Too many showcases

The success story of renewable energies is also reflected in the number of exhibitions and conferences which are meanwhile claiming to be a “must” for the respective sector. In the wind power sector the event calendar for 2010 kicks off with the European Wind Energy Conference taking place in a different European city every year. This year, for the first time, the conference is taking place in Warsaw in April, and will look at the highly interesting wind power market in Poland. Just one month later comes the Windpower in Dallas, Texas. In September, the traditional Husum WindEnergy 2010 is yet another leading international exhibition which no manufacturer with a name and standing can ignore. This is still relatively transparent, especially as the organisers of the Husum WindEnergy have reached an agreement with the Hanover Trade Fair in which they won't compete with each other in the future by holding their events in separate and alternating years.

Those who are missing the most important wind power world market in 2009 based on installed volume, namely China, should be reminded that the Chinese wind power sector is dominated by home-based manufacturers – and these are not (yet) interested in an international showcase.

As opposed to the relatively stable growth in the wind power sector, the photovoltaics sector has been seeing extreme growth rates, but also dramatic market collapses. These fluctuations in the sector are also mirrored in the events which are being held. At the moment, countless organisers are pushing and shoving to get a place in the (exhibition) sunshine. The latest example of the dynamics in the sector is the splitting off of the Intersolar from the Solarcon. The partnership entered into just last year between SEMI India and Solarpromotion, the German organiser of the Intersolar, thus only lasted a few months. Solarpromotion is carrying out a systematic expansion of its conference programme. In addition to the Intersolar Europe in Munich and the Intersolar North America, which continue to be supported by the semiconductor industry association SEMI, plus the solo event in India, there is also a first appearance in China – once again in cooperation with SEMI in the shape of SEMI China.

Growing competition for Solarpromotion and SEMI in the exhibition business is coming from events such as the Photon Technology Show in April, the SNEC in Shanghai in May, the Solarexpo in Verona, also taking place in May, and the EU PVSEC in Valencia in September. Just a month later comes the Solar Power International in Los Angeles – and also the Taiwan International Photovoltaic Forum & Exhibition in Taipei. Apart from this there are numerous national events, plus other international events which are not only aimed at solar energy, but which also wish to cover the other sources of renewable energy.

It can be considered unlikely that the photovoltaics companies, who are facing increasingly strong competition for customers, will continue to be willing to invest money and time to travel from one event to the next in the way they have been willing to thus far. In the wind power sector a fistful of large exhibitors have managed to achieve a concentration on just a few major exhibition dates. In the photovoltaics sector this will be difficult to achieve. We can expect that the players will be voting with their feet. If this leads to a clear structuring of the exhibition landscape, then this will be no bad thing.