

The energy equation



The 2050 energy roadmap will help meet the demands of a low carbon economy, says **Romana Jordan**

Every walk of life has its fashions, its trends and its critics. European politics is no different and, sadly for me, the current fashion is to criticise any and all EU initiatives before proper analysis and consideration of the alternatives has taken place. Maybe, like theatre, it is because it's so much easier to be a critic than an actor. Or is it because it's easier to get headlines

with bad news rather than constructive comment?

The European commission's energy roadmap 2050 is an example of this 'fashion'. The headline seekers, critics and some of the media are all looking for the negatives in the aims and objectives of the only map we have for a tough but essential journey that will take almost 40 years of travel together. This document has the status of a communication – a kind of policy – it is not a regulation or even a directive so why be so vehement with criticism even before the ideas are properly considered, refined. For my part, I am honoured to be the shadow rapporteur on the low carbon roadmap in parliament's industry, research and energy committee. Achieving a low carbon economy demands many contributions and I see the

energy roadmap 2050 as an essential and core element.

First of all: Why do we need this roadmap? Well, quite simply, the EU faces the toughest challenge in its history to stimulate the economy, harness the working output of our citizens, protect the environment and guard against the still increasing dependency on others for our energy. All of these factors define the energy policy that we need today, tomorrow and for decades to come. We need enormous investment in the energy sector for this. Not just in the emerging technologies, such as wind and solar energy, but also to improve the way we burn fossil fuels, harmonise grid and market systems, replacement of our ageing nuclear plants and more. Investments need investors and investors need to see a credible and stable plan.

The energy roadmap can do much to provide better investor confidence so long as we endorse it, work to it and maybe refine it as needed over the coming years. Such a plan needs also to look at the demand side of the energy equation. There is enormous scope for energy saving in buildings, better use of 'waste' energy that currently accounts for around half of all energy production. Combined heat and power projects can pay for themselves within a few years if properly considered – and these technologies are mature, working and available.

We often forget that the EU is almost twice the population of the US and that means we can have influence on other major economies – an international voice on climate, clean air and unnecessary waste. But for the EU to be recognised, we need unity of purpose, clarity of intentions and, yes, a clear indication of our policy – we need a roadmap. Central to the aim of encouraging low-carbon investments while remaining globally competitive and influential, is the EU emissions trading scheme (ETS). ETS is a market instrument designed to encourage the kind of low emission energy investments that we need. The revised system does not come into force until 2013, but already its critics are lining up to say it does not work. I will be the first to admit that improvements may be needed as we see the way it operates and conduct a proper impact assessment. With political will and commitment, this essential market instrument can and will encourage low-carbon investments. I am also sure that, when other major economies see ETS working as an investment encourager, they too will see our lead and follow. With global influence comes global responsibility and that means avoiding the various 'quick-fix' remedies in favour of longer term, environmentally conscious and economically sound intentions.

The EU has already done much to set out our stall for the future with various directives covering renewables, cleaner coal, nuclear, energy efficiency and more. What we need now is a framework and a plan to bring them all together, to provide the right mechanisms for fine tuning and to measure how well each is doing and identify gaps in the policy. For this we need to identify milestones to assess achievement and the means



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to correct where those achievements are not adequate. The 27 members of the EU family all start from different places on this journey, but the destination is the same. The energy roadmap 2050 can be the fit for all of us so long as we are fit for it. ★

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