



12

Climate Crisis –

Driving the Energy Transition

Forward!

While science is urgently pointing out the climate emergency, and the climate catastrophe is becoming more and more visible to everyone worldwide, the energy transition is unfortunately only making very slow progress. Especially at the beginning of a new legislative period, it is therefore particularly important that organisations such as the Mouvement Ecologique campaign for

a strong policy that takes climate protection seriously and drives the energy transition forward.

In a sense, 2024 was still a year in which the government had to familiarise itself with its duties. However, important issues were discussed – in 2025, more concrete steps towards the energy transition must be taken.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE LUXEMBOURG GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON NUCLEAR POWER

At the beginning of the year, the position of Minister of State Luc Frieden regarding nuclear power sparked heated discussions. According to the Mouvement Ecologique, Luc Frieden broke a taboo by being the first minister of state to soften Luxembourg's firm position against nuclear power, which has been a social consensus since Remerschen and Cattenom. This is because he no longer firmly advocated the phasing out of nuclear energy at the EU level. The tenor of the Minister of State is that he does not want to dictate policy to other governments. Furthermore, Luxembourg is open to investing EU research funds in the new generation of nuclear power plants.

The fact that Environment Minister Serge Wilmes formally confirmed the government's position against nuclear power at the Mouvement Ecologique congress on the same day, at a time when he was not aware of Luc Frieden's statements, was explosive. Even after further inquiries, he clearly stated that this government would not change course. The nuclear power issue is therefore not only an explosive issue in terms of energy policy, but also the way in which this government operates was up for discussion.

The dossier and the statement of the Luxembourg government accompanied the Mouvement Ecologique throughout the year, also in cooperation with the 'Aktionsbündnis géint Atomkraft', which the Mouvement Ecologique coordinates together with Greenpeace. Among other things, the alliance held a meeting with Minister Lex Delles on the subject.

Nuclear power has no chance as a future technology, it is the most expensive technology of all, the costs for a new nuclear power plant can amount to over 20 billion (!) (money that is then not available for the expansion of renewable energies), the final storage problem is not solved, and much more. The French electricity company EDF has debts of over 70 billion.

You give billions and get no return on investment at all until the plants have generated the first electricity, which takes more than ten to fifteen years. And then the electricity generation costs are about five to ten times higher than those of offshore wind.

Nuclear power plants do not solve the CO2 problem either: in the best case, they would be completed in 15 years (minimum construction time), i.e. 2035-2038. But it is precisely in the next 15 years that CO2 needs to be reduced, and by then renewable energies must have been expanded for a long time.

Investing more money in research into nuclear power is also a waste of money: work on this 'new generation of reactors' has been going on since the 1950s without any noticeable success! Furthermore, the alternatives in the form of renewable energies and increased efficiency are well known and have proven themselves.

It was therefore obvious that the Mouvement Ecologique called for a French anti-Cattenom demonstration, which was organised by the Coordination Antinucléaire Nord-Est on 27 April 2024 - one day after the Chernobyl disaster memorial day - in front of the Cattenom nuclear power plant. The protest was against the French state's nuclear policy. Due to pressure from the nuclear industry, the French state wants to build new European pressurised water reactors (EPR) throughout the country and extend the life of existing plants, most of which are over 40 years old.

WHY IS THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, AND BIODIVERSITY IGNORING AN IMPORTANT BODY LIKE THE "PLATEFORME CLIMAT"?

... is the title of another statement from Mouvement Ecologique. To provide a better understanding: this 'climate platform' was introduced with the climate protection law and brings together stakeholders from NGOs, employers and employees, municipalities and other stakeholders, and is intended to support the government in climate protection policy. However, the fact is that this platform was only convened for the first time at the end of 2024, more than a year after the new government came into office. This is despite the fact that key climate-related decisions have already been taken by the government during the year! In 2024, the Mouvement Ecologique intervened on several occasions to urge the government and the Ministry of the Environment to finally take this body seriously.

The problem was brought to public attention, for example, when the national climate and energy plan was revised and when the provisional CO2 balance for the various sectors was published in July 2024. All this work was carried out without consulting this body, which is so useful...

APPROACH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL CLIMATE AND ENERGY PLAN

The law requires that Luxembourg's National Climate and Energy Plan (PNEC) undergo a so-called strategic environmental assessment. This involves examining the plan's impact on air, water, soil, biodiversity and landscape, among other things, and outlining alternatives if necessary.

In view of the importance of this document, the Mouvement Ecologique formulated some fundamental criticisms and specific proposals for amendments to the draft. For example, it was seen as problematic that it was difficult to understand how the CO2 savings of the individual measures were assessed and why the important ecosystem services were not sufficiently taken into account.

SAFETY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOLAR SYSTEMS, INSULATION, AND GREENING – EXCHANGE WITH CGDIS

Safety standards, which are mainly contained in municipal regulations, all too often appear to hamper the expansion of renewable energies, better insulation of buildings and much more in practice. The reason for this, according to a frequent argument, is the safety standards of the CGDIS (Corps grand-ducal d'incendie et de secours).



Intervention sapeurs-pompiers du Luxembourg - Logo du CGDIS, le corps grand-ducal d'incendie & secours. © Radio France

For example, it is said that these are the reason for the (too) large distances between the solar cells and the neighbouring house, certain insulation materials are not allowed, etc. Or, solar cells integrated into the roof would not be recognisable as such at night and would therefore pose a safety problem in the event of a fire – accordingly, their installation would be problematic.

The Mouvement Ecologique, together with the Oekozenter Pafendall, sought a direct exchange with the CGDIS, which was very informative. The CGDIS sees itself primarily as having the role of explaining the best possible safety precautions in the event of a fire.

According to the Mouvement Ecologique, it is the role of the state to find a balance between particularly demanding safety aspects and other collective interests (including the development of renewable energies). In addition, it would be important to examine the extent to which there are practical solutions for certain problems (e.g. creating a database of buildings with integrated solar cells in the roof).

All in all, it was a constructive exchange. Work is currently underway on drawing up recommendations for municipal regulations. It will be interesting to see the outcome. In any case, the Mouvement Ecologique will continue to follow the matter closely.

APPROACH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NETWORK DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF CREOS

In mid-April, the grid operator Creos published a draft network development plan for Luxembourg, as required by EU law. This plan is intended to show how the grid infrastructure in Luxembourg, in particular, is to develop in view of the numerous developments expected in Luxembourg (increase in electricity consumption, expansion of renewable energies, population and economic growth, etc.). As required by law, this draft had to go through a public procedure.

The Mouvement Ecologique submitted an objection in this context and formulated a technically well-founded statement in which fundamental problems were addressed.

The following five topics were addressed:

1. A more detailed approach to storage capacity and flexibility
2. Pricing and cost calculations as central elements of a strategy
3. Placing grid development in a national planning context and taking regional production into account
4. Making high-voltage grid planning democratic and transparent
5. Communication is of fundamental importance
6. Specific comment: gas-insulated switchgear despite climate impact.

APPROACH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PUBLIC PROCEDURE FOR THE PLANNED CREOS PIPELINE

In 2024, the Mouvement Ecologique and its Regionale Uelzechtdall submitted an objection as part of the public procedure for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the planned modernisation of a high-voltage power line on the Aachen - Bofferdange and Bofferdange - Bertrange route. This was preceded by a lengthy exchange with members of the Uelzechtdall regional association. According to official statements, the construction of this new line is essential to ensure Luxembourg's energy supply.

In its statement, the Mouvement Ecologique recognises the need to plan this high-voltage line, but only on condition that it is done in an environmentally friendly manner and with respect for health protection. Specifically, the Mouvement Ecologique has formulated a number of objections to the dossier, which can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of visualisation of the route options
- Unsatisfactory facts regarding the emission values of the electrical and magnetic fields and noise emission values
- Inadequate presentation (and investigation?) of possible underground routes
- Lack of explanation of specific local measures to avoid and reduce pollution



- No consideration of the cumulative impact of projects on the environment.

An objective weighting of the various claims would not be possible due to the deficiencies in the available dossier (protection of residents in the case of courses near settlements, protection of open, open landscape areas and valuable nature reserves, protection of forests...). There is also a lack of a transparent comparison of variants for the various sections based on such criteria, in line with a SWOT analysis (strengths – weaknesses – opportunities – threats).

Due to the serious formal and substantive deficiencies of the dossier, which are in contradiction to the EU directive on the environmental impact assessment, the Mouvement Ecologique demanded that a new public procedure with a revised dossier must be carried out.

A SUCCESS OF YEARS OF COMMITMENT: FINALLY EXITING THE "ENERGY CHARTER" TREATY

In 2024, non-governmental organisations celebrated when MEPs endorsed the EU's withdrawal from a controversial energy treaty (Energy Charter Treaty – ECT). The Energy Charter Treaty is an international investment treaty between the European Union and 53 non-EU countries. Among other things, the treaty allows corporations to sue individual countries if they have enacted regulations that they believe unduly restrict the rights of corporations.

The organisations – including the Mouvement Ecologique – have been campaigning for this exit for years, even decades. After the previous Luxembourg government had already decided that Luxembourg would leave on 26 June 2023, an agreement for the exit from the EU has now been reached after months of dispute. All Luxembourg MEPs voted in favour of the EU withdrawal. The Energy Charter Treaty was originally established to protect energy investments in post-Soviet countries, but it has increasingly come under fire as the treaty has allowed a whole range of investments in fossil fuels.

The conclusion: Persistent engagement over years pays off.

CALL: YOUR EXPERIENCE IS NEEDED!

The Mouvement Ecologique asked for the experiences and knowledge of its members directly on two occasions in 2024. This was when the Mouvement Ecologique, as part of the Energietisch, advocated for the removal of obstacles to the expansion of renewable energies. Another time, the aim was to benefit from experiences gained locally in order to address issues that needed to be clarified in order to promote the expansion of heating networks in Luxembourg. In both cases, the input was very enriching and helped the Mouvement Ecologique to contribute constructively to the debates.

HEAT PLANNING IN THE MUNICIPALITY – MOVING FORWARD!

The heating transition is certainly one of the most difficult tasks to be solved in the energy transition. Heating networks have a key role to play here. Numerous municipalities are aware of this fact and want to push ahead with their construction as quickly as possible. The only problem is that under the current conditions, this proves to be quite difficult. There are still too many unresolved issues, such as who would be the appropriate operator, how maintenance costs can be regulated, whether or not a connection obligation makes sense, and much more. On the one hand, there are numerous legal issues, but on the other hand, there are also aspects for which the state must develop guidelines, rather than each municipality having to do this work individually.

The Mouvement Ecologique has therefore compiled a list of key issues that it believes the ministry should address and forwarded them to the Minister for Economic Affairs, Lex Delles. The Mouvement Ecologique hopes that these suggestions will be incorporated into the future law on heating networks.

CLIMATE PROTECTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR – RENOVATING EXISTING BUILDINGS INSTEAD OF NEW BUILDS

Prof. Amandus Samsøe Sattler, architect and DGNB President, called for a paradigm shift at the Energy Week conference, which took place as part of the Energy Weeks of the Oekozenter Pafendall and the Mouvement Ecologique on 3 October 2024. He explained his principles in a memorable way: we will not save ourselves from the climate crisis by building new passive houses, but only by re-appreciating the existing building stock, focusing on reuse and building with materials that reduce CO2. This analysis led to lively discussions with an informed audience of architects, municipal officials, planners and committed citizens.

IN DIALOGUE – THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORK

It goes without saying that a dialogue was sought with the responsible Minister for the Economy and Energy at the beginning of the legislative period. In a first stimulating exchange, topics such as the expansion of the heating networks, the orientation of Luxembourg's economic policy, the 'sustainability' or 'compatibility check' for companies, the question of growth and the Mercosur agreement were on the agenda.

GETTING INVOLVED: ALSO IN SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL DOSSIERS

In 2024, an EU directive was implemented that established new rules on how the consumption of certain types of energy for individual households in a multi-family building should be recorded (draft law – Comptage divisionnaire et la répartition des coûts de chaleur, de froid et d'eau chaude sanitaire (N° 8250)). One of the objectives is to promote energy saving. The Mouvement Ecologique welcomed the basic orientation of the draft, but made a number of suggestions to remove inconsistencies in the text.

These were welcomed by Energy Minister Lex Delles, and the Mouvement Ecologique was informed in detail in a letter which proposed amendments had been incorporated into the final law.