

International Open University for Renewable Energies (OPURE)

One of the major results of the international conference for renewable energies in Bonn is the initiative for an International Open University for Renewable Energies (OPURE). The memorandum of the World Council for Renewable Energy (WCRE) of their conference, 29th to 31st May, Bonn, renewed the proposal, originally stemming from EUROSOLAR, at the World Renewable Energy Forum, held in Bonn in the days before the renewables2004, and put it in the focus of attention.

During the renewables2004, the Solar Energy Research Association (ForschungsVerbund Sonnenenergie, FVS) organised the Science Forum, funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF), as an official side event. In the final panel discussion Hermann Schunck, representative of the BMBF, indicated, when approached by the chairperson of EUROSOLAR Germany Hans-Josef Fell, the willingness of Federal Minister Edelgard Bulmahn to financially support the start up of the university for renewable energies.

This was an important signal, initiating many talks and activities during the Bonn conference in order to start the foundation process. The initiative mainly came from FVS's vice spokesman Jürgen Schmid, director of the Institute for Solar Energy Research (Institut für Solare Energieforschung, ISET) in Kassel, MoP Hans-Josef Fell, chairperson of EUROSOLAR Germany, and Osman Benchikh, UNESCO, Paris.

Fortunately, the Call for Actions of the renewables2004 responded immediately and accepted to include OPURE in the International Action Plan, one major outcome of the international conference.

The name OPURE stands for Open University for Renewable Energy. This name indicates that

the university will be organised initially as an internet platform. The long term goal, though, is to transform the internet university into an ordinary university. Most important mission of the university will be generally speaking: the exchange of know-how, education and training, and networking of renewable energy research.

All national as well as international institutions can be participating actors, particularly those which are universities, research centres, and institutions specialised in renewable energy research.

For the time being, the foremost task of OPURE will be to organise the exchange of information, communication and cooperation in science and research for renewable energies. At the centre of activities will be training programmes on all levels of education, translated in as many languages as possible, programmes for research and development, the exchange of results of most recent research as much as the development of national strategies and policy tools for renewable energies.

Thus, the Bonn conference signalled other Governments, the private sector, and NGOs to contribute to the financing of OPURE.

Under the roof of UNESCO's active support to coordinate individual activities soon and global acceptance will be achieved.

Now, it is necessary to elaborate a realistic concept for which the BMBF will provide the funds as promised. A such concept will be worked out by and in the responsibility of Prof Schmid and the FVS in the next weeks. EUROSOLAR will continue to actively support that process.

Nationally as internationally the idea has received great attention. Many institutions,



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universities, or other educational organisations have already stated that they were interested to participate in OPURE, approaches have been coming even from China and Brazil.

It is remarkable that the German parliamentary committee for education and research has made the decision to support OPURE in their first session immediately after the renewables2004 and that all parties agreed on this question unanimously. And last but not least, this decision proves that the proposals of EUROSOLAR and of the FVS receive wide support from all sections of society, in politics and science.