



## Energy efficiency will be ‘motto’ of EU energy union, Cañete says

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### IN BRIEF

Proposals for an EU energy union will include measures to dramatically cut power use by buildings, transport and household products, European climate chief Miguel Arias Cañete said. Energy-union policies will also include an EU liquefied natural gas strategy, plans to improve gas and power links between countries, and “a new renewable-energy package,” he said.

Proposals for an EU energy union will include measures to dramatically cut power use by buildings, transport and household products, European climate chief Miguel Arias Cañete said.

The European Commission is set to publish energy-union proposals for Feb. 25, in response to national calls for the EU to reduce its dependence on Russian energy supplies (see here).

Without an energy union, the EU “will remain dependent on a single supplier that views the sale of gas not simply as a commercial matter, but as a political weapon,” Cañete told a conference\* in Brussels today.

And the motto of this energy union should be “efficiency first,” he said.

With this in mind, the dossier on Feb. 25 will include or be followed by “new or updated legislation on eco-design, buildings, heating and cooling, and new measures for efficient vehicles – including promoting electro-mobility,” the commissioner said.

In particular, the EU needs a “new approach” to the energy efficiency of buildings, he said. About a third of the power consumed across the bloc is used

in the heating, cooling, construction and lighting of buildings.

Much of this energy can be saved through “investments in insulation,” Cañete said. “Most of the work here has to be done at a national level, but the commission can play a role by creating a framework.”

Cañete said the commission will also publish a “communication,” or guidelines, on energy-saving standards for heating and cooling. These will draw on EU experience setting eco-design and energy-labeling laws for household products, such as light bulbs and washing machines.

Critics in countries including the UK and Germany say eco-design laws represent unnecessary EU interference and block some popular products from the market (see here). But Cañete said eco-design and energy-labeling rules have been a success.

Europe could further reduce its reliance on Moscow by importing more liquefied natural gas, or LNG, from producers such as Norway, he said.

“This is why I will be proposing a new EU LNG strategy, and working to accelerate other infrastructure projects,” he said. “We should build the necessary infrastructure to bring this gas to where it is most needed in the EU.”

The energy union is likely to focus on investments in infrastructure to link national gas and electricity markets (see here).

Linking national markets also means making sure weather-based renewable energy can be absorbed into a power grid designed for fossil fuels and nuclear, Cañete said.

The commission will ask for comments on including renewable energy in the power grid, before proposing “a new renewable-energy package,” Cañete said.

Europe needs to create a market for renewable power that “competes freely in the overall electricity market” and “promotes efficiency,” he said.

– Governance system –

Despite commission pressure to cut energy use 30 percent by the end of 2030, EU government opted for a non-binding 27 percent target at talks last year (see here).

“The position of the commission is clear,” Cañete said today. “We would like a more ambitious target, and we would like it to be binding. The council [of EU heads of state and government] didn’t follow us. But we will establish a system

of governance, to make sure we achieve not just 27 percent, but at least 27 percent.”

The commission has said it will propose a “governance” system for EU climate-change targets later this year.

This means rules to explain how the targets will be enforced. As well as the non-binding energy-efficiency improvement, governments say a goal to boost the use of energy from renewable sources is only legally binding on the EU – not on individual countries.

***\* “The 2015 Energy Productivity Summit,” The Lisbon Council, Brussels, Feb. 17, 2015***

## **Linked Case File(s)**

EU Energy Union

Subjects : Emissions, Energy, Regulation

Industries : Construction, Consumer Goods, Consumer Industries, Electricity, Energy, Energy-intensive Industries, Manufacturing, Nuclear, Oil, Gas, Coal, Renewable

Regulators / Courts : EU Institutions

Jurisdiction : EU, Europe