

As the European Council for the "climate-energy package" is gathered in Brussels

The development of renewable energies is stimulating demand for copper in Europe

Paris, 20 October 2008 - In 2007, renewable energy sources saw sustained growth which increased demand for copper. The Eurobserv'ER barometer announce increases of 17% of installed capacity for wind power, 49% for photovoltaic power and 12.5% for solar power. These sources of natural energy are exploited thanks to advanced technologies which rely on copper: this material, with its exceptional thermal and electrical conductivity, ensures optimum operation. Faced with the urgency of climate change and the EU "climate-energy package" targets, this trend should continue in the years to come.

Renewable European energy: growth in 2007 and ambitious objectives for 2020

2007 saw continuous growth in the European renewable energy market. Wind power gained 17% compared to 2006, with total installed capacity reaching 57 GW. Photovoltaic power grew by 49% in just one year, bringing the installed capacity in Europe to almost 4700 MWc. Finally, at the end of 2007, the EU had nearly 24 million m² of solar collectors installed, an increase of 12.5% compared to 2006 (Source: Eurobserv'ER barometer).

With a target of 20% of energy from renewable sources in the overall energy package by 2020, the countries of the European Union should pursue this development actively in the future. Indeed, France should increase its share of renewable energy from 10.3% in 2005 to 23% in 2020, Germany 5.8% to 18%, the United Kingdom from 1.3% to 15%, Sweden from 39.8% to 49% and Poland from 7.2% to 15%.

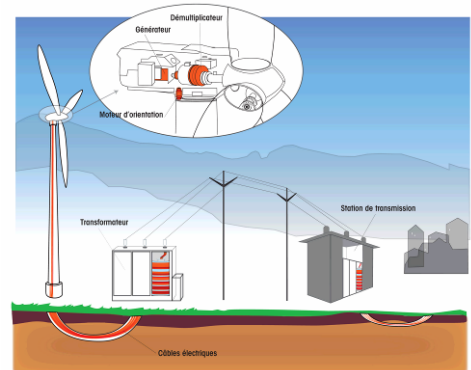


The solar power plant of Sanlúcar la Mayor PS-10

Technologies which rely on copper

The wind, the sun or heat from the earth, are all sources of free energy, that are inexhaustible and available almost everywhere. The systems used to exploit these sources of energy are based on highly advanced technologies which use considerable quantities of copper. On average, a 1-MW wind turbine contains 3.9 tonnes of copper and a photovoltaic installation approximately 4 kg of copper per kW of installed capacity (ECI).

It is estimated that the wind turbines currently installed in the EU contain, in total, about 190 000 tonnes of copper and the photovoltaic installations nearly 19 000 tonnes. If we believe the growth forecasts for these markets, then these quantities could reach more than 300 000 tonnes for wind power and almost 45 000 tonnes for photovoltaic power, by 2010.



Copper in a wind turbine © ECI

Copper: exceptional physical properties

Copper's unique combination of physical properties make it the material of choice for systems that generate electricity or heat from renewable energy. Copper is the best electrical conductor of all non precious metals and can optimise electrical efficiency and limit energy losses. "Each tonne of copper used to optimise the efficiency of energy systems saves 200 tonnes of CO₂ a year" explains Professor Ronnie Belmans, President of the International Union of Electricity. This metal is also used in solar thermal and horizontal coil geothermal systems, where its excellent thermal conductivity is exploited to transfer heat.

➔ Press pack on copper and renewable energies on simple request from climpens@prp.be

About the European Copper Institute

The European Copper Institute (ECI) is a joint venture between the world's mining companies (represented by the International Copper Association, Ltd) and the European copper industry. Its mission is to promote copper's benefits to modern society across Europe through its headquarters in Brussels and a network of eleven copper information centres.

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