

Plant making gas from wood opens in Austria

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Freshly cut trees. A new plant that produces gas from wood was opened in Austria on Wednesday, paving the way towards new possibilities in renewable energy.

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According to its backers, the [gas](#) produced at the plant can be used in urban heating systems, for gas-powered cars or by power stations that work on gas.

"We still need fossil fuel of course, but this plant shows what is technically possible," Austria's Environment Minister Nikolas Berlakovich said at the plant's inauguration.

The facility, located in Guessing southeastern Austria, a town renowned for being entirely energy self-reliant, can produce some 100 cubic metres of bio-gas per hour -- enough to heat 150 homes on a cold winter's day.

"The gas produced has the same quality as [natural gas](#)," said Richard Zweiler, from the European Centre for Renewable [Energy](#) (EEE), which is behind the project.

Funded by the European Union, Switzerland and Austria, the plant took three years to move from the pilot phase to the industrial phase. The project cost a total eight million euros (11 million dollars).

The so-called Guessing model is now due to be copied "in Germany and Sweden, and on a larger scale," Martin Kaltschmitt, head of the German Biomass Research Centre (DBFZ), told AFP.

A plant able to produce between 20 and 25 megawatts of power -- about 25 times bigger than the Guessing project -- is already in the works in Goteborg, Sweden.

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