

Energy Union: old wine in new bottles?

EUROCHAMBRES has mixed feelings about the Energy Union package, published by the European Commission today.

“All in all, the package looks rather like old wine in new bottles. Priorities might have shifted, but none of the strategies presented today are really new. The Commission has drawn the right conclusions from recent economic and political developments in some areas, but in others, there seems a lack of resolve to challenge Member States or come up with new approaches,” stated Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES.

Tackling fragmentation is rightly priority #1

On a plus note, Chambers welcome the Commission’s intended zero tolerance approach on the implementation and enforcement of existing energy legislation.

“The completion of the European internal energy market is clearly the lowest hanging fruit for reducing costs and securing supply, so it is encouraging that Vice-President Šefčovič recognises that the Commission must be much firmer on the enforcement of existing rules,” added Mr Abruzzini.

However, in order to create a genuine single market for energy, the EU must go far beyond this by developing harmonised EU-wide support schemes for renewable energy and by swiftly establishing clear EU-level rules for potential capacity mechanisms. Otherwise, there is a strong risk of even greater market fragmentation.

Coherence, competitiveness and energy efficiency

The continuing lack of a clear strategy for ensuring affordable and competitive energy wholesale prices is the package’s main deficiency. Future European semester Country Specific Recommendations should clearly outline measures to reverse the trend of increasing price pressure. Furthermore, efforts to boost the competitiveness of the European economy must not conflict with measures to reduce the Union’s carbon footprint.

Lastly, EUROCHAMBRES supports the energy efficiency focus on those sectors where the potential gains are highest, such as buildings and transport, but underlines that further cross-sectoral support measures, targeted in particular at smaller businesses with limited expertise and resources, are also required.

* Financial mechanisms to ensure uninterrupted energy supply when there are shortfalls in renewable sources.

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