



ENERGY CROSSROADS

Our choices

Each journey has a purpose. This should also apply to Europe's future energy supply in the year 2050.

Oddly enough, a clear roadmap or itinerary is missing for this long journey. Neither the crossings on the journey have been mapped out. Corporate Responsibility manager Marga Edens of energy company RWE does what every traveler does before departure. What definitely needs to be taken on a journey? Where can we change our destinations when we are already on the way? Eventually she decides to make a personal statement: "This is something I would really like to see and experience myself..." P+ starts a new series on the crossroads in the energy policy of Europe.

✦ TEKST MARGA EDENS ✦ FOTOGRAFIE CHRIS DE BODE

Marga Edens on Europe's future energy supply: "How should energy be provided? Has it not already been decided by energy accords, European Directives and global agreements?"

Large, steel pipelines, trenches stretching into the horizon... When I was peering out of the attic window as a child in Slochteren (the Netherlands) I did not realize that I was looking at the construction of a European energy infrastructure. Neither did I have any idea that the seeds had been sown for my future career. Energy has indeed become the central theme in my professional life.

Initially my involvement was in the provision of services: I was a corporate lawyer and manager of Investor Relations at Essent, a Dutch energy company. As the company developed from a regional utility company into an international player operating in the free market, my fascination with the subject grew, along with the realization that energy is not just a product.

In our society, energy is a basic necessity, but the satisfaction of that need takes place in a manner that simultaneously constitutes a threat to society.

This diabolical dilemma has kept my mind busy for a number of years. I have approached it from every possible angle, taking into consideration every insight, opinion and piece of expertise I could find. Up until now I can only be sure of one thing: there are no easy answers, and no easy choices. Are there any choices?

Since 1 July 2012 I am Vice President for Corporate Responsibility at RWE AG in Essen, Germany. If I now look out of my attic window, several decades and changes of address further on, then the dilemma is very tangible. Looking to the right I can see the chimneys of a large power station, silhouetted against the horizon. To the left, I can see the solar panels on my neighbors' roof. "Should I also have had solar panels installed? But now I am a customer of the energy company that I am working for. And I at least have green energy..." "As I turn the heating down a degree, my doubts remain. Have I made the right choice? Can I still make another choice? What are my actual choices anyway? These are questions at a micro level, but they are also questions that we should be asking ourselves at a macro level.

WHO IS MARGA EDENS?

In June 2012, Marga Edens took over as Head of Corporate Responsibility, incl. Environmental Protection, Diversity and RWE Stiftung (RWE Foundation) in the Group Center of the RWE Group. From here she manages RWE's realignment in the field of sustainability – especially with a view to the energy transition in Germany and Europe. This is aimed at ensuring sustainable corporate activities and a responsible attitude toward society and the environment. She is at the forefront of having the value of diversity incorporated into the company's future performance capabilities. Another focus is the social and cultural commitment through the RWE Foundation. Following first professional experience as corporate lawyer, Marga Edens gathered wide-ranging knowledge and expertise in various functions in the energy sector, including Essent N.V. During her career there, she held positions such as Secretary to the Executive Board, Head of Investor Relations as well as Head of Corporate Responsibility.

Marga Edens studied law at Utrecht University (NL) and graduated with a focus on civil law. Afterwards, she completed international post-graduate studies with a degree as Master of Business Administration, MBA.

How should energy be provided? Has it not already been decided by energy accords, European Directives and global agreements? Or will we still have to make important choices between now and 2050? And what will those choices be? Some decisions appear to be set in stone, such as the investments made in large gas, coal and nuclear power plants, or in large offshore wind farms. Everything settled then?

On the basis of six questions I would like to show over the next year that there are indeed choices to be made. Choices that we face as a society and that are not simply left to 'the energy companies' or 'the government'. But that are made by all of us, as citizens.

- ✦ Can we influence our energy use, and why would we want to?
- ✦ Should we make energy cheaper or more expensive?
What are the consequences for households and industry?
- ✦ Is small really beautiful, or should we set limits on the amount of locally generated renewable energy?
- ✦ Should we see CO₂ as a problem or as a product?
And how can we influence emissions?
- ✦ What do we want to know about the origin of our fuels?
And what must we know?
- ✦ How should we use energy for a circular economy?
Are multiple partners desirable?

In the next six editions of P+, I will answer these questions in turn. It will be shown that there are several possible answers to each question. There are choices. I will mention what choice I would make; your choice might be different, but my objective is that you make a conscious choice. As a society, we are at a crossroads of choices that have to be made. ■

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This series will be written in English.