

Denmark energy independence

The Danish Government today unveiled its "Energy Strategy 2050", which describes how the country can achieve its independence from coal, oil and gas by 2050 and significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

The energy strategy contains a raft of initiatives that will reduce the energy industry's use of fossil fuels by 33 percent in 2020, compared with 2009. The reduction will put Denmark well on its way to complete independence of fossil fuels by 2050.

"Denmark is the first country to present such a specific and ambitious strategy for achieving independence from fossil fuels," says Minister for Climate and Energy Lykke Friis.

The strategy calls for a significant increase in renewable energy obtained from wind, biomass and biogas which over the next decade will increase the share of renewables to 33 percent of energy consumption, if the initiatives in the strategy are implemented. Doing so would place Denmark among the top three countries in the world in terms of overall increase in renewable energy as a share of total energy consumption. Part of the increase would also rely on increasing use of biogas for heat, and a number of new initiatives will be put forth in order to promote the production of biogas.

The strategy offers an economically responsible path to the conversion of the Danish energy supply, and includes specific initiatives, that are all fully financed and which will not damage the nation's competitiveness. Homeowners will experience moderate increases in the costs of heat and electricity, but will also be given opportunities to lower their energy expenses through greater efficiency. Companies can expect added expenses amounting to 0.1 percent of the rise in their gross revenue growth by 2020.

Minister for Climate and Energy Lykke Friis underscores that the costs of converting from fossil fuels to green energy should also be seen in the light of expected increases in the cost of fossil fuels.

"No one is saying that carrying out major investments in energy efficiency and expanding our use of renewable energy is going to be free. But the alternative: Continued dependence on fossil fuels will, as all signs indicate, only become more expensive in the years to come. Converting to renewable energy will shield Denmark from the effects of increasing energy prices."

"This is no small task, however. Over the next 40 years, we need to cut our consumption of coal, oil and gas four times faster than we have over the past 40 years. The government's energy strategy shows that this can be done without burdening state finances and without eroding businesses' competitiveness. And, if we are smart, converting to renewable energy will also give us new opportunities to increase our exports of green energy technology at a time when the global market for such products is growing."

"The next step will be to discuss this proposal in parliament. I would like to emphasise that it is my hope that we will be able to reach a broad agreement on the energy strategy so that we can establish the framework for tomorrow's energy policy."

Tomorrow's energy supply will to a much larger extent be made up of electricity produced from renewable sources. In order to stimulate the pace of this shift, the Government is proposing a broad range of initiatives that will encourage a shift to biomass in the power plants of the major cities, increase consumption of renewable energy and promote more efficient energy use. The initiatives include:

Biomass and biogas Make it more financially attractive to establish biogas plants by granting biogas production subsidies, subsidies for biogas infrastructure, subsidies the use biogas in industrial processes, etc.

o Replace coal with biomass by allowing producers and consumers of district heat freedom of contract, this will make it more advantageous for both sides to convert to biomass.

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