

Post-Paris EU climate policy briefings

At the Paris Climate Summit, 195 governments agreed to reduce man-made greenhouse gas emissions to zero during the second half of this century and to limit average global temperature rise to 1.5°C. As signatories to the Paris Agreement, the EU and its Member States now need to revise and strengthen their climate and energy policies, and all other relevant policies to make them coherent with the Paris objectives. Our briefing papers provide a top line overview of the processes that will contribute to the needed zero-carbon transformation.

Further development of the Energy Union

April 2016

What?

European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker, created both a Vice-President position for the Energy Union and an Energy Union project team comprised of 14 Commissioners. The Commission published its proposal for an “Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy” in February 2015. The establishment of the Energy Union is based on “five mutually-reinforcing and closely interrelated dimensions”, i.e. energy security, a fully integrated energy market, moderating energy demand, decarbonising the economy and research & innovation. On 18 November 2015, the Commission released its first State of the Energy Union report, accompanied by other documents, including a roadmap on next steps. The State of the Energy Union report is expected to be released annually at the end of the year.

It is expected that the Commission in the future might consider to include recommendations for Member States in the State of the Energy Union. By doing so, it would replace similar recommendations that previously had been integrated in the European Semester process.

What is at stake?

The strategy for the establishment of the Energy Union framework recognises the need to move away from an economy driven by fossil fuels, but does not define a clear course of action towards reaching this goal, which should namely be through reducing energy demand and promoting renewable energy. This inconsistency poses a risk to the EU’s long-term climate objectives, undermining the efforts to maximise the benefits of decarbonising our economy. The Energy Union is an important opportunity to build a common vision for the future of the European Union’s energy system by setting a transformative agenda, which will lead to a 100% renewable energy future and an end to fossil fuel use by the middle of this century. This is urgently needed if the EU is going to do its fair share of the effort needed to avoid dangerous climate change and be in line with the Paris agreement to keep global temperature increase well below 2°C and pursue the 1.5°C temperature rise limit.

On energy efficiency particularly, the European Commission, in the State of the Energy Union, pledged to ensure that energy savings can compete on equal terms with generation capacity, which is broadly referred to as the “energy efficiency first” principle.

The Energy Union offers a potential alternative for the fact that the Commission seems to have opted to phase out recommendations on climate and energy and in particular on fossil fuel subsidies from the European Semester process.

Who are the key players?

For the European Commission: the members of the Energy Union team, under the leadership of Vice President Maros Sefcovic. The team consists of the following Commissioners: Arias Cañete (Climate Action



and Energy), Oettinger (Digital Economy and Society), Hahn (Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement), Malmström (Trade), Vella (Environment, Maritime and Fisheries), Thyssen (Employment and Social Affairs), Moscovici (Economic and Financial Affairs and Taxation), Hogan (Agriculture and Rural Development), Bulc (Transport), Bieńkowska (Internal Market, Industry and SMEs), Jourová (Justice and Consumers), Crețu (Regional Policy), Vestager (Competition) and Moedas (Research, Science and Innovation).

While the Vice-President will continue to have bilateral consultations with all Member States, the State of the Energy Union if not formally discussed by the Council of Ministers nor by the European Parliament.

What has happened, will likely happen and when?

February 2015: The European Commission published its proposal for an “Energy Union with a forward-looking climate policy”;

March 2015: The European leaders endorsed the Commission’s proposal;

18 of November 2015: The Commission released its 1st State of the Energy Union report;

November 2016: The 2nd State of the Energy Union is expected with possible recommendations for Member States.

CAN Europe’s position

We urge the European Commission to place renewable energy and energy efficiency at the heart of the Energy Union and accelerate the phase out of polluting and dangerous energy technologies from its energy system. The endorsement of the “energy efficiency first principle” by the Commission indicates that there is an opportunity to push for a clear articulation and implementation of the principle across the Energy Union framework.

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