

Policy Briefing Note #2

Issue:

Imbalance in public R&D funding grants disfavors physical development of new biomethane technology

Background:

To reduce capital cost, operational costs, maximizing positive environmental impact and optimizing systems integration, the state of the art of biomethane technology must be moved forward. To do that it is important to have access to enough financing for high risk, original experiments and practical proof of concept projects. Because of the risks involved and the distance to market introduction this type of funding will primarily have to come from public sources. The 30 developing biomethane technologies identified in the RecordBiomap project is evidence that this progress is happening to some extent, but technology developers attest that progress would be faster and more far reaching with access to more funding targeted to original works that physically moves the frontier of technology forward.

Discussion:

When scanning scientific literature and project logs in both the EU and national funding systems it is striking to see how many review articles and technology aggregation projects there are in comparison to projects where original ideas are developed into prototypes and new products. A surprising ratio of publicly funded project aggregates knowledge and technology information that others have developed, repackages the data for comparison and produce reports based on that.

To exemplify the issue an entry of the following search words: Biogas, and Biomethane, Technology, Energy into the scientific database Science Direct renders a total of 71 articles. Seven of these describes work where a novel technology or concept have been physically developed or evaluated while 64 articles had no relation to physical development of a novel technology, or just aggregated data from other authors or developers into, for example, a comparative format.

This imbalance constitutes a barrier to the development of small to medium scale biomethane technology. It should be noted that we are not necessarily advocating for more public funds going towards biomethane projects but rather a re-prioritization of what is already allotted in favor of original works.

Options:

1. No action. Consequence: Technology development within the biomethane area continuous to be slow and falls short of its potential
2.
 - a. Initiate a thorough scan of past and present biomethane projects and analyze the fraction of projects that actually involve physical development of novel technologies. If the ratio is deemed to be too low implement option 2.b.
 - b. Increase the number of calls which specifically targets novel technology development and proof of concept projects in the area of biomethane production and use. Consequence: Increased rate of technical development and higher probability of new

technologies successfully making it to market due to a larger pool of developing biomethane technologies to draw from.

Recommendation:

Option 2.a.

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