



in the future energy mix and to compensate for current market-failures.

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IN THE SHORT TERM, the biggest challenge facing the wind industry at the moment is the wave of policy uncertainty, which has swept over Europe and the United States over the past couple of years. While there are signs that things are settling down in Europe with the establishment of the new German coalition government, there are some key decisions to be made this year and next that will determine the growth prospects for wind in Europe both onshore and offshore in the near to medium term.

In the United States, the policy rollercoaster that saw record installations in 2012 (as a result of the imminent expiration of the production tax credit), and the dramatic drop in 2013 installations (because of the late reauthorization of the PTC), could

be ameliorated, ironically by the new found spirit of cooperation in advance of the 2014 mid-term elections following the disastrous budget fiasco late last year.

In the longer term, however, the greatest challenge facing the industry is how to focus the minds of policy makers, utilities and systems operators and the wind power industry on the transformation of the electricity system: moving away from a system reliant on a few large sources of supply for an inflexible demand; and into one with a wide variety of sources (some variable, some not) that supply an increasingly sophisticated and managed demand, and where electricity plays a larger role in the overall energy picture, i.e., contributing significantly to transport as well as heating/cooling. While there are many forward thinking policymakers and system operators in some countries who are pushing the envelope in this area, there are many more who are resistant to change.

As we move inexorably towards an electricity (and energy) system dominated by renewables, the question becomes less one of technology *per se*, but one of system management and rewarding ‘good’ behavior on the part of consumers large and small. ●

Steve Sawyer joined the Global Wind Energy Council as its first secretary general in April 2007. The Global Wind Energy Council represents the major wind energy associations (China, India, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Canada, USA, Europe, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Italy, Korea, South Africa and UK) as well as the major companies involved in the global wind industry.



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