

THE ZERO CONFERENCE 2016

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For several years I was the voice of CCS in the European Parliament. It was early in 2008 that my then assistant told me that CCS was really important and I should take it up as a cause.

I championed CCS. I steered through the EU's regulatory legislation. I introduced a financing support mechanism that became known as the NER300 and was expected to be the key means of supporting CCS development. I persuaded the Parliament to give its backing support for a range of new measures to stimulate application of the technology.

And all of this was intended to try and get the European Union to live up to the commitment made by its Prime Ministers in 2007 to have up to 12 CCS demonstration projects in operation by 2015.

But in these respects I stand before you today as a failure. Not one CCS demonstration projects has yet been built, and construction of not a single one has even yet been authorised.

At least I am not alone in my failure. With the sole exception of the Dutch, EU governments have collectively abandoned their commitment.

It's strange. The reason why government's commit themselves to expensive policies to curb CO2 emissions is because the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading scientific body on the subject, says that if we don't act the consequences could be catastrophic.

The IPCC's words are cited by politicians like priests cite Holy Writ.

Yet the IPCC says other things as well. It says that if we don't adopt CCS technology on a massive scale the costs of curbing global warming will increase by 138% and may be impossible to achieve.

It seems that some words are sacred while others are ignored.

Governments are choosing not to take note of these words even though the IPCC says that the ambitions cannot be met unless they pay heed and act upon them.

But at least they are not ignored here.

For those of us who have been crossing the CCS desert, to come to Norway is like arriving at an oasis with palm trees for shade and cool fountains of refreshing water.

In Brussels you will still hear voices saying that CO2 storage is 'unproven'. You will still hear people saying that nothing can be done until new technologies are 'tested and developed'. You will still hear NGOs condemning CCS as the work of the Devil, a means of sustaining the evil of fossil fuels.

And so all of us who recognise that CCS has a role to play in decarbonising electricity supply, CO2 emitting industries, and even domestic heating systems, all of us owe Norway our thanks.

Thank you for showing what is possible.

But I have a question for you.

Given all this, why has Norway so little influence?

The answer starts with the fact that so few people know what Norway is doing.

Yes, you co-chair a European Commission working group that ordinary people have never heard of. Yes you send representatives to meetings of the Zero Emissions Project, and it's done some very useful work, but again most people and politicians have never heard of it.

And then there is the North Sea Basin Taskforce, and no-one has heard of that either!

To those who say that this is not fair, and that Norway is speaking, I can only respond by saying "well I can't hear you!"

By comparison to what could be done Norway is hiding its light in the darkness.

In Brussels yesterday morning I asked the senior Commission official responsible for European CCS policy where it stood now. She told me: "With the exception of the ROAD project in Rotterdam, CCS development within the EU is "dormant".

"Dormant". That means "nothing happening".

You want to win business for Norway? You first need to ensure that there is business to be won. And that means making CCS relevant.

European governments are not convinced they have a need for CCS. The IPCC may say that it is vital, so does the International Energy Agency, but most national capitals are indifferent or downright hostile.

The message is not getting through.

This is because there is almost no-one out there advocating CCS. I can't name a single company with a base in Brussels that is preaching the virtues of CCS on a daily basis, and that includes Shell and Statoil both of which have CCS experience.

With the honourable exception of Bellona, which is very much under resourced, I can't think of a single environmental NGO in Brussels that is advocating CCS. In fact many are strongly opposed to it.

Wind Europe, the European wind energy advocates, has 55 people in Brussels working to promote their technology. CCS has scarcely a one, and no campaign group exists solely to take the CCS agenda forwards.

We are not going to get CCS moving unless we put our shoulders to the wheel and give it a strong push.

Here in Norway you have the experience in the energy sector to persuade the doubters that CCS is relevant. You are taking the lead also in the industrial sector, which everyone who knows anything recognises will only be decarbonised with the use of CCS.

Norway can position itself as the leader, the source of knowledge, the place with expertise. But at this moment the promotion policy is passive not active.

CCS should become a huge business in Europe, with hundreds of installations in operation or under construction over the next few decades, but the ambition will be realised only if Norway itself takes the initiative to sell the message.

The reason we haven't got CCS is because we haven't campaigned for it. We haven't done what is necessary to get in place the financial and regulatory instruments needed to drive it forward. We haven't forced EU governments to think about how to achieve the 2050 objectives.

That's what we need to do but no-one is doing it.

Norwegian companies, Norwegian NGOs, state bodies like Gassnova, need to come together to set up a properly resourced campaigning body to raise CCS awareness and lobby for policy change.

Centred in Brussels it should have a presence too in Europe's national capitals.

It needs to get governments to look to 2050, and to the CO2 reduction goals that cannot be achieved without CCS.

It needs to ensure that no meeting on climate policy passes without consideration of CCS.

It needs to give adoption of the technology a sense of inevitability.

And it should be doing everything possible to show that all paths lead to Norway, because policy askers and policy influencers across Europe need to see and hear for themselves what is the experience to date and what is the potential for the future.

I think there are some immediate political, commercial and promotional initiatives you should be taking.

You should start marketing Norway's CO2 storage potential. Very, very publicly, to attract maximum attention, you should be telling the German government and others that their industrial CO2 can be stored now beneath the North Sea.

You should be very, very publicly promoting a North Sea partnership on CCS with the British, Dutch and Belgian governments. Getting policy makers properly engaged.

I say "very, very publicly" because the objective has to be get debate going and get CCS into the political sphere. No politician at present pays a price for not demonstrating support for CCS, and that is a position that must be changed.

All of this just emphasises the need for an approach that today is missing.

The need for a campaign group to promote CCS with a strong communications programme and specific policy lobbying objectives.

And one that is at sufficient arms-length from its funders to be able to rock the boat, create some noise, pick a fight if necessary to get CCS talked about and into the mainstream of climate change debate, yet without causing embarrassment to its backers.

After the American election I don't need to remind anyone that upsetting people and creating noise can prove a pathway to success.

My single message today is that after this event someone in this room, someone at this conference, needs to call a meeting, bring together the key players, and decide what must be done to turn a European CCS strategy from one that is dormant into one that is active.

I've been asked to speak at several CCS conferences in Norway over the years. Norwegians don't need to hear from me again. It's Europe that needs to hear from Norwegians.

On CCS, Norway deserves to be a winner. But deserving isn't the same as winning.

Fortune favours the brave. Winning goes to the people who make things happen.

I wish you success.