

Opening Speech

By Mr. Peter Ahmels, Conference Chair /
President of BWE (German Wind Energy Association)

Signore e signori,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Milan! Bienvenuti qui a Milano

The overture to this conference comes from – what else in this town? – an opera. It is the final chorus of Rossini's "Il turco in italia", shown for the first time in 1814 at La Scala. After much trouble, masquerading and conspiracy, favourable winds take the lovers into a bright future.

Ladies and gentlemen, Please take this musical beginning as a reference to our host town. The European wind industry is very happy to be meeting in Milan - a town with a great musical tradition. And also host to a sizeable European industry and business community.

This is a good location for our line of business. Across the globe, the wind industry has become increasingly important economically. And it is growing fast.

Italy recently joined the "wind revolution". And there is no doubt that Italy will turn this into an economic opportunity. As the composer Rossini wrote: the wind is friendly. This March saw the dawn of a **new era** for Europe: EU-member states agreed on a common, mandatory target for renewable energies: 20% of primary energy must be produced by renewables by 2020. For electricity, this means 35%. In other words, at the end of the next decade more than one third of Europe's power will be renewably sourced.

This has sent a clear political signal.

It is no less than the beginning of a second **industrial revolution**. Fossil fuels will be replaced by a new technology, know-how and a highly-qualified workforce. This challenge also provides enormous value creation opportunities across Europe. Millions of new jobs will be created. Growth rates will be more than 20% over the next few years. By 2020, the "green sector" will provide more jobs than many other traditional industries.

Europe can lead the way in the development of climate protection technologies. This will aptly fulfil the Lisbon strategy for European leadership in technology.

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In 2020 wind energy can deliver at least 13% of European electricity consumption. In order for this to happen, we need –to produce 5 times more wind power than today. This means that more than half of the new renewable electricity needed will be wind power.

This will be the most competitive way to save CO2. In Germany, for example, wind energy has already provided for a 27 million tonne reduction in CO2 emissions. Whereas, the emission trading scheme in its present form costs German consumers 5 billion euros annually without significantly reducing CO2 emissions.

The prospects for wind energy are very favourable. But just like in Rossini's opera, there are a number of obstacles to overcome:

We need concrete plans.

The binding 20% target has to be converted into ambitious plans in all EU-countries. Member states should include sector-specific targets in their national plans. And these targets should become compulsory. Only explicit and mandatory figures will create long term investment incentives and security. And time is pressing, as illustrated by the latest alarming IPCC reports.

The existing RES-e directive has worked very well up until now, and it should remain in place during the negotiation process. Successful support schemes, such as feed-in-systems, which have created high growth rates in several countries, should also continue, as they offer a high level of reliability for public and private investors. Only such successful systems are appropriate for harmonisation.

Ladies and gentlemen, 200 years ago Rossini was a pioneer, injecting the opera with new elements and..... he succeeded. Our overriding aim now is to revolutionise energy generation towards renewables - as soon as possible. And like Rossini, we will succeed.

Europe is now at a crossroads, facing energy and environmental challenges. Energy security, fuel price rises and climate change are now at the top of the political agenda. This latest EWEA campaign highlights this fact: if Europe seizes the opportunity, it can win the energy battle by developing, using and exporting its own power.

Today, we need one per cent of the GDP in order to reduce CO2 emissions. In 20 years we will need 5-20 per cent of the GDP in order to repair the damage caused by failing to act now. So, we need to act NOW.

Investments should be made today in indigenous energy sources, such as wind. I strongly believe the messages transmitted from Milan will be listened to across the world. And they may also be on the agenda at the G8 summit in June in Germany. So may the winds of change and the courage to pursue our goal of a new energy era dominate the next 4 days. The last EWEA film, with the amazing music, generated a lot of publicity. And I am quite sure, even Al Gore was inspired by it. The time is right for a new film conveying new messages. So, without further ado, please sit back and enjoy this exciting new film:

Wind Power – Seize the Opportunity

I wish you all a very pleasant stay in Milan.



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