantic climate cooperation

The Green Party faction in the German parliament, the Bundestag, has brought forward a motion to make climate protection a focus of transatlantic cooperation. Citing the importance of the American role in any efforts to limit average global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, the motion calls for the German government to expand policy, technical, and scientific cooperation between the US and Germany/EU in the field of climate change. Such cooperation is needed not only on the political level, but also between civil society, environmental interest groups, academia, and media on the national and sub-national levels, building on existing German-American state affiliations. This should be carried out through expansion of the Transatlantic Climate Bridge, among other measures. The motion was introduced in a plenary hearing on Friday, November 11, 2011 and was then referred to the Environmental Committee for further consideration. The Greens currently have 68 out of 620 seats in the German Parliament. Read the motion here: [English / German](#)

An Energy Roadmap for Europe

On December 15th, the European Commission presented its Energy Roadmap [outlining](#) different potential pathways for energy development. The EU has a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80 – 95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. The Roadmap explores seven different scenarios for achieving this goal. These scenarios and the analysis of their impact on energy costs and prices will help Member States make the informed policy choices. The share of renewable energy rises substantially in all seven decarbonisation scenarios, achieving at least 55 percent in gross final energy consumption in 2050, up 45 percentage points from today’s level of around 10 percent. The share of renewables in electricity consumption reaches nearly 65 percent in the High Energy Efficiency scenario, and as much as 97 percent in the High Renewables scenario.