News from our members
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Austria
The 53 employees of Wien Energie, who were isolated in the power plants to ensure the security of supply, can now get out. The company goes back to working in normal shifts, while applying very strict health and safety regulations. New “isolation shifts” could be implemented again within hours, should there be a need.

Belgium
Electricity and gas prices for individual consumers are 30% lower compared to the same period in 2019. According to the Belgian regulator, CREG, this is one of the collateral effects of the coronavirus pandemic which has pushed the demand to historic lows. Additionally, the substantial wind output, gas abundant stocks and the mild winter have contributed to this decrease. Read more

Bulgaria
Electricity spot prices settled below 30 €/ MWh, due to falling hydro and wind production. Bulgarian hydro reserves reached an eight-month high of 1.65 TWh, representing a 27% year on year increase. A minimal rise is expected in the coming days, determined by a moderate rainfall. Furthermore, data from ESO, Bulgaria’s TSO shows that power imports increased by 78.97% year-on-year to 1,468,294 MWh during the first quarter.

Czech Republic
20 April: Baseload prices rose 7.71%, reaching 26.28 €/MWh, while peak prices surged 12% to 25.29 €/MWh. The Czech transmission operator observed a daytime gross production peaking around 8 GW, 3GW lower than the previous year. Moreover, cross border daily exports of electricity fell by almost a third reaching 554 MW compared with 2019.

15 April: Electricity industry supports Czech hospitals with the large scale production of disinfectants. Health authorities have certified a new hand sanitiser developed by Ledvice Power Plant laboratories. The product is now distributed to healthcare facilities, to support their daily need of approximately 100 litres. Additionally, they have contributed to the purchase of an ambulance dedicated to the transport of patients who tested positive for COVID19. Read more

France
French Minister Elisabeth Borne commended energy sector employees involved in the generation, distribution and supply of electricity. “You are demonstrating professionalism, know-how and a sense of public service. Thanks to you, our hospitals are working, our homes are powered, millions of people can telework and businesses can continue their activities. Any telecommuter can see how much we count on you”.

Finland
Finland has started to lift roadblocks in the region around Helsinki, in a first step towards easing coronavirus-related restrictions and reducing the impact on economy. The Finance Ministry estimates that economy could shrink by at least 5.5% in 2020 and it could further contract by 12% if strict restrictions were maintained for six months. Read more

Germany
17 April: Electricity prices often go into the negative when renewable output outstrips demand. This quarter, rates fell below zero 773 times, in auctions of power for delivery in 15-
minute intraday periods on the Epex Spot SE exchange. This represents a 78% jump from the same period of 2019. The negative prices were about 23% lower on average than a year ago, intraday auction prices plunging to minus 123 €/MWh in one 15-minute period for April 13. Read more

14 April: After substantial declines in the past three weeks, the electricity prices in the wholesale market stabilised around 30 € / MWh. In addition, the CO2 price rebounded during the previous week reached around € 21 /t CO2. Read more from BDEW.

Greece
The renewables division of the state–owned Public Power Corporation is planning a subsidy-free 50 MW solar plant in the Megalopoli coal mining region of the Peloponnese peninsula. Also, the company plans to install 3 GW of solar capacity on former coal mines, in support of the national efforts to phase out coal by 2028 at the latest. Around 3 GW of solar projects are expected to be delivered. Read more

Hungary
Hungary could receive € 5.6 bn to deal with the side effects of the COVID-19 crisis. However, discussions are still ongoing regarding the allocation criteria for the € 37 bn Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRIII), gathered from unspent cohesion funds. Read more

Italy
In March, the total electricity demand has dropped to 23.7 TWh (~10.1% compared with March 2019). It further plummeted to 8.2 TWh, after the shutdown of commercial and industrial activities in the second part of the month. Terna, the Italian TSO estimates a 22% decrease, compared to the same period in 2019.

Latvia
Following the national lockdown, Latvenergo AS portal FIZMIX, has seen an increase of visits from an average of 1,800 to 5,000 visits a day. FIZMIX, was created 7 years ago to show the exciting side of physics. Being continuously updated, the portal is now used by large number of physics teachers as an educational tool for long-distance teaching. Read more

Lithuania
The solar power industry estimates that the number of customers will double compared to 2019. “There has been a temporary slowdown in the production of the main solar components – solar modules, but now almost all plants work to full or increased capacity. The quarantine has not stopped the installation of solar PVs, as most of the work takes place without direct contact with people”, said Indrė Balušienė, Ignitis Solar Product Manager. Read more

Netherlands
Energy supplier prepare to implement measures regarding the temporary postponement of payments. Until June 2020, commercial consumers receiving a monthly invoice will not be charged for renewable energy storage or the VAT. Customers not eligible for a deferment, but facing financial difficulties, could opt for specific payment arrangements or temporarily adjust the collection date. More from Energie Nederland.

Norway
The Energy Regulator adopted temporary measures allowing grid operators to lower the network tariffs. Companies that find this measure appropriate and justifiable can cut the
network tariffs throughout the year, but there is no obligation as such. “Such an exemption can give some grid companies greater flexibility to respond to the current challenges,” says grid and contractor Kristin H. Lind of Energy Norway. Read more

Poland
Polish power demand dropped 4% in March, whereas electricity generation decreased 6% year on year. While lignite-fired generation and wind fell approximately 20% each, the hard coal-fired production continued to increase, covering half of Poland’s generation. Gas is also rising, accounting for approximately 10%.

Romania
Electricity suppliers are changing their business models, digitalising their operations to counter the spread of covid19. Electricity demand is expected to shrink by 10-12% until the end of April. Ioan Lungu, representing the suppliers’ association, cautioned about impact of low demand and low power prices on companies’ ability to invest. Additionally is concerned about the potential negative impact on the entire electricity value chain resulting from the deferral of payments.

Spain
17 April: Spanish Ecological Transition Minister Teresa Ribera said: “We already knew that we need to build an economy more compatible with climate protection. In this crisis we see how energy prices and security of supply are working well thanks in part to the presence of renewable energy in our system. The recovery program has to be green, and that national governments need to seize the moment to set ever more ambitious targets.” Read more

15 April: Electricity demand dropped 24% in April. This trend could be reversed as the industry and construction sectors restart their activities following the relaxation of lockdown measures. The generation mix is shifting in favour of renewables, with solar PV increasing 72% on year and hefty hydro power stocks rising above 14TWh.

Switzerland
Volker Lischke, Head of Business Unit Trading at BKW, talks about new ways of improving exchanges between different teams working remotely. The company moves forward in the preparation to respond to specific emergency scenarios. Employees are now engaged in “VersusVirus”, a hackathon aimed at finding new approaches and solutions to provide decentralised electricity supply during a crisis.

Sweden
Energy companies have developed webinars to ensure a continuous and high standard training for their personnel. As operations move online to reduce the spread of coronavirus, companies made available tools and technical solutions that are easy to use and enable safe interaction. A digital knowledge bank can now be also by distribution operators, technicians and other staffers. Read more

United Kingdom
Vulnerable customers advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks, can now sign up the Priority Services Register. In case of a power cut, customers in vulnerable circumstances can receive free tailored services and guidance. Meanwhile, maintenance and repair works will be conducted only if necessary for ensuring a safe and reliable supply of energy. More from ENA.