

**Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Energy, Environment and Water  
of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly  
Linz, 12 and 13 October 2009**

**Preparation of the Copenhagen Climate Conference,  
with a special focus on the Mediterranean region**

**Rudi ANSCHÖBER - Regional Minister for the Environment, Upper Austria**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Ms. Orthner has already said, I would also like to welcome you on behalf of Upper Austria. I'm very happy to have you here for a two-day meeting on a very vital issue. Apart from combating the economic crisis, environmental protection is the key issue for the coming years and our main responsibility vis-à-vis future generations and I can only continue where the minister stopped his impressive speech.

Adaptation and protection will be equally necessary in coming years and if we remember the IPCC forecast two years ago, the situation has become even more serious in between. Forecasts for the next twenty to thirty years are even more frightening because we know that the melting of the arctic ice has proceeded at a much faster pace than predicted. And it is a fact that we are all in one boat - all regions of the world will be affected dramatically if and when the climatic crisis should continue unhindered. We are all victims at the same time, there is not a single region in the world which will not be affected, although in very different manners. But there will be an impact on water supply for every region. We have looked at the consequences also in our region, here it is not so much water supply as you might imagine if you look at the weather outside. Here it is more the increase of dramatic weather incidents that will provide serious damage and also the risk of flooding as we have already seen in recent years. So, we all have to provide a contribution – it is not one single country on this planet that will be able to solve the problem alone. The new challenge is that we need concerted action by everyone in order to come up with a common solution, in order to clearly and dramatically decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Providing a solution to the energy crisis will probably be one of the key issues in this fight because most of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are generated by the combustion of fossil fuels. This is where we need to step out and it is possible in technical terms. I'd like to describe the status quo in Upper Austria and also to provide a short outlook with a view to Copenhagen.

From our point-of-view it will be the decisive conference in climate questions:

In Upper Austria we do have climate protection and the conversion to renewable energy sources has been made a constitutional principle of the land of Upper Austria. It is a priority objective of our land to be very serious about climate protection and this is why we are trying to be an international trailblazer in energy questions. We have a very ambitious official state goal which was decided two years ago, namely to use a 100 per cent of alternative energy resources for ambient heating and electricity by the year 2030. This may sound a little utopian for some but it is a realistic goal given the current situation in Upper Austria: we have a share of 34 per cent of renewable energy sources in the total energy consumption; 34 per cent of renewable energy, about 46 per cent of heating is on the basis of ecological power distant heating, solar power and 72 per cent of our electricity supply comes from renewable sources. That is a considerable stock-taking I'd say, but I see that there is still something missing until we reach a 100 per cent. So, there is good deal of work ahead for us as for all other regions, but it is visible that we can do it.

And I'd like to share a few basic principles that have allowed us to achieve success so far and that will help us to achieve a complete conversion to renewable energy resources for ambient heating and electricity in the coming years. Mr. Schennach has already given you a few figures and I will try to present them in a different dimension in thermal solar energy. And during your technical visit tomorrow you are going to see it for yourselves when you look at the roofs. Many private roofs already have solar panels and in sum total it's an area of a little more than 1 million m<sup>2</sup>. This year around 100 000 m<sup>2</sup> are going to be added to that. That is to say that we do make progress, the population is very much involved and I think that is a decisive effect. We have two thousand photovoltaic plants, of course a lot more can be done but we are still in the beginning. Our neighbours in Germany are a little further in that, so there is lot of potential here. And we have 615 water hydropower plants, this has to do with the Austrian wealth in water.

One main aspect of energy policy is information of and consultation with the population. Every person who builds a house in Upper Austria, every business owner in Upper Austria, everyone who constructs a new office building will be given comprehensive information and advice by our energy saving association on how to save energy when constructing new buildings and we also have our own desk for energy rehabilitation for buildings. Consultations with all target groups, this has been a very successful initiative and the population responded very well to this offer. The consultations include information campaigns for promoting renewable energy sources that are also promoted and supported by the land of Upper Austria.

Another point is stable and transparent subsidy programs for conversion to energy efficient systems and renewable energies. Let me give you an example: If you live in an older building with oil heating in Upper Austria, you will get something like 4500 € in subsidies if you convert to biomass or distant heating which is about one third of the necessary investment. Again, we receive very positive feedback for that. Stable pricing is another thing. Economic and ecological benefits should both be applicable.

And the second thing is that we have a very comprehensive thermal rehabilitation program for private households – this year about 10,000 older buildings will be rehabilitated, so that their energy consumption will be reduced by an average 50 per cent. Again, this will contribute towards reaching our ambitious goals for our complete conversion. And finally we heavily promote so called beacon projects, that is to say that we promote new technologies through public support. For example, the building of the district administration centre in Rohrbach was newly constructed two years ago. For the first time in Europe, it has a solar cooling system. That is to say, that it has some air conditioning that does not use up energy because it uses solar energy and it is a technology that should be implemented and will be implemented worldwide. This is one example, how you can promote new technologies through pilot projects in order to try and turn them into standards.

Law making is another big issue - a few decisive measures have been adopted in recent years in our support for private housing, e.g. oil heating systems are no longer permitted. We have tried to make these very decisive step in order to orient our population towards renewable energies.

Education is another aspect and we are very much trying to promote and support a business community that is geared towards climate protection. We have an instituted teaching profession that we call eco-engineering and eco-technicians, they are experts that can install solar plants, biomass heating systems and who are specially qualified for that area. Providing them with solid training has turned out to be very important and we have our professional college in Wels where we also offer something like a diploma for eco-engineering.

The fifth big area we are focusing on is research and development in order to develop eco-energy programs. As everywhere else in the world the big challenge is storing eco-energy, i.e. solar power that can also be used in winter: it is generated in summer and then stored to be used in winter. So, the storage question is a key issue, but there are also many other details that are being looked into in our research programs.

The sixth area I'd like to point out is a big trade exhibition our so-called energy saving trade fair in Wels. A little more than a 100,000 visitors attend that exhibition every year and eco-energy companies offer and introduce their specific projects at this trade exhibition.

The seventh area is the eco-energy cluster, Ms. Orthner has already mentioned it. The land of Upper Austria established the objective of providing a network for such companies and to help them in their product marketing and development and also to help them tap export markets and be represented at technical exhibitions. 150 companies are networked in this eco-energy cluster, we are very successful in terms of exports in Europe for the time being, but we are also trying to tap new markets with our products. Tomorrow you are going to visit two of these pioneering companies, Fronius and Xolar, both are high-tech pioneers in eco-friendly energy technologies.

In the eighth area, we have launched an export offensive as we call it. Every sixth pellets heating system in Europe is from Upper Austria and a very high share of solar energy plants in Europe are actually produced in Upper Austria. A very successful step was to provide a strong domestic market by playing a pioneering role in order to become a technology leader, particularly in solar energy efficiency and biomass. This has worked very well and by now eco-energy, energy technology and the energy sector as such is recognized as one pillar of the Upper Austrian economy and business community and the labour market including all subcontractors. We provide about 15,000 jobs in that area in our land with a total turnover of something like two billion €. So, a very positive step has been taken.

If we want to reach our very ambitious energy goal of having 100 per cent alternative renewable energies for room heating and electricity, this would mean a great step ahead because then CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Upper Austria would be decreased by something like 65 per cent. This would be a giant leap ahead and in that case that would mean we would be really a trailblazer in our region.

So, as this is a key issue for climate protection, Copenhagen is a key for combating the climate crisis. From our point of view, it would be indispensable to have the European Union objective of 2 degrees Celsius as the result of the Copenhagen conference as a world-wide objective. No temperature increase over and above 2 degrees in order to prevent uncontrollable climate change, to slow down increases right now in order not to exceed the two degrees.

And another important principle from my point of view is a fair distribution of investments. This will be required because it is inadmissible that 80 per cent of the emissions are being generated by industrialized countries and therefore the main protagonists will have to share most of the burden. A fair balance in investments and efforts will be necessary for the new climate contract that we need as a result of the Copenhagen conference. The objectives also need to come along with sanctions because we cannot afford, as it was the case in Kyoto, that some countries do comply with the Kyoto commitments while others do not. There must be some pressure from the international community in order to make sure that the objectives are actually complied with.

And in order to achieve that, a new mind-set is required together with the awareness that we are all in the same boat. Only by concerted action and close cooperation will we be able to solve the problems of this planet. All regions of the world need to pitch in and we need to come up with common objectives.

So, my modest little offer is that the land of Upper Austria will of course be happy to contribute its share to international cooperation to the extend of our possibilities with regard to new technologies. We are very happy to be part of an intensive dialogue and an intensive cooperation. I'm convinced that this giant problem can only be coped with if we all act together and then we are going to make it happen together. Thank you very much for your attention.