

Tackling climate change – the next steps for emissions trading

17 April 2007, The Centre

A high-level seminar on climate change and tackling CO₂ emissions by means of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) was organised on 17 April by The Centre and the Environment Agency, sponsored by Vattenfall and WWF. Martin Porter from The Centre chaired an interesting and by no means uncomplicated discussion with the following speakers: Anders Wijkman (MEP), Damien Meadows (European Commission), Tricia Henton (Environment Agency for England and Wales), Sylvian Ionescu (National Environment Guard, Romania), Lennart Billfalk (Vattenfall) and Stephan Singer (WWF).



Among the audience were representatives from companies, environmental organisations and European institutions.

The main topic of the seminar concerned policy options for the future of the EU ETS, i.e. various ways to develop and extend this EU policy, which is currently being reviewed by the European Commission. In the discussion that followed, experiences from the scheme's first year in place and the importance of setting the scope and the ambitions of its future were highlighted.

EU ETS was initially designed to meet the European Union's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target under the Kyoto Protocol. One allowance traded within the scheme represents one tonne of CO₂ emissions. A common opinion expressed during the seminar was the importance and achievement of the scheme as an instrument to reach the emissions reduction goals (global as well as on EU level).

The scheme has a role to play within the urgent action needed to combat climate change, reduce emissions and avoid a global temperature increase. The need for countries outside Europe to engage in the same type of measures to combat climate change was discussed. A potential competitiveness disadvantage for Europe that could occur if other countries avoid further emissions reductions 'post-Kyoto' was also highlighted. This disadvantage could even lead to EU trade measures in order to get non-active countries on the way towards combating climate change and sharing the common burden of pollution and emissions reductions.

The EU ETS could gainfully expand its borders and become a basis or a blueprint for a global scheme. On the other hand, if it fails to become a robust system, the EU ETS might be by-passed by international discussion and movement, and thereby lose importance.

In addition to the EU ETS, some speakers stressed the importance of other measures in order to combat climate change in and beyond Europe, including energy efficiency and further research and development of new techniques within energy production, industry and the transport sector. Two rounds of questions opened for further debate and discussion, e.g. the possible increase in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of developing countries like India and China intensely advancing their industrial production.

The fact that the speakers covered a very broad range of interests (politicians, experts and industrialists) made the seminar well worth visiting, even for an untrained ear on EU ETS issues.



Samuel Ulfgard

Host



Environment Agency



The Centre

Links

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/emission.htm>

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

<http://www.vattenfall.com>

<http://www.wwf.org>

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