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OPINION PIECE

EURACTIV

GAS MAKES THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL WORK

With the European Green Deal, the European Union has a vision for climate protection and an economy of the future. Dawn Summers, President of GasNaturally and COO of Wintershall Dea, sets out how natural gas can contribute – just before the start of the COP26. GasNaturally is a partnership of eight associations that together represent the whole European gas value chain.

Almost two years ago, the President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen presented the European Green Deal. It was, she said, Europe's 'Man-on-the-moon moment.' Combining a long-term vision with a detailed implementation plan she established a bold ambition for Europe: to better protect the climate without weakening our economy. To move forward with new technologies without leaving anyone behind. And to invest a great deal of money, wisely.

In a few days, the international community will meet at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow to update climate policy, with an eye on the 1.5-degree target. The gas industry supports decisive action. We also believe that updated policy must focus on all effective, proven measures. That includes the use of natural gas, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and the role of hydrogen. Our task is too important, too urgent, to rule out low-carbon solu-

tions that work! And our economy and prosperity are too important to renounce economic efficiency or weaken our commitment to security of supply. The gas industry has been the hidden-backbone for people's lives for decades: giving them energy in the truest sense of the word. We at Wintershall Dea will continue to do so in the future. But in a different way and above all: with the intention to achieve net zero in operations by 2030.

Gas can help achieve climate goals

The gas industry has the will and the technology to protect our climate and advance decarbonization. We fully support net zero by 2050. We are supplying the market with natural gases and believe that gas will play a critical role in meeting COP26 objectives and delivering decarbonization. Therefore, we are transforming to ensure that our products contribute and enable climate neutrality – supplying the market with natural, low-carbon and re-

Photo above:

Dawn Summers, Chief Operation Officer and board member at Wintershall Dea. The manager joined the company in June 2020.

newable gases. The gas industry is developing innovative technologies. From hydrogen and CCS, to biogas, bioLPG (biogenic Liquefied Petroleum Gas) and fuel cells, we are providing solutions for the low-carbon energy systems of the future. Gas in all its forms is not only flexible, but is also a climate-friendly fuel.

As the gas industry, we agree to von der Leyen's vision: The European Green Deal should be an effective strategy for growth. That's why we will be presenting a call to action at the COP. It's our contribution to the European Green Deal.

We urge the Commission to create an inclusive, fit-for-purpose, policy framework that will foster all forms of clean hydrogen and CCS. That in turn would safeguard the competitiveness of Europe's industrial sector and secure high-quality jobs in Europe. Moreover, we need a CCS strategy that supports public acceptance of the technology and drives forward its use.

The transitional role of natural gas must be safeguarded. There is no better complement to rising renewables, and many member states in Europe will need gas for the coming decades as they shift away from coal. We must combine economic strength and environmental protection – otherwise we'll lose both.

Coal to gas-switching has already brought tremendous progress

Natural gas is an and should remain the partner for renewables. Because energy consumption continues to rise and intermittent renewables are not always a reliable source, recent reductions in coal-fired electricity generation, especially in 2020, were enabled by a constant supply of power from natural gas. The fuel was able to compensate for around 50 percent of the reduction in coal-fired electricity production in Europe. Therefore, gas should be seen as the second pillar of the energy transition along-

side electrification. Gas provides flexible and scalable energy to replace more polluting energy sources. If you want renewables, you can't leave gas out of the equation.

Let's implement the future together

Carbon capture and storage, CCS, can be a key technology for addressing climate change, and it is already available in some European countries. CCS involves capturing CO₂, for example from power plants or industrial facilities, and storing it long-term in underground geological structures, such as depleted offshore oil and gas reservoirs. Countries on the North Sea are doing it already, such as Denmark. In the Project Greensand Wintershall Dea is a core member of the consortium, alongside INEOS Oil and Gas Denmark and 30 other companies and organisations. The consortium believes the project may in future be able to safely store 8 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, equivalent to a quarter of all Danish emissions. CCS receives significant political support in Denmark, with the Danish parliament identifying the technology as a crucial means to meet the country's emission targets.

CCS enables proven and affordable decarbonisation of sectors with CO₂ emissions that are difficult or impossible to avoid. One example is the steel industry. In Germany, 85,000 people are directly employed in the steel industry, with another four million indirectly employed in wider industry. Using CCS to enable low carbon steel manufacturing will help secure the industry's competitiveness in the coming decades. That's aligned with another important goal of the European Green Deal, which is not only a climate programme but also a Pan-European idea to take our economies to the next level. Von der Leyen said herself: "The European Green Deal is our new growth strategy – it is a strategy for growth that gives more back than it takes away... We want to be the frontrunners in climate friendly industries, in clean technologies, in green financing."