

# DESERTEC Foundation: 110906-01 Multi-billion Euro project “HELIOS”

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**Dr. Thiemo Gropp,**

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"George Papaconstantinou, Minister for the Environment, Energy and Climate Change of Greece, is planning to turn German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble's proposal for a multi-billion Euro solar project into reality. Should the "HELIOS" project drive European countries to expand the European power grid and to establish national feed-in tariffs for the import of clean energy, it would also benefit the realization of DESERTEC. However, we must sound a note of caution and stress that photovoltaic (PV) solar power from Greece cannot provide a viable alternative to clean power from deserts.

PV is a sensible option to meet local needs in Southern European countries where, because of air conditioning use during the summer months, electricity demand peaks at noon. However, it is not the first choice to export large amounts of electricity, as the lack of storage capacity means that PV cannot meet the need for energy as and when it arises. In contrast, concentrating solar-thermal power (CSP) plants offer the opportunity to store thermal energy and generate electricity even when the sun is not shining. But the potential for CSP plants in mainland Greece is limited compared with the opportunities which could be realized in Spain, North Africa or the Middle East.

Nonetheless we welcome the news of the planned developments in Greece. It is encouraging to see that politicians are realizing that international cooperation offers a faster and more viable way to establish renewable energy as an alternative to nuclear and fossil fuels, than national initiatives because renewable energy investments are most beneficial for energy provision and climate protection when realized in the most suitable locations."