

Postpone the show?

No, Wind Energy Asia is vital to the development of the supply chain in Taiwan

PES brings you a review of Wind Energy Asia 2020, which took place from March 3rd -5th and a look at forward to the upcoming edition in 2021. In mid-February 2020, as the show approached, the coronavirus spread was heating up and headed straight to be declared a pandemic. Many European exhibitors were having difficulties imagining getting on a plane and flying to an island just 100 plus miles from China, where it all had started and was still far from under control.



The technical seminars drew an interested audience

In Taiwan however, with no community spread to speak of, the virus situation was very much under control. And we knew that, despite the pandemic, renewables continued to need development and that a strong supply chain in Taiwan was critical for the continued development of the industry here. So, despite the many skeptics, we went ahead. And were rewarded grandly!

All our numbers were up handsomely, yes, up, in 2020, imagine, compared to 2019:

- 52.8% more companies exhibiting, 136 in total. About 10-15 others canceled days before due to the pandemic
- 13 countries and 8 pavilions: up from 6 last year
- Exhibition area grew 29.7% to 205 booths
- 19.6% more trade visitors, for a total of 1,876

This is a remarkable development, and even more so when compared to competitive events in Taipei that are about a third of the size and shrinking year-on-year. The industry is realizing that wind events in Taipei might give you some exposure to the

government, but if so and besides that, little else. The real business with truly new opportunities is done down South in Kaohsiung. Kaohsiung is in the center of the steel, ship-building and petrochemical industry clusters, where a strong base for wind is already established and expanding by the day.

The exhibition is not huge when compared to some of the leading European shows, but it is by far the largest event dedicated solely to the wind industry in Taiwan, and already Top 3 in Asia. Probably best put by Piet Warnaar, Senior Business Developer at the Dutch ECN/TNO. 'Visitor quality is very good, the average crowd is better than last year, the number of booths has grown a lot, so your reputation is building. Please carry on. Thank you!' he said.

The event provides a great platform for B2B discussions leading to concrete business relationships. Most exhibitors remarked on the fact that they were able to get new contracts because of just being there! 'Being here we have received a lot of inquiries from big players like JDN, Boskalis, CDWE and could actually test the equipment on the ship. We are definitely coming next year!' said Vice President Lin from Smart Frequency Technology/K-Best Technology. And Chung-Pang Chen, Chairman Hung Hua Construction stating 'Because we were exhibiting, we have closed deals with domestic and foreign partners. I am sure the exhibition will grow even stronger in the future!' There is no doubt: WEA means business!

136 exhibitors sharing 205 booths in the exhibition hall were visited by 1,876 industry professionals. 8 pavilions from Denmark, Holland, France, Germany, the UK, Sweden, the US and Taiwan, showed off their wares together with most Tier 1 vendors with their local partners and JVs, i.e. Jan de Nul, CDWE/DEME, Boskalis, among others.

At the Opening Ceremony, Deputy Economics Minister Vincent Tseng, responsible for Energy, reinforced the commitment of Taiwan's government to have wind become a cornerstone in the country's energy transformation. He was followed by strong messages of support from the Representatives or Trade Office Directors from Holland, Sweden, UK, France and Germany.

The job fair and technical seminars dominated the stage in the exhibition hall on the 2nd and 3rd day of the show. The job fair looks for answers to an urgent need by the industry to recruit new talent which is lacking in every level in Taiwan. We cooperate with 6 main technical universities, mainly from South Taiwan, arranging to bus students and engineers to the show, thereby exposing them to the industry and giving them the opportunity to sit in on presentations by leading companies searching for talent.

The technical seminars are a fundamental tool to show off new technologies, disseminate knowledge and establishing credentials in the midst of a thirsty audience willing to soak up the facts. In 2021, we will again have a separately-paid conference or forum with key leaders and sponsorship opportunities. We expect that this will be partially virtual, to allow high-valued foreign speakers to deliver their message, as well as allow a broader participation from a remote audience.

And this brings us to the important subject of virtual, hybrid or online/offline, however it should be called. We are currently in discussions and working with vendors to provide a truly great experience for the exhibition hall as well. In Taiwan we don't foresee any problem with the event taking place given the control on the virus there is, but to allow a wider participation for the many who cannot afford 14 days quarantine, we will have a great solution we are excited about. Stay tuned.

The skepticism about the location which we had faced before the 2019 version went unmentioned this time. The benefits of having the show were very tangible, when visitors were able to actually, not only see, but board and take tours of the 6 working vessels in the marinas just at the foot of KEC, 2 minutes' walk from the exhibition entrance. The vessels were CTVs (crew transfer vessels) from Cwind and Hung Hua as well as 2 OGTs (ocean going tugs) and one large salvage vessel from Asian Marine based in Kaohsiung. In addition, Melchers Trading placed a fully-built out office container from Hoover Ferguson into the hall, possible only because of the huge freight doors and 5-ton floor loading of the hall in Kaohsiung Exhibition Center.

For WEA 2021, we foresee a repeat of the vessels and probably more, and a larger 40-foot container kitted out as a dormitory. We aspire to get visit permits to China Shipbuilding's dry dock, tours of Xinda Port, a 20-minute drive away and key for the build-up of foundations and for future operations and maintenance activities and ideally of the Metal Industries Research and Development Center's (MIRDC) brand-new training facility. All this cannot be experienced in Taipei in the North.

The wind industry in Taiwan is backed by a very strong investment by the Taiwan central government which has committed about US\$ 90 billion towards the goal of obtaining 20% of its power from renewables by 2025 first, and then add 1GW each year thereafter, for a total of 15.5GM by 2035. But the industry is under a lot of pressure due to the short deadlines and localization requirements developers need to commit to. Currently these are very low, but will increase over the years.

Still today, many components are either not available locally or too expensive because



The largest of 6 vessels docked at the marinas at the foot of the exhibition hall. The vessel tours were popular

local suppliers have not had the time to go down the learning curve. The development of a strong local supply chain is crucial and there is no time to lose! Wind Energy Asia is specifically designed to contribute towards this end. Helping to find local partners who are capable of using foreign technology to produce components at an internationally competitive price. Creating the talent to feed the industry, develop it and improve it.

Already in a host of other industries: semiconductors, cell phones, bicycles, gaming to name a few Taiwan has proven to have the innovativeness, tenacity and investment power required. This small island, located between China and the vast Pacific, has 24 million people with a strong work ethic, strong technical universities and a relatively low labor cost which makes it a great choice to use as a base for manufacturing wind energy components for

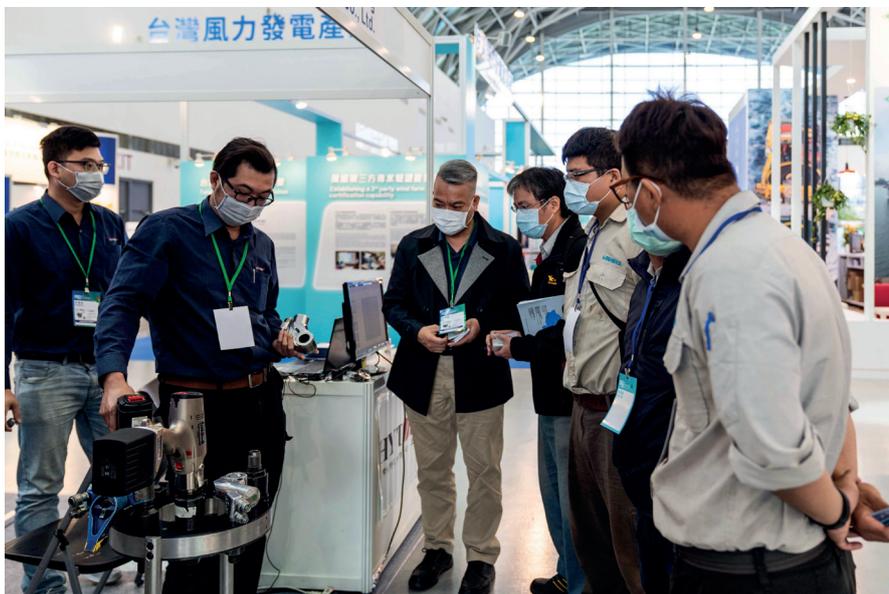
the local market and to export to the rest of Asia, as newer markets come online.

As the government contracts being awarded at this time are all offshore, this dominates attention. The argument, as in many other places, is that Taiwan is too crowded for onshore given its size and population density. But once harbors, industrial zones and freeways are taken into consideration this might change. And with the impressive development of floating wind, one wonders where the future development lies. The sizeable French delegation who made the trip despite the virus, certainly strengthened the floating wind discussion. For this reason, despite offshore getting a lot of airtime, the Wind Energy Asia welcomes all sectors of the wind industry.

The event has already become the focus of the industry in a market that cannot turn back. The elections in January confirmed Taiwan's commitment to democracy and amongst others, to green energy. Taiwan's energy independence is a must, to reduce its dependence on imports, to reduce pollution and improve air quality, to meet its commitment to international accords in the world's race to reduce CO2 emissions. The wind industry has recognized the value of Taiwan, and most developers and Tier 1 vendors have established their Asian headquarters here. The strong legal environment and respect for the rule of law is also a big factor. Foreign companies offering their technology can do it without the risk of being ripped off by their partner as many Asian horror stories tell. Strong tech-oriented partners interested in developing and upgrading into a growth market, are interested in joint-venturing for the long-term. Taiwan has a lot to offer. And definitely in wind energy. Come be a part of this exciting new industry in this unfolding market!

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Great conversations were had in the exhibition hall, with 136 companies showing their wares