

Oettinger is criticising the increasing costs of the climate protection policy

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On 4 October, the EU commissioner for energy, Gunther Oettinger warned of the excessive costs of climate protection which are leading to deindustrialisation and – as a consequence – to a dramatic fall in industry's share in the creation of the added value in the EU's economy. In his opinion, only the western and southern regions of Germany, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and Poland are still attaching great significance to industrial production. Oettinger also emphasised that energy costs had become dangerously high, and therefore he identified the pressure from the European Parliament to increase the rate of reduction in CO₂ as harmful. Oettinger expressed admiration for the US energy policy. This country has become significantly less dependent on imports owing to shale gas extraction.

Commentary

- Oettinger's statement may mean that the opinion that the present form of climate protection policy is harmful to the EU's economy is breaking through into the awareness of representatives of EU institutions at a time when the economy is plunged in crisis. The European Commission is expected to announce its new strategy soon for setting up more beneficial conditions for the development of industry in the EU. This may mean that the European Commission will reduce its engagement in supporting the acceleration of the rate in limiting CO₂ emissions by 2020 from the presently required 20% to 30% (in comparison to the level existing in 1989), which some member states have been pushing for.
- Oettinger's words can be seen as indirect criticism of the energy transformation in Germany, one of the central themes of which – along with lowering the dependence on imports of raw materials and the development of green technologies – is the reduction of CO₂ emissions. Industry representatives are also emphasising that this accelerated transformation is leading to a rapid increase in energy prices and mass redundancies in Germany. Furthermore, it is adversely affecting the situation of German producers of conventional energy. In turn, Oettinger has been criticised by pro-ecological circles, claiming that he does not understand the threats linked to climate change.
- However, Peter Altmaier, who has been the German minister for environmental protection since May this year, upholds Germany's stance that the CO₂ emissions level must be

reduced by 30%. Altmaier, who is coordinating the German energy transformation on behalf of Chancellor Merkel, in the transformation strategy he has devised, asserts that **Energiewende** is an opportunity for the German economy and that economic growth and climate protection are in fact two sides of the same coin, and not mutually exclusive goals. From the point of view of Germany, as one of the key exporters of green technologies and modern solutions in energy efficiency, this is economically reasonable. It would be even more so if Germany succeeded in propagating its transformation model across the entire EU and thus boosted the demand for German green technologies.

- However, there is still a problem with the lack of progress in the achievement of the other goals of the German energy transformation, such as the development of transmission networks or the construction of efficient, modern gas power plants. The federal government also fears increasing energy prices and private capital's unwillingness to make higher investments (for example, in the production of electric cars). Therefore, it should be expected that Germany will not only uphold its stance and continue to push through increasing CO₂ emissions reduction goals but it will also take other actions at the EU forum aimed at introducing regulations that will foster the development of renewable energy sources, including subsidising them from the EU budget.