



No technical barriers exist to cheap and clean electricity trading, MPs hear at Climate Parliament symposium

Economical and sustainable opportunities can exist for linking the European and North African renewable energy systems, experts have underlined at a Climate Parliament symposium in Paris on the 29th of April at the French Assemblée Nationale.

Leading members of the Climate Parliament's parliamentary networks in France, Tunisia and Italy had the opportunity to ask questions on the environmental, technical and financial aspects of trading clean electricity during the event, which was hosted by French MP Arnaud Leroy – Sustainable Development committee secretary at the French Assemblée Nationale.

Paolo Frankl, director of renewable energy at the International Energy Agency, told participants that the perception of electricity produced from renewables being more expensive than fossil fuels can and must be challenged. The barriers to start trading the electricity across the Mediterranean are also political rather than technical, he stressed.



Frankl was joined on the expert panel by Damien Mathon from *Syndicat des Energies Renouvelables* and Charles Ifrah from *Desertec Foundation*. Also on the panel were Philippe Adam from *Medgrid*, Philipp Godron from *Desertec Industrial Initiative*, and Kevin Sara from *NurEnergie*.

Dhamir Mannai MP, deputy spokesperson for the Tunisian Parliament, called on Europe not to prevent Tunisia from exporting electricity to the continent. In response to his question on the benefits of interconnection, he heard that this would benefit two fractured energy markets. This is because annual energy demand peaks at opposite times on the two sides of the Mediterranean – during summer for North Africa and winter for Europe - he heard, offering opportunities for trading.

Meanwhile, French MP Jérôme Lambert, of the French Assemblée Nationale's finance committee, argued that while being commendable, Europe's efforts in fighting climate change so far had not been sufficient and that clean electricity from the desert could now form part of his country's energy mix. He heard that deserts hold the potential to meet the entire world's electricity needs, while the cost of producing electricity there from Concentrated Solar Power is falling by 5% a year and that from wind already costing just €0.04c/kWh plus transmission.

Enrico Borghi, who leads Partito Democratico MPs in the Italian Parliament's environment's committee, signalled his country's intention to achieve a transition to renewables by 2050. Lamenting Italy's overcapacity in electricity production, he heard that energy could feasibly flow in both directions across the Mediterranean to ease this.

Pointing to Italy's high wholesale electricity prices compared to the rest of Europe, which average over €0.06c/kWh, Borghi heard that the better countries are interconnected, the more profitable clean electricity trading can be - with Italy potentially being at the heart of the system.

Several billions of euros have been spent on renewable energy subsidies in Italy, whereas an interconnector with Tunisia could cost just €300 million, Frankl then noted, calling for an EU framework for paying back their cost.



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Great civilisations have always entered their stride thanks to transport routes, agreed Mr Mannai, arguing that it can be possible to over-analyse scenarios whereas the best way to predict the future is to get on with inventing it.

Investors, French development agency and Ecology ministry staff, World Bank officials and industrial stakeholders were also among the participants at this month's event. All were subsequently invited to send in their own ideas for action which could help fight climate change in the Mediterranean.

