



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

It was a year ago that the German Federal Government responded to the events at Fukushima in Japan by taking decisions intended to accelerate the energy transition. The envisaged objectives include the exit from nuclear power by 2022 and the virtually complete changeover to renewable energies by 2050. Today, people are no longer discussing the “vision” of the energy transition but its practical implementation. The desire to move away from nuclear power, which used to extend across all parties, is getting lost in political squabbling. Strident opponents of nuclear power and environmentalists are actually often the first to oppose the creation of alternative supply infrastructures. The discussion about grid expansion and options for storing electricity is dominated by the concern that many of the country’s citizens have about rising electricity prices and by their unease in view of the challenges posed by the exit from nuclear power.

And the energy transition indeed has its price. One cannot create clean energy at the same time as grid security and low electricity prices at the press of a button. To allow the energy transition to succeed, efforts should be made not only to expand renewables, but also to strive for a balance between security of supply, competitiveness and climate protection. However, all parties must realise that these objectives cannot be reconciled immediately. Those who wish to have green energy coming out of the socket instead of electricity from nuclear power must accept that it will be necessary for electricity lines, solar parks and wind turbines to be built on a large scale throughout the country – if necessary overriding the reservations of local action groups. Added to this is the fact that an immediate exit from nuclear power is not possible while simultaneously rejecting conventional transitional solutions involving

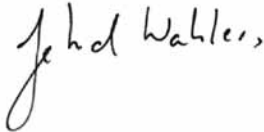
fossil fuels. German industry will not be able to defend its position in world markets without coal, gas and oil for the foreseeable future.

Especially supposedly environmentally-friendly alternatives, such as biofuel, are often anything but ideal solutions. In newly industrialised and developing countries, the cultivation of the plants from which the biofuels are produced all too often involves the creation of monocultures and the clearing of primeval forest. "The mandatory blending quotas, which were introduced by the red-green government, have resulted in food shortages", warned Federal Minister Dirk Niebel in mid-August. In the meantime, the debate on E10 fuel has flared up. But this example also demonstrates that condemning fossil fuels prematurely is a mistake – we shall still need them for many decades to come.

If Germany, as one of the leading industrialised nations, succeeds in converting to renewables for its energy supplies by 2050 without jeopardising its competitiveness, the functioning of its industry and the prosperity of its citizens, the energy transition might be an attractive model for other countries to follow. Over the next few years, the federal government of Germany, the states and the local authorities must adjust to the energy transition in all policy areas. The main focus should be on the speedy expansion of the grids and storage capacities to facilitate effective usage of the extremely volatile amounts of electricity produced from renewable energies and guarantee the base load in the grid. But what we also have to succeed in at the same time is further expediting the process of making renewable energies competitive with fossil fuels in view of increasing electricity prices and bringing down subsidies. During the transitional period the use of fossil fuels such as coal and gas should be encouraged, but it should take place in power stations that are as efficient as possible.

The energy transition also demands an intensive political dialogue within the European Union, particularly as Germany might have to rely on electricity supplies from its neighbours in the winter. There are very different energy policy trajectories apparent here – looking not just at the

German energy transition – and this might make a common European energy policy difficult or even impossible. These coordination efforts must take place now, because the energy transition is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. Today, we are paving the way so that future generations will inherit an environment worth living in.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerhard Wahlers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'G'.

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Deputy Secretary General

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