

Electrifying Europe: The Future Generation of Electricity and the Supergrid

The first workshop of several to be held on this new and exciting field of research attracted considerable interest from both within Sussex University and externally. This was reflected in the wide range of participants who attended. The workshop saw a number of thought-provoking presentations on a variety of different aspects of electricity generation. These sought not just to explore this huge and complex subject area from a variety of different (and often unrelated) perspectives, but also to develop a new platform in order to integrate very disparate fields to understand the many complex interrelationships between the current issues and how these will change and evolve in the future as the electricity system becomes ever more integrated. An example of the new approach being developed is a presentation given on the changing nature of the national grid. An historical perspective was used to cast light on how the national grid came into existence, the changes it has experienced since, and the scale of change and upgrading it now requires so it is fit for purpose to enable large-scale use of renewables and how the UK can start to address the issue of energy security in practical terms by building more interconnections with continental Europe. Another presentation focused on how North Africa has emerged as an important new area for electricity generation through the exploitation of solar power and the unexplored (and possible) widespread consequences a large ring of concentrated solar power (CSP) plants around the Mediterranean coastline will have on the natural environment. Towards the end of the afternoon there was a very lively question and answer session which provided an opportunity for all of the participants to ask the presenters any questions they wished to do so. This stimulated a lot of discussion and debate where opinion on many issues remain divided and very diverse on a subject matter of enormous contemporary importance. A second workshop is being held on 26 October 2012 at Sussex University.