

EU local

About saving or not saving CO2 quota, about Danish farmers being the top students in the climate class, and about running as candidate for the EU parliamentary election in 2014.

A report from the EU-themed open meeting at Ballen Badehotel, an event supported by INFORSE-Europe and Europeanævnnet. 45 people, both Samsøe citizens and guests from the "Best to Next Practice" symposium, showed up and listened to three short presentations from Gunnar Boye Olesen, coordinator of INFORSE-Europe, Marcel Meijer, the local candidate for the European Parliament, and Henrik Oester, chairman of the farmers' union on Samsøe.

The NGO's point of view

Soeren Hermansen, Director of the Energy Academy, bid everybody welcome. He first gave the floor to Gunnar Boye Olesen, INFORSE-Europe. Gunnar went through a brief history of EU energy policies since the Brundtland Report in 1987. Already in the 70s Denmark had car-free Sundays where children enjoyed the reduced traffic on the roads. Later, the Brundtland Report was very influential, and Denmark made a sustainable energy strategy following the report. In the 1990s in the EU, it was discussed whether CO2 should be taxed, but the countries could not agree.

In Denmark our national strategy, Energy2000, included proposed requirements for the energy efficiency of products. This was not allowed by EU that could not accept national restrictions of products in the EU internal market. Instead, the EU made the SAVE program with no energy efficiency requirements, and at the same time, the EU introduced energy efficiency labels for the consumers to know which energy-friendly products to buy. While we were sceptical of the soft proposal from the EU concerning the labelling of white goods from energy class A to G, the Danish consumers began to buy A-labelled products and thereby saved substantial amounts of energy.

After the EU's approval of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the EU made a new climate change policy including proposals for stronger energy efficiency requirements. This became the Ecodesign regulation. Now many products such as TVs consume a lot less energy today compared to before. With the climate program in the late 1990's the EU also started developing the quota system. In the first phase the countries decided for themselves

Get closer to Europe!

Samsøe Energy Academy and Inforse Europe invited the local island community to a meeting about the EU. It was the night before the "From Best to Next Practice" symposium, so international guests were present as well. The meeting was held in Danish.

Kom tættere på Europa!

Der er snart valg til Europaparlamentet.

Samsø Energiakademi laver i samarbejde med Inforse Europa et borgermøde om EU.

Oplæg fra EU kandidat Marcel Meijer, Gunnar Boye Olesen og Henrik Øster.

Klokken 20.00 til 21.30
den 18. september i cafeen på Ballen Hotel.

Ordstyrer Søren Hermansen

Projektet er støttet af Europeanævnnet



how many CO2 quota they needed. This gave windfall profits for some companies that got more quotas than needed and could sell them. This in turn created a bubble of unused quota which made quota prices fall to a level where, today, the quota are unable to regulate CO2 emissions.

At the moment, the system is getting updated, which means that the quota are not released as fast as previously planned. Recently, the European Parliament has given its support for the extraction of 900 million CO2 quota from the market, but the Parliament also decided that there should not be an update of the overall framework of the quota system, and that these quota can be put back on the market again later "creating new surplus in the future", said Gunnar.

In the following discussion many questions are raised and comments made from the locals and the symposium participants. Soeren asks Gunnar about his expectations of EU's green leadership and whether countries like Japan and the US can learn anything from the EU. Gunnar answers: "We should be able to become green leaders, but the quota system doesn't fit in. As it is today, all the energy we can save, we don't have to import, and that's why we in the EU have a greater interest in saving energy than the energy producing countries have."

The farmer's point of view

Soeren points to the fact that it is costly to take leadership and be innovative. After the lively discussion, he

calls on Henrik Oester, the new chair of the board in the local farmer's association, to speak.

"I'm just an ordinary farmer," Henrik starts by saying. "When my mother read in the local paper that I would be speaking on behalf of the farmer's association, she said 'what do you know about that?' But I do have an opinion about the agricultural policy of the EU. Many people think that the EU is so complex and so far away, so I think this meeting is good."

Henrik explains about the latest agricultural reform and the new EU rules. He complains that Denmark does not have a say about farming in the EU even though we are the green guys in the climate class and stick to all the rules. "It's expensive to be innovative", he states. Denmark is the country in the world which produces the food with the lowest climate imprint – and our CO2 emissions have gone down 23 percent since 1990. It is important that production, research and innovation go hand in hand. "We need all three", Henrik says.

The local politician's point of view

The last speaker at this EU meeting is Marcel Meijer, who is a local islander running as a candidate for the European Parliament in the 2014 election. Marcel says: "I have lived on Samsø since 1992, but I was born and raised in the Netherlands so I really don't have this nationalist feeling – I'm a European citizen. To me, the EU is a peacekeeping and cooperative project. I was elected to the local municipal council here on Samsø and I am vice mayor, and when I travel

around Europe the conversations are always about how Samsø successfully managed the transition to renewable energy. It is an amazing role to be in as a politician. I have to say that this transition has probably been easier to achieve in Denmark because our green taxes make renewable energy cheaper. But with the national government's new growth plan it no longer pays to save energy, and as a social democrat I am not proud of that. We need to become more competitive, so instead of lowering our green taxes we should change the electricity prices in the EU."

Marcel does not think that we should be in competition with one another in the EU with the result that we end up with lower electricity prices. We should be working for lower prices on electricity all over Europe. At the same time, we should work for higher wages all over Europe because salaries are much lower in most other parts of Europe. He explains that Samsø has a canning factory but that beetroots can be bought in a discount supermarket for less than 1 euro. After VAT there's 0,75 euro left, and out of this amount the farmer has to be paid to sow, harvest, transport, peel, cook, put on glasses and transport the product to the supermarket. In Germany and Poland this can be done cheaper because the salaries are lower. We can't compete with this. Therefore we must work to raise the wages all over Europe.

Many of the locals as well as the symposium participants took part in the dialogue about the EU while eating tapas and enjoying a glass wine.

AN EXTRACT OF A DIALOGUE AT THE MEETING – ABOUT FOOD PRODUCTION

Henrik Oester, chair of the local farmer's association:

We should keep production power in Denmark.

Guest: If people in the local areas produced their own food, we would also see a culinary development.

Henrik: It's not possible to produce food everywhere in the world. Denmark is a good place to produce food. Denmark has a great reputation and we export food to China and directly to Hong Kong.

Guest: Do the farmers tell the story about being the green guys in the class? The consumers must be interested in that story.

Henrik: When it comes to telling our story, there is definitely room for improvement. I also think we should put a Danish label on our products.

Guest: There might be a level of external transparency, but what about transparency internally? If we in Denmark actually understood that we are very good at producing food, maybe we would learn to buy products produced at home.

Henrik: That is what we are trying to do, and people are spending a lot of money on that at the moment. But the big supermarkets have a capitalist mindset, and they keep lowering the prices we get for our products.