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Economics

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Russia has overslept a boom in wind power

China has left USA and EU behind in installed generators



In developed countries wind turbines have become an integral part of landscape

Photo by Konstantin Remchukov

Capacity of wind turbines installed in 2009 exceeds the capacity of 25 large-scale nuclear reactors. China has taken the leading role in wind power development leaving USA and EU behind in installed generators. This data was stated yesterday in the report by Global Council on wind power. In comparison with the world boom Russian wind power is hardly developing. Even China alone constructs more wind turbines annually than Russia could have built in all its lifetime. Due to expert opinion, pressure by oil lobbying and government's indifference explain Russian wind power stagnation.

The Global Council on wind power has distributed a report upon a rapid wind power growth around the globe - except Russia.

According to the report, the installed wind power capacity in 2009 reached almost 37.5 mln KW which app. equals 25 large-scale nuclear reactors. Therefore starting from 2008 one can report almost 30% growth in installed wind power capacity around the globe.

As foreign analysts say, China is most rapidly building up wind turbines' capacity: in 2009 this country had 13 mln KW increase. More over for 2nd year in a row China has been doubling these indicators. In wind units construction race China is followed by USA: in 2009 their capacity increased for more than 9.9 mln. KW. The bronze in this race goes to Spain which has got almost 2.5 mln KW increase.

According to Global Council data, USA leads in the total installed wind power capacity (35.16 mln KW). Germany is second with app. 25.78 mln KW and China takes the third place with 25.1 mln KW (in 2008 China overcame Spain in total installed wind power capacity).

During the last year wind power was strengthening its positions regardless world economic crisis. Environment friendly, relatively low prime cost and quick wind turbines' assembly are the three factors grounding wind power boom. But all these benefits have no effect on priority list of Russian authorities.

Today in Russia the total installed wind power capacity is a little bit over 15 MW. As to energy experts' evaluations, the economic wind power capacity in Russia reaches almost 260 billions KWh per year which app. equals 30% of total energy output in the country. The largest wind power station is located near Kulikovo village (Zelenogradskiy rayon, Kaliningradskaya oblast) plus other large-scale power plants are in Chukotka, Bashkortostan, Kalmykia and Komi.

Wind turbines are being built in Russia, but we are far behind the world leaders. "From 2003 until 2008 the installed wind power capacity in Russia has shown a growth of 54%, - describes the situation a "2K Audit – Delovye konsultatsii" expert Petr Klyuev. - However this growth is grounded by the initially low starting point". Nevertheless as Klyuev says, this trend\direction is under development in Russia and i.e. "RusGydro" is considering a possibility to construct 36 wind-diesel units in the most remote places in Kamchatskiy kraj and Yakutiya.

There are several reasons that Russian wind power is less developed than global. "On the one hand Russia lacks state support for wind power development, on the other thermal power generation is subsidized. Which means that energy companies have zero economic benefits for wind parks development", - enumerates a senior analyst at I2BF Venture Capital Alexander Korchevskiy.

"Russia practically lacks state programs promoting investments in this area" – agrees the Head of Department at "Intercom-Audit" Andrey Prihodko. The fact that in the past our country took its cues from large-scale electricity supply objects and continues doing it under its own momentum explains Russia's indifference to wind power. "By the date wind power became topical USSR already had got a developed and modern energy system and nuclear energy was the next item on its priority list. But because the idea of modernization is raised at state level for the first time in 20 years, only now we've got the chance to correct this choice", - thinks an analyst Sergey Shandybin from "Razvitie" group.

"Connecting wind turbines to the central energy system in Russia is not totally welcomed because its leaps caused by wind changes require additional efforts for

stabilization”, - marks Shandybin.

Several experts also talk about strong oil-&-gas lobbying against promoting tariff premiums that could have made wind turbines construction more beneficial than coal and gas energy stations. “In our country wind turbines are hardly ever constructed. Major obstacles include still relatively low level of electricity tariffs and underdeveloped legislation. The cost of wind power is too high to compete with ordinary grid electricity, - explains AEnergy.ru General Director Stanislav Chernitsa. - Globally a premiums mechanism allows to smooth these price differences away”. But as Chernitsa says in Russia the authorities being under pressure by strong oil-&-gas lobbying disagree to introduce promoting premiums. As the expert hopes, in Russia tariffs on wind, gas or coal energy could compete only in the next 5-7 years.

Today for the regions with good wind capacity the premium of app.1.5-2 rubles per 1 KWh is expedient. “If such premium is introduced in Russia, then by 2020 we will easily fulfill the government's plan to develop 7 GigaW based on wind power” – thinks Korchevskiy. Due to expert opinion, the most competitive wind turbines will be the ones installed on Russian sea borders, in the Caucasus and Far East.

Yesterday we didn't manage to receive a comment from Minenergo regarding the grounds from Russia legging behind in wind power.

Wind turbines don't have the same capacity as coal or gas stations. Nevertheless this doesn't stop energy experts to refer to Germany's experience - a country where the total installed wind power capacity is comparable with the installed capacity of all nuclear stations belonging to “Rosenergoatom” – marks “EnergopromService” Technical Director Alexey Okshin. “Russia has huge potential for wind power development: area and big number of distributed facilities to which it would be pretty expensive to string electric power lines. This is where we need the highest level of state support here, at the Ministry of energy level”, - concludes Okshin.

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