

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

The Chairman

CONFIDENTIAL

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Jerzy Buzek
President
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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ACCES RESERVE

Dear President,

On Thursday 14 January 2010 the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy held a public hearing in accordance with Rule 106 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, with Mr Günther Oettinger, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Energy.

Prior to the hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions. The written answers provided by Mr Oettinger were considered satisfactory.

Mr Oettinger opened the hearing by making a statement, in which he declared the 20-20-20 targets (20% increase in energy efficiency, 20% energy from renewables sources and 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) are ambitious and challenging, but the principles for his action and the common task to complete for all institutions involved. He committed to build upon the steps and initiatives set by his predecessor. He stressed that the Lisbon Treaty provides for a comprehensive competence to develop a truly European Energy policy within the respect of the principle of subsidiarity. Facing the reality of import dependency and fossil fuels still being the major energy sources, the Commissioner-designate stressed his determination to work towards a paradigm shift in energy policy by developing a low-carbon economy. In order to achieve this shift, he outlined the following four priority actions during his mandate:

- (1) Assessing and revising the Energy Efficiency Action Plan;
- (2) Fostering the link between the internal and external dimension of energy policy;
- (3) Developing the energy infrastructure;
- (4) Correct transposition of the 3rd internal market package for the liberalisation of the energy markets.

Subsequently, Members addressed a series of oral questions to Mr Oettinger as regarding the four priorities outlined by the Commissioner-designate. Concerning the completion of the internal market Members raised in particular the issue of correct transposition of the 3rd energy package including the role of ACER, missing interconnectors for gas and electricity and support for infrastructure, fair access to the grids and the avoidance of energy islands as measures to avoid energy poverty.

As regards the external energy relations and fostering energy supply Members raised specifically the issue of implementation of energy solidarity, the role of energy storage for increasing energy supply, prospects of NABUCCO as well as other major gas infrastructure projects with third countries, energy relations with Russia and measure to avoid import dependency, as well as measure to enforce the solidarity principle.

Concerning the efforts to achieve the EU 20-20-20/30 targets, Members questioned the energy mix to achieve the ambitious targets, the role of the EU as regards nuclear energy, the means to achieve the 20% energy efficiency target and the need to make this objective a legally binding target, the role of bio energy and the development of bio energy sustainability criteria, support for research in energy technologies and delimitation of competences with other Commissioners in this field, setting global emissions standards for power plants, the role of hydropower.

Furthermore, some Members raised concerns concerning his independence vis-à-vis interests of the energy sector as well as the interests of the country he knows best. He reassured a significant majority of the Committee about his independence. Some Members, especially from the new Member States expressed concerns, whether Mr Oettinger will be able to act fully in accordance with the solidarity principle in EU energy policy, particularly in the complex relationship with Russia's state monopoly. He reassured the Committee about his commitment to solidarity.

He made in particular the following commitments with regard to the policy area he will be responsible of:

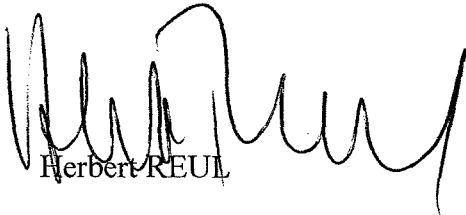
- to present a new action plan for energy efficiency based on the assessment of the current at the beginning of 2011;
- to consider making the 20% energy efficiency objective legally binding, if an assessment of the pursuit of this target in 2012 indicates that the EU will not be able to reach it;
- to present a report on the impact of biofuels and land-use, agriculture and food supply;
- to monitor the development of energy prices;
- to consider mandatory supply of basic energy needs to avoid energy poverty giving preference to a market-based solution (meaning to work towards the basic supply of energy for any person notably by considering to develop a code for energy companies, in order not to cut off supply);
- to develop safety rules according to the highest technically feasible standards for nuclear energy and waste management;
- to increase the EU industrial competitiveness as regards energy technologies;
- to develop and better coordinate financial support for energy efficiency measures, notably in the private building sector;
- to develop mobility based on electricity;
- to work on favorable conditions for smart grids;
- to work on a long-term vision for low-carbon energy supply;

- to support energy infrastructure, including strategic projects such as the Mediterranean Energy Ring and the Northsea offshore wind network as well as solar thermal cooperation with Africa and tidal energy;
- to involve Civil Society in policy deliberations,
- to monitor and to enforce the correct implementation of the third package for the liberalisation of the energy market;
- to work towards a strategic multilateral partnership including cooperation in the field of energy and industry with Russia;
- to give support the development of the Southern Corridor;
- to discuss with the Parliament a list of issues to be raised at the next European Spring Council;
- to fight for more budgetary resources for research in energy.

The nominee's understanding of the issues and problems raised during the questions were appreciated. It was particularly welcomed that he is convinced of the European added value of energy policy as well as his commitment to defend independently European interests. Members appreciated his long-standing experience as a Parliamentarian and his experience as the Prime Minister of an important region. His clear willingness to work closely with the Parliament and all its political parties and to fully exploit the potential of the new legal basis for energy policy provided by the Lisbon Treaty assured the Members of this Committee. Finally, he was perceived as a candidate with a European commitment and convincing communication skills.

In conclusion, Members considered that the Commissioner-designate gave a good impression of his aptitude to be a member of the College of Commissioners and of his possession of the necessary personal and professional skills, as well as political determination, to carry out the specific tasks assigned to him.

Yours faithfully,



Herbert REUL