

Starting up

- Will renewable energy sources such as wind and solar (sun) power one day completely replace carbon-based energy such as coal, oil and gas? If so, when will this happen; if not, why not?
- Read through the whole article. Then do the exercise below.

Reading 1

Read the article again to find:

- a) a power company
- b) its head
- c) a newspaper
- d) two industry associations for power companies
- e) the head of one of them
- f) five European countries
- g) an association of countries
- h) one of its governing bodies

Green energy set to overpower coal

The European energy sector has reached a watershed, where cheaper, clean energy will destroy the profitability of coal production within a decade, says the head of Europe's largest power utility. Francesco Starace, chief executive of Enel, said the lower costs of wind and solar energy would mean that coal and other types of carbon intensive power production would be driven out of the market, and governments and companies must plan to replace the jobs that will be lost. "The watershed moment for coal is there in some countries already, and will happen across Europe in all countries," he told the Financial Times.

Managing the decline of older forms of energy production will require the industry and governments to "face the truth", he said. "What should we do with the power plants that are obsolete? Can you defend them past their own time? Can you tell people lies saying it is all going to be fine continuing doing what you have been doing? Or should you rather tell the truth, and say 'guys, in the next five years, 10 years, 20 years, this is going to happen, so let's plan ahead'."

The coal industry employs 185,000 people across the EU, according to Euracoal, a trade body. Several countries, such as Germany and Spain, have already closed their pits and attempted to find new jobs for their miners. He said the use of technology to manage capacity and distribution of power, and the continuing falling cost of building cleaner power generation production, meant that the economics of clean energy would mean more polluting energy sources would cease to be competitive. "The question has always been: can the costs of wind or solar generation beat the costs of an old coal plant? When that happens the old technology is dead."

Mr Starace, president of Eurelectric, the pan-European industry trade body, said he believed he had managed to convince his members that it was better to prepare for a future where coal power would become obsolete than "fight losing battles". "There are 28 countries in the European Union, and the energy policy of Portugal and Poland, or Germany and France, are very different," he said.

"The European Commission was used to having Eurelectric as an opponent, they wanted to do things and it said no. All of a sudden the commission found it was getting proposals from the power industry going in the direction the Commission originally thought they would fight.

"This moment is now, and this is a major moment which we can be proud of, that we faced the truth – and this means there is a big opportunity in front of us.

"We have tried to say, let's look at what the world is throwing at us, whether we like it or not, and let's not fear this future. Demand for electricity is going to grow faster than growth in the economy as a whole, is that good or bad for us? We are in the electricity business."



Vocabulary – synonyms

Look at the headline and the whole article. Replace the words and expressions in *italics* with the correct alternative that has the closest meaning. (The item must also fit grammatically into the surrounding context, which does not change.)

- 1 Green energy *set to overpower* coal
a) will overpass b) will overgrow c) will overtake
- 2 The European energy sector has reached a *watershed*...
a) an important moment b) an unimportant moment c) an interesting moment
- 3 ...coal and other types of carbon intensive power production would be *driven out* of the market,
a) added to b) included in c) removed from
- 4 "What should be done with the power plants that are *obsolete*..."
a) no longer working b) no longer useful c) no longer functioning
- 5 Managing the *decline* of older, more polluting energy production will require the industry and governments to "face the truth".
a) fall in output b) same level of output c) increase in output
- 6 Several countries, such as Germany and Spain, have already closed their *pits*...
a) electricity plants b) coal mines c) power stations
- 7 He said the use of technology to manage *capacity*...
a) the actual output b) the output that could be produced c) the planned output
- 8 ...the economics of clean energy would mean more polluting energy sources would *cease to be* competitive.
a) stop be b) stop to be c) stop being
- 9 "The European Commission was used to having Eurelectric as an *opponent*..."
a) organisation that agreed with it b) an organisation that supported it
c) an organisation that disagreed with it
- 10 All of a sudden the commission found it was getting *proposals* from the power industry going in the direction the Commission originally thought they would fight.
a) invitations b) apologies c) recommendations
- 11 ...this means there is a big *opportunity* in front of us.
a) chance b) event c) proposal
- 12 "We have tried to say ... let's not fear this future. *Demand* for electricity is going to grow faster than global growth, is that good or bad for us?
a) Planned output b) Required output c) Past output

Grammar – advice and suggestions

A Imagine a meeting between a politician and an energy advisor. In answer to the politician's questions, the advisor makes:

- three suggestions using positive forms of *should*, *ought to* and *could* using the words in the first set of brackets.
- one suggestion using the negative form *shouldn't*, using the words in the second set of brackets.

1 What should we do with the old power plants? (shut down), (keep open)

We should shut them down.

We ought to shut them down.

We could shut them down.

We shouldn't keep them open.

2 What should we say about the future? (tell / truth), (tell lies)

3 How should we use the old coal mines? (turn / into museums), (close / down completely)

4 When should we introduce the new energy policies? (announce / as soon as possible), (wait / more 'convenient' time)

5 What should the European commission try to do? (work together / EU countries), (have different ideas / different countries)

B The meeting continues. The advisor now answers the politician's questions with different suggestions using appropriate forms of the words in brackets. In this section, give one answer for each question.

6 How should I persuade people to stop using coal fires? (Why not / tax reductions / people buy new forms / heating?)

7 When should I tell people about an increase in energy bills? (Why don't / wait until after / election?)

8 How should we influence people to install solar panels on their roofs? (What about offer / buy / electricity / them?)

9 How should we reduce opposition to the wind farms needed for wind power? (How about build / new wind farms / sea?)

10 In what ways should we get people to reduce their energy consumption? (Why not / persuade / switch off machines / not in use?)

Reading 2

Which one of these is *not* a correct 'takeaway' from the article?

Renewable energy is now cheaper than old forms of energy and governments:

- a) must keep mines open even if they are not profitable.
- b) have to prepare people for the idea of closing coal mines.
- c) can help coal miners to find new jobs.

Further discussion / Group work

- 1 What are the advantages and disadvantages of wind farms? Why do people sometimes dislike them?
- 2 Do you have or would you consider having solar panels on the roof of your house or building? How much does it cost to install them? What are the benefits of having them?

Do research on internet if necessary.

ANSWER KEY**Reading 1**

- a) Enel
- b) Francesco Starace
- c) the Financial Times
- d) Euracoal, Eurelectric
- e) Francesco Starace
- f) Germany, Spain, Portugal, Poland, France
- g) the European Union
- h) the European Commission

Vocabulary

1c 2a 3c 4b 5a 6b 7b 8c 9c 10c 11a 12b

Grammar

- 2 We should tell the truth.
We ought to tell the truth.
We could tell the truth.
We shouldn't tell lies.
- 3 We should turn them into museums.
We ought to turn them into museums.
We could turn them into museums.
We shouldn't close them down completely.
- 4 We should announce them as soon as possible.
We ought to announce them as soon as possible.
We could announce them as soon as possible.
We shouldn't wait for a more 'convenient' time.
- 5 It should work together with EU countries.
It ought to work with EU countries.
It should work together with EU countries.
It shouldn't have different ideas for different countries.
- 6 Why not give tax reductions to people who buy new forms of heating?
- 7 Why don't you wait until after the election?
- 8 What about offering to buy electricity from them?
- 9 How about building new wind farms at sea?
- 10 Why not persuade people to switch off machines when not in use?

Reading 2

a

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