

## EU needs ambitious goals and investments in green technology

Written by Morten Helveg Petersen on 9 December 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

In order to reach its climate goals, the EU should put its money where its mouth is and help industry become more environmentally friendly, argues Morten Helveg Petersen.



The easy answer to ensure that the EU meets and exceeds its 2030 energy and climate goals would be to be tough and launch infringement procedures.

As I see it, the European Commission must take a step in this direction if member states fail to achieve the agreed targets. However, while it is an easy answer, it is not and should not be the only answer.

Instead, we should be making the business case for the energy union. Energy efficiency, and the transition to a more sustainable energy system, are often presented as burdens that hamper business.

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Yet with the energy union, we have the opportunity to support new sustainable energy projects within the private sector. Planning and accountability are important, but they are not everything. We need to get investors on board and regulatory uncertainty is the biggest barrier.

It is crucial that we lay down a clear and coherent long term plan for energy - which includes predictable and sound legislation and policy. If we can agree on an energy union with a clear message of promoting sustainable energy that will send an investment signal to business.

In that perspective, investors will be confident in investing in low-carbon energy projects. They will immediately start to contribute in this field with new technologies and sustainable projects.

In my home country, Denmark, our energy mix includes 40 per cent wind power, which does not hamper Danish industry. If anything, this has carved out a significant competitive advantage, by being as innovative and efficient as possible and slashing energy overhead costs; Danish producers now benefit from a stronger position in their respective fields.

It hasn't been easy. But thanks to long-term planning and, of course, strict goals, the private sector has achieved a strong position when it comes to innovative clean technologies. We must capitalise on this strong position in order to compete with the US and China.

Energy and raw materials often represent 20 to 50 per cent of the EU manufacturing industry's overall production costs. Even though increasing energy efficiency leads to a reduction of these costs, energy prices still remain higher than for our major competitors, the US and China. We simply need to be the world leader in renewables and energy efficiency in order to stay competitive.

I believe that if the EU is able to build a competitive environment for businesses, where we allow to industry to make the right investments in energy efficient technologies and innovative solutions in order to be competitive, then Europe will be much closer to reaching its targets, both in terms of climate change and competitiveness.

Promoting renewables and ensuring our energy security goes hand in hand. If the EU can create a business atmosphere in which industry recognises the advantages of using energy efficiency and more sustainable sources of energy, we will both fight climate change, and reduce dependence on imported energy.

Both of these are crucial in order to achieve energy security for the EU. Of course, binding targets and launching infringement procedures are still part of the equation. And we still need to be ambitious.

We will invest in energy infrastructure in the coming years, but it is important to remember investments from the private sector, if we want to achieve cleaner and more secure energy for EU citizens.

## About the author

Morten Helveg Petersen (ALDE, DK) is a Vice-Chair of Parliament's industry, research and energy committee

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