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Wind energy suffers tough year in Europe with 12 nations failing to install a single turbine

- Growth in onshore wind fell by more than half in Germany last year and "collapsed in the U.K."
- Overall, Europe managed to install 11.7 gigawatts of gross wind power capacity in 2018.
- Wind energy covered 14 percent of the European Union's electricity demand in 2018.

Anmar Frangoul

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Twelve countries in the European Union (EU) failed to install "a

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single wind turbine" last year, the CEO of industry body WindEurope said Thursday.

Giles Dickson said that while more and more people and businesses were benefiting from wind power, many things were "not right" beneath the surface.

Dickson added that growth in onshore wind fell by more than half in Germany last year and "collapsed in the U.K.", stating that, in the EU, 2018 was "the worst year for new wind energy installations since 2011." The latter figure reflected regulatory changes undertaken by EU member states following a review of state-aid guidelines.

In Germany's onshore sector, the group explained that "lengthy permitting processes" and projects with "longer build-out periods" had resulted in a "significant decrease" in installations, which fell from 5,334 megawatts in 2017 to 2,402 megawatts (MW) in 2018.

While investments for future capacity were deemed to be "quite good" in 2018 thanks to the U.K., Spain and Sweden as well as expansion in offshore wind, Dickson said that the outlook for new investments remained uncertain.

"There are structural problems in permitting, especially in Germany and France," he added. "And with the noble exception of Lithuania and despite improvements in Poland, there's a lack of ambition in Central and Eastern Europe."

Overall, Europe installed 11.7 gigawatts (GW) of gross wind power capacity in 2018. While this represents a drop of more than 30 percent compared to installations in 2017, the sector still installed more capacity than any other type of power generation in the EU last year, WindEurope said.

Breaking the figures for 2018 down further, 9 GW of installations in Europe took place onshore, with 2.65 GW coming offshore and 0.4 GW of capacity decommissioned.

Wind energy covered 14 percent of the European Union's electricity demand in 2018, WindEurope said, representing an increase from 12 percent in 2017.

Europe boasts several large-scale wind energy projects. In the offshore sector, it is home to the world's biggest offshore wind

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facility, Walney Extension, which is located in the Irish Sea and capable of powering almost 600,000 homes, according to Danish energy firm Orsted.


Walney will soon be superseded by another vast project, Hornsea One. A joint venture between Orsted and Global Infrastructure Partners, Hornsea One will have a capacity of 1.2 GW and be able to power more than 1 million homes in the U.K. It was announced last week that the first turbine at Hornsea One had started to generate power.

Anmar Frangoul


Freelance Digital Reporter, CNBC.com

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