Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0960-1481(18)30020-X
DOI: 10.1016/j.renene.2018.01.020
Reference: RENE 9625

To appear in: Renewable Energy

Received Date: 9 November 2017
Accepted Date: 8 January 2018


This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.
Clean vs. Green: 
Redefining Renewable Energy. 
Evidence from Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania

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Abstract

As the role that the society plays in energy and use of resources is of importance, what is vital is early education, as it is one of the pillars significantly influencing the planning of a “cleaner future” energywise, especially through utilizing energy-specific education techniques. Up to this point, it has been suggested that younger students tend to describe Renewable Energy Sources (RES) as ‘Clean’ rather than ‘Green’, while their selection in the color that best describes them is Yellow or White rather than Green. On the subject of redefining RES, a total of 1689 face-to-face surveys are conducted in schools in the Baltics and Eastern Europe countries, i.e. Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania, in order to further contribute on the discussion of which term -‘Clean Energy’ or ‘Green Energy’- is the term of choice for students of younger age with no or less formal education and experience on the subject of best naming RES. As far as the color to best represent RES is concerned, younger students tend to choose Yellow or White instead of Green, a choice that shifts to Green in higher grades. The results, with the exception of Lithuania where older students chose the term ‘Clean Energy’, confirm those of previous studies in Greece and Bulgaria, enhancing the importance of the elicitation of such preferences in order for energy issues to become part of the educational system of all levels. As Clean and Yellow or White are the terms of choice for naming and describing Renewable Energy Sources according to young students, it is imperative that the scientific community reconsiders and adjusts said preferences in education and research, for the better-future-implementation of renewable energy practices and use of resources.

Keywords: clean energy; education; energy; green energy; public awareness; renewable energy sources
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