

Project Group 15 Ukraine war- a turning point for sustainability?

## Comment

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### **The war of aggression in the Ukraine- a turning point for Germany's energy policy?**

The war in the Ukraine shows how dependent Germany and many other countries are on Russian oil, gas, and energy. Many citizens had to change their style of living, to save those resources to ensure stability of the infrastructure. To prevent this kind of events in the future, many voices are getting loud for Germany to reform their energy policy to be less dependent on other countries while also switching to more sustainable energy production methods. But how can that be accomplished, and how realistic is it?

A survey by "YouGov" back from 2020 shows that ca. 86% of German citizens would prefer a change in the direction of green energy production with wind turbines and solar panels already being common and well established on the market. Switching to more sustainable methods of energy production at this point of view would also ensure that Germany doesn't finance Russia in their war against Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

To become more independent from Russian gas, Germany and Europe need to enable and invest into new technologies like hydrogen engineering in mobility and industry. But the German hydrogen energy engineering program H2Global is too underfinanced yet and the money from the CO2-Certificates should be used to finance these big projects<sup>2</sup>. If the money can be acquired, the change in energy production could be even bigger and faster than imagined, according to Allianz Trade<sup>3</sup>.

As you can see, there are many possibilities for relatively quick change in the energy sector from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that those changes will really happen in the foreseeable future. There is still too much bureaucracy involved with long approval procedures of wind turbines and other similar energy sources. The general civil will is also in parts not in line with the expansion of e.g. wind turbines, power lines etc.<sup>4</sup>. 57 % of German oil imports are still coming from Russia and if Germany wants to be independent from Putin and his regime, a shift to only renewable energy sources is not possible in the next few years. Instead, the German government increases their oil imports from other autocratic states like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which isn't sustainable either<sup>5</sup>. A major expansion of infrastructure and production of hydrogen and modernization, as well as an expansion of the power grids is also necessary for the energy transition. If change should happen, the society must change a lot more and there has to be a lot more backing from the people and also from

companies and stockholders<sup>6</sup>. Pessimistic voices could say the new energy crisis won't bring the change that is really needed but only a change in import sources.

While the opportunities for change are given, there are still many unanswered questions. The stamina of the citizens and the pressure that will be put on the government to import more gas to get through the winter are deciding factors as well as the willingness of the government to change existing laws, for example simplifying the process of planning and building new wind turbines, and firms willing to invest in this kind of projects. Most obstacles can be overcome, but for that, politics and citizens must work hand in hand.

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