

Report from Kiev

Hans Josef Fell

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In Ukraine, the dominant topic is the Russian military invasion in the East. Even though the fear is growing, Kiev is peaceful and there was only a small demonstration taking place on Maidan Square on the evening of the Russian aggression. In general, a friendly summer and holiday atmosphere prevailed on Maidan Square and the adjacent streets. However, the economic depression and its consequences were obvious: there was a yawning void in my four-star hotel, directly located at Maidan Square.

The reason for my trip to Kiev at the end of August was an invitation from enterprises operating in the Ukrainian renewable energy sector. Unfortunately I repeatedly had to look into depressed faces during my stay since the current war led to a quasi stop of investments. Besides the shortage of investments, renewable energy systems have also been destroyed by missiles. At this point however, one can be happy that the destroyed facility was a PV-facility and not a nuclear power plant. Only in 2011, Ernst & Young assessed the Ukrainian market of renewable energies and qualified it as an attractive growth market in the context of their “Renewable Energy Country Attractiveness Indices”. Ukraine possesses a large potential in the fields of bioenergy, wind power, geothermal power, water power and solar power. In addition, one of the largest photovoltaic systems in Central and Eastern Europe is located in Ukraine. Yet, the war stopped this development and a large part of the recently built renewable energy systems is located on the Crimean peninsula, which made them fall into Russian hands.

In Kiev I met the team of Julia Berezovski, being composed of ten employees, among them many women, that strive for the energy transition in Ukraine. It was a long time ago that I met such highly motivated people and that I took part in discussions of such intensity about the necessity of and justifications for renewable energies, related to the current situation of war in Ukraine. What I found particularly impressive were the outstanding skills of the young people working in the team. For instance, Karina Bichko translated simultaneously from Ukrainian into English with the greatest ease. The clear and severe comments on the current political situation that I received underlined once more how important it was for the Ukrainian people to fight for their freedom on Maidan Square. Moreover, Julia Berezovski, the president of the IB Centre, is organising the international energy security conference EUROSEF taking place on September 26th, 2014 in Brussels.

Besides talks with Julia Berezovski and the Ukrainian Association for renewable energies, I had the opportunity to meet the newly appointed head of the national energy agency, Mr Savchuk, the influential politician Alexander Matvivchuk and secretary of the parliamentary committee for investments and the MP Alexander Dombrovskyi, who is the leader of the parliamentary group for energy independence in the Ukrainian parliament and a close confidant of President Poroschenko. I was received in the pompous building of the largest agro company in Eurasia, where Dombrovskyi is in possession of 10% of the company's shares. He is a strong advocate of renewable energies and carefully listened to my long statement because he is planning on using the upcoming amendment to the renewable energy law for the expansion of renewable energies. All three politicians were particularly interested in the energy transition in Germany and German technologies. Even though they have been friendly towards renewable energies for quite some time already, they became the engine for their future development in Ukraine. I have to admit that I was surprised being confronted with the new degree of seriousness attributed to the development of renewable energies.

Indeed, I have the impression that the perception that renewable energies are essential for the survival of Ukraine is becoming dominant.