

Survey on wind energy in France

Summary of the results

Rhônealpeénergie-Environnement has carried out a poll on wind energy on 15th and 16th April 2005 in collaboration with the institute Louis Harris. This inquiry has been conducted by phone among 501 persons which are representative of the french population regarding sex, social class, geographical location and dwelling composition.

RESULTS

The results show that a wide majority of french people strongly support the development of wind energy in France, since 91% is favorable to it. Only 6.6% consider it is unuseful or harmful to the environment. They judge the development in France more anarchic (48.5%) than controlled (41.8%). As regards the landscape 60.7% of french people think that wind turbines do not disfigure the landscape, while 37.9% have the opposite opinion.

The question of the size of wind parks has been asked. Big parks have been defined as made of more than 10 wind turbines. Concerning this topic 17.8% of french people think that it is preferable to develop only big wind parks. While 40.4% would rather like small parks of a few wind turbines and 28.7% both kinds of parks. To the question of what kind of wind park they would rather like to be installed near their living place or holidays place, 68.7% would rather like a small wind park than a big.

Regarding the legitimacy to select wind energy development areas, the inhabitants of the concerned municipalities are first (45.3%), then the Regional Council (20.8%), the elected officials of the concerned municipalities (16.4%), the local representative of the State authority (8.4%) and seldom the project developer.

COMMENTS

The massive support of the french people to the wind energy is reaffirmed. It had been several times revealed in previous inquiries.

The impact on the landscape does not seem to be assessed as strong as the caused debates. Only a bit more than one third of the french people think that wind turbines disfigure the landscape. The majority does not think it is the case.

French people would rather like more small wind parks to be developed than big parks of more than 10 wind turbines. This is the case near their living or holidays place, but they consider it is generally preferable for the development of wind energy in France.

The choice of proximity for the selection of the wind energy development areas clearly appears. The role of the local representative of the State authority is weakly recognized. French people wish to be associated to the choices made on their territory, as regards wind energy, besides the elected officials of the concerned municipalities and the Regional Council.

These results appear on several aspects to be in contradiction with the decisions made by the MPs through the amendments on wind energy in the frame of the debates on the draft law on energy strategy. The landscape impact is recognized but it is not felt by a majority. The exclusivity of big parks (more than 20 MW) is mainly refused, and smaller parks are preferred. Regarding the decision of installation, even it is currently between the hands of the local representative of the State authority, the citizens wish massively to be associated to it besides their local elected officials.