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GÜNTHER H. OETTINGER  
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Ms Maria van der Hoeven  
Minister of Economic Affairs of the  
Kingdom of the Netherlands  
The Hague

Dear Minister, *Liebe Frau van der Hoeven!*

Thank you for your letter raising the issue of industrial waste gas being burned off due to the provisions on priority and guaranteed access to the grid for electricity from renewable energy sources. You expressed concerns that the greenhouse gas emissions savings related to the use of electricity from renewable sources may not be able to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by burning off the excess industrial waste gas that could not be converted into electricity.

The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is one of the objectives of the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC but not the only one. Increasing the security of energy supply, promoting technological development and innovation, as well as opportunities for employment and regional development are equally important objectives pursued by the Directive. Thus, the fact that CO<sub>2</sub> reductions achieved due to the priority access of electricity from renewable energies to the grid may be offset by an increase of CO<sub>2</sub> due to burning waste gases is not necessarily an argument against priority access for electricity from renewables.

In addition, Member States are under the obligation to "take the appropriate steps to develop the transmission and distribution grid infrastructure, intelligent networks, storage facilities and the electricity system" to accommodate the development of electricity production from renewable energy sources (Art. 16 (1) of the Directive). Thus, it is up to the Member States to take measures to avoid the occurrence of situations as the one described in your letter, e.g. by increasing the capacity of the grid in question.

In order to allow us to assess the situation more thoroughly to compare it with other realities and to work towards a good solution, it would be interesting to receive more information on the problem at stake in particular on its concrete dimension.

Yours sincerely,

