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Networks in renewable energy policies in Germany and France

The aim of this paper is to discuss the transformation of the energy sectors of Germany and France, with a main focus on obstacles and success conditions for renewable energy sources. The networks of actors struggling for this aims in both countries and the obstacles they face are analyzed, using the examples of the introduction of political instruments to support renewable electricity and biofuels and their success so far.

Though both countries are obliged to change actual emission trends under the Kyoto Protocol the performance of the two analyzed ways to reduce CO₂ emissions varies considerably between both countries: Whereas biofuels perform very well in both countries and the goals set by the EU directive on biofuels are most likely to be reached, the success of renewable electricity policies in both countries differs extremely. Although France has also introduced a minimum payment system for renewable electricity which was one of the main success conditions in the leading wind energy countries Germany and Spain, the growth of installed capacity remains slow.

My main argument is that biofuels perform so well because a crucial driving force for their development in France comes from the pressure exerted by the agricultural lobby longing to reduce dependence on subsidies for food production. In contrast, the network opting for renewable electricity remains weak in France compared to Germany. Secondary interest groups like the approximately 120.000 German employees in the renewable energy sector do not yet exist in France. So it is basically the EU directive on the promotion of electricity produced from RES that helps the network struggling for the introduction of renewable electricity in France to defend renewable interests which so far is not sufficient to promote further growth of the sector.