

Finland energy transition

Last year was a year of many dubious records. Parts of Greece were scorched by the largest wildfires ever in the EU. Pakistan saw one-third of its land submerged after torrential rains. The Earth was hotter than ever before, with the global mean temperature nearly hitting the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels.

Finland has also made a noteworthy shift toward clean energy. More than 90 per cent of the energy it generates is already carbon neutral; yet, it has set its sights on doubling clean energy production to build a more robust and sustainable foundation for economic growth.

Vaasa, a city on the west coast of Finland, has emerged as the leading electrification ecosystem in the country, hosting a cluster of companies that includes ABB, Danfoss, Hitachi and Wärtsilä. It is also the site of Vaasa EnergyWeek, an event that this year delved into batteries, hydrogen, natural gas, wind, storage solutions and other critical areas of the energy transition.

Minna Martikainen (right) called for investments in domains contributing to the green transition, sustainable business growth and competence-based security of supply at Vaasa EnergyWeek.

Minna Martikainen, rector at the University of Vaasa, stated last month at the event that new exports emerging from the green transition will be a prerequisite for not simply surviving but succeeding in the face of global competition.

"Bigger investments are needed especially in areas that are important for sustainable business growth, the green transition and competence-based security of supply," she underscored.

Martikainen also identified fostering international expertise through education as a vital means to secure access to skilled labour and fuel economic growth. Another important measure, she added, is to promote research co-operation between businesses and universities.

An example of industry-academia co-operation is Hydrogen UnderGround, a research project coordinated by Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) and VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland. Bringing together 16 industrial partners, the project - as its name hints - focuses on the role of underground hydrogen storages in ensuring a stable supply of what is billed to be both a key fuel and energy-storage medium.

The goal is to lay the foundation for a large-scale underground hydrogen storage concept for the business and technology ecosystem emerging around hydrogen, said Pasi Valkokari and Teemu Lindqvist, managers of Hydrogen UnderGround at VTT and GTK, respectively.

"The project also aims to establish pathways for continued research, inviting partner companies to contribute to ongoing advancements in the field," the duo added.

Helsinki's energy utility, Helen, has decided to invest in developing the city's first green hydrogen plant to serve heavy-duty transport around Vuosaari Harbour.

"The 3H2 project is the first of its kind in the world, combining four different sectors: electricity, transportation, heating and hydrogen, as well as flexibility between them," remarked Sari Mannonen, head of new business and hydrogen at Helen.

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