

Bridge Forum Dialogue
8 June 2015
European Parliament – Schuman Building
“Energy Union: time for Europe to deliver”

Excellences

Mesdames, Messieurs,

Chers Amis

I warmly welcome you to today’s conference on **“Energy Union: a time for Europe to deliver”**.

To match the importance of the topic we are fortunate to have a speaker who is at the very heart of the matter at a European level - Vice President Maroš Šefčovič.

Vice President Šefčovič is the European Commissioner in charge of the Energy Union project team. President Juncker has assigned him the ambitious task ‘to bring about a resilient Energy Union with a forward looking climate change policy’ by the end of 2019.

Born in Bratislava, he studied law and joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1990's. He had a long and distinguished career in the Ministry.

His last position in the Ministry was as the Slovak Permanent representative to the EU from 2004 to 2009. Since October 2009 he has served as a European Commissioner.

He was briefly the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth (until February 2010) and he then became Commissioner for Inter-institutional relations and Administration (until November 2014). He is now the Commission Vice President responsible for 'Energy Union'.

He has long been a passionate advocate of the European project. For several years he has actively sought to engage with the public, businesses, non-governmental organisations to promote the role of the EU - to explain how it works and to promote greater participation.

Last year he published a book entitled 'Driving the EU forward' (2014) in which he set out what he had learned from these

audiences and also reflected on how to generate greater confidence in the EU and its institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's subject is one of the most complex and challenging issues in European politics.

In fact, it is the second time in a month that we have shared a platform on this issue. Vice President Šefčovič was the keynote speaker at the Court's recent conference on EU Energy Security in Brussels. It is a pleasure for me to see you again and to welcome you here in Luxembourg.

The audit of energy related topics is currently a priority for our audit work. We have produced reports on energy efficiency and renewable energy and we are currently carrying out performance audits on the security of energy supply and EU assistance to Ukraine.

So, permit me to highlight just two related aspects of today's complex topic.

The first is the 'security of energy supply', which the International Energy Agency defines as 'the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price'.

As the EU is not self-sufficient in energy, one of the challenges it faces is to reduce dependence on external suppliers. That problem is particularly acute in the Baltic states.

Another challenge is the need for effective EU energy infrastructure. There is no single European grid and the current disparate systems are not well integrated. So there is a need to improve the connection of energy networks across borders.

In addition to these hardware requirements there is also the need for software, in particular legislation, market structures and regulation to facilitate improvements in the security of energy supply.

That brings me to the second aspect I would like to highlight, namely the creation of an Internal energy market.

The EU's objective in creating a single energy market is not only to promote energy security but also to achieve efficiency gains, competitive prices and higher levels of service.

The Commission has long since had a mandate to establish a single market in which gas and electricity moves and is traded freely within and between member states.

Indeed, the Commission's first proposal on the internal energy market was made in 1992. Since then three legislative packages on market liberalisation have been enacted. But we do not yet have a single market in energy. So we can see that progress in this area is relatively slow.

In fact, harmonising energy markets across Member States has proved difficult.

Furthermore, developing the internal market has revealed a need for an EU level governance system. European regulators have a role in the oversight of the energy market, facilitating cross border cooperation as necessary, and also a role in consumer protection.

In this context, I understand the Commission is proposing to review the powers of the Agency for the cooperation of energy regulators (ACER).

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope I have succeeded in highlighting some of the challenges to be faced in this area, I now give the floor to you, Vice-President Šefčovič, to tell us about the Commission's proposals.