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Germany’s position ahead of the climate and energy summit in Brussels

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Before the summit of the European Council on 23-24 October, Berlin has announced plans to champion the ambitious objectives of the EU’s energy and climate policy to 2030. The European Commission is proposing a reduction in carbon emissions by 40%, an increase of energy efficiency by 30% and an increase in the EU’s renewable energy sources ratio to 27% (the two latter objectives are not binding for EU countries). Germany has declared that it will push for three binding objectives at the summit which would see the EU’s member states going beyond the European Commission's proposal: a reduction in carbon emissions by at least 40%, with the option to increase that target in the future, a 30% share of renewable energy sources, and to enhance energy efficiency by 30%.

Commentary

- Despite an increase in carbon emissions in Germany in 2012-2013 and the lack of success in implementing the national plan to improve energy efficiency, Berlin is one of a group of the states that are lobbying for ambitious goals for the EU’s energy and climate policy. According to Germany's official position this is the most cost-efficient way to decarbonise the EU’s economy. In Germany's opinion, the development of a low-carbon economy will result in increased energy security, encourage investment, will generate innovation and also create jobs. It will, however, be difficult for Germany to defend its position. Only the UK, Denmark, Luxembourg and Portugal support Germany in official statements in maintaining the goal to reduce carbon emissions by at least 40%. As for the binding target of energy efficiency, Germany's allies are: Denmark, Luxembourg and Portugal. As regards the binding target for the share of renewable energy sources in energy production only Denmark is with Germany in supporting this in declarations. The outcome of the negotiations will depend greatly on support from France, Italy and the countries of Central Europe.
- Germany’s own economic interests are an important driver for its wish to push the EU’s policy towards such ambitious goals. The German energy strategy assumes that by 2050 80% of electricity will come from renewable energy sources and carbon emissions will have fallen back by 95% against 1990 levels. One of the goals of Germany's foreign policy to open up foreign markets to German “green technologies”. According to government analyses, Germany is the global leader in this market and the creation of legal framework

for the development of the environmental protection industry in other countries will be advantageous for German exports. Furthermore, for Berlin it is important to negotiate an ambitious agreement ahead of the world's climate summit in Paris planned for December 2015.

- There is consensus in Germany both among the political parties and business circles regarding the need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to decarbonise the economy. The vast majority of German society supports the position of the political elite; according to most Germans their country has a moral obligation to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and to develop a low-carbon economy. The commitment of the German political elite to environmental protection stems both from their pro-environmental position and Germany's economic and political interests. Germany has played a leading role in environmental protection since the 1980s and it is determined to maintain this position.