

austria WORLD SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DAYS 2007

Wels, Austria 27 February-4 March

Organised by O. Ö. Energiesparverband, the World Sustainable Energy Days 2007 comprised four topical conferences and a large exhibition showcasing energy efficient products. O. Ö. Energiesparverband is a regional energy agency in Austria which promotes energy efficiency and innovative technology. Renowned as the largest conference of its type in Europe, presentations are given in English, German, Italian, Spanish and French. As in 2006, 930 delegates travelled from fifty-six countries to attend. It is not random that the event takes place in Wels, Austria. Thirty per cent of Upper Austria's primary energy consumption can be attributed to renewable sources such as biomass, solar and hydro. The region has set itself challenging targets to increase sustainability and energy-efficiency. 27 February allowed early arriving delegates to visit local sites where innovation has been made in the field of sustainability. The European Pellets Conference, 28 February to 1 March, highlighted the rapidly growing market share of convenient and CO₂ neutral wood pellet fuel. Presentations focused on the problems facing this sector and the opportunities for a global market. During the round table discussion, entrepreneurs from around the world – Austria, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Estonia and Denmark – appraised the future of their respective markets and the technologies now employed to fulfil them. The heating markets of the globe were discussed during an afternoon session which saw speakers from the USA, Japan, Brazil, France and Switzerland highlight their biomass resources. Wood pellet production and technology was examined prior to a workshop focused session.

An exhibition of initiatives and innovations in sustainable energy ran in conjunction with the conference. Attended by 35 companies, agencies and associations, the exhibitions offered the delegates an opportunity to swap ideas, form partnerships and view research. The Association of Building Engineers' stand was well received and many promising contacts were made. Many of the possible language barriers were overcome through the use of internet-based website translation.

The European Energy Efficiency Conference on 1 March addressed technical, economic, political, social and legal issues relating to energy efficiency. It was evident that due consideration had been given extensively to how to balance the economical cost of energy efficiency and the need to protect the environment. MEP Mechtild Rothe, Vice-President of the European Parliament discussed Europe's answers to the energy challenges. The round table discussion focused on how to transform the market, turning current products into energy efficient solutions. Representatives from Europe made the delegates aware of the many challenges and solutions that can be adopted.

Campaigns, policies, services and programmes were highlighted by German, Austrian and Italian speakers, who were keen to impart their country's ideas. Many believe the answer to energy efficiency lies in the advancing technologies within the sector. This was reflected in a number of sessions where solutions already implemented were reviewed. The 'European Green Paper on Energy Efficiency', 'End-Use Efficiency and Energy Services' and 'Energy Efficiency Action Plan' provided a base for the whole conference.

The conclusion of the day emerged that the strategies in place and those planned can not only help everyone to decrease energy costs and lower the environmental impact of energy inefficiency, but can also result in opportunities for economic growth stemming from innovation and the associated growth in the employment sector.

The next twenty years will see significant changes in energy systems. 'Energy Future 2030' raised the need to take a proactive approach to the problems faced, the opportunities for new technologies and improvement in quality of life. The long-term plans, questions and outcomes needed careful consideration. Subjects including 'Changing face of cities', 'Energy poverty – solutions for the future' and 'A vision for 2030' were delivered by speakers from Britain, Kenya and Europe. The interactive dialogue platform titled 'Are we ready for the energy future?' pushed the delegates to be honest about their energy efficiency plans. On 1 March, the seminar 'Rural Development and Sustainable Energy' aimed to motivate stakeholders to take action in their field. A growing number of rural communities are using efficient energy resources thus benefiting economically. Examples were provided from Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and Ecuador. Running in conjunction with the World Sustainable Energy Days 2007, an exhibition and trade show 'Energiesparmesse', showcased renewable energy sources and products. It attracted roughly 800 exhibitors and many more delegates. It allowed people the opportunity to investigate and view real solutions to energy efficiency that already exist in the market. The trade show covered wood chippings to solar heated jacuzzis, reclaimed timber flooring to the newest ideas in domestic heating. In short, the whole event surpassed many British conferences and exhibitions and should be more widely supported by British industry and organisations.

