

11 May 2009

World wind power capacity increased 29 percent last year

Global wind capacity increased an estimated 27,000 megawatts with cumulative installations up almost 29 percent in 2008, ending the year at 120,000 megawatts, according to a new report from Worldwatch Institute.

The new wind power update provides data since 1980 on global and national cumulative capacity in the top wind-producing countries and sheds light on key financial trends in the sector.

It reveals, for instance, that for the first time last year, wind power represented Europe's leading source of new electric capacity with 8,900 megawatts (MW) added, well ahead of natural gas at 6,900 MW and coal at 760 MW.

By the end of 2008, wind power accounted for 8 percent of EU power capacity, enough to generate 4.2 percent of the region's electricity in a normal wind year.

Asia accounted for almost one-third of global wind capacity, with China quickly surpassing its 2010 wind target of 10,000 MW and ending 2008 with 12,200 MW in place.

The United States led in new installations, surpassing Germany to rank first in wind energy cumulative capacity and electricity generation.

Nearly 400,000 people are employed by the wind industry worldwide, though this number could slide in the near term due to project financing difficulties, particularly in the United States.

However, the economic crisis has resulted in cheaper material and construction costs that are expected to lower turbine prices, a potential boon for long-term installation projections, the report says.

Source: Energy & Enviro Finland, Weekly News, week 20