

Opening speech VP-designate for Energy Union

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Messieurs les presidents,

Honorables parlementaires,

Mesdames, Messieurs,

1. Introduction

En 2010, **Jerzy Buzek** a déclaré, ensemble avec **Jacques Delors**, je cite : "*Il faut un changement radical dans la manière dont nous produisons et consommons l'énergie.*"

Nous sommes convaincus que l'Europe a besoin d'une politique énergétique commune plus forte".

Dans ses orientations politiques, le Président élu Jean-Claude Juncker s'est fondé sur cette vision pour appeler de ses vœux une "Union plus résiliente sur le plan de l'énergie, dotée d'une politique visionnaire en matière de changement climatique". Dans la lettre de mission qu'il m'a adressée, il m'a chargé – sous réserve bien sûr que je sois confirmé par votre institution – d'orienter et de coordonner

des initiatives clés destinées à accomplir concrètement cette vision.

Je suis très fier et très honoré que cette priorité m'ait été confiée. Les politiques de l'énergie et du changement climatique se sont clairement déplacées ces dernières années en haut de l'agenda politique européen.

Aujourd'hui, l'Europe doit relever **deux défis** énergétiques immédiats :

- Assurer sa **sécurité énergétique** dans le contexte de crise entre la Russie et l'Ukraine ;
- Lutter contre le **changement climatique**, avec les négociations à venir lors du prochain sommet de Paris.

2. Personal remarks

Vážení členovia Európskeho Parlamentu !

Tak ako som už spomenul na mojom nedávnom hearingu, 25 rokov po páde **Železnej opony** a 10 rokov od zjednocujúceho rozšírenia Európskej únie sa stále stretávame s negatívnymi dôsledkami tohto vyše polstoročia trvajúceho umelého rozdelenia Európy, ktoré sa prejavujú chýbajúcimi strategickými prepojeniami v dopravnej a energetickej infraštruktúre.

Ak sme jej dobudovanie donedávna posudzovali najmä z ekonomického hľadiska, udalosti posledných rokov urobili z tejto otázky jednu z najdôležitejších strategicko-politických a bezpečnostných priorít EÚ. Chcem vás ubezpečiť, že presne týmto spôsobom túto otázku vnímam aj ja a preto k nej budem pristupovať s maximálnou zodpovednosťou.

Vážený páni predsedovia, vážený poslanci, spolu s Vami **som kandidoval** a bol zvolený do Európskeho parlamentu. Občania mi na predvolebných stretnutiach kládli na srdce, aby sme sa v EÚ venovali hlavne

otázkam, ktoré ich najviac trápia. Aby sa nemuseli báť o prácu, mohli žiť v zdravom životnom prostredí a pozeráť do budúcnosti s optimizmom a presvedčením, že najhoršiu krízu sme prekonali a poučili sa z nej. Takmer v každom z mojich rozhovorov s občanmi sa objavila téma cien energií, ochrany životného prostredia, či dopravnej infraštruktúry.

Honorable Members,

I will never forget the **winter of 2009**, when Slovakia, literally plunged into darkness. For over 2 weeks the economy was at standstill, factories closed and energy was provided only for households and hospitals. You know very well that Slovakia was not the only country in such a situation. I am convinced that without true European solidarity and almost immediate European assistance the consequences would have been horrible. It is our solemn

duty to make sure that our citizens do not face such a situation again.

It is important that we have learnt from the crisis. As the recent **gas stress test** shows, we are much better prepared than any time before. This includes being able to help **Ukraine** through reverse flows from Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. And rightly so, because we see that Russia is increasingly using gas supply as an instrument of pressure and as a political "weapon" against Ukraine and other countries, who want to help her. This is totally unacceptable and if I get your

support I will address the issue of energy security with the utmost attention and with the general European interest in mind.

The stress tests also show that the negative impacts of a gas disruption can be mitigated, if countries work together, instead of adopting purely national approaches. **The time for a European Energy Union has clearly come.** To those who are sceptical about this strategic decision I would say: 70 years ago united a Europe was just a dream; crossing the border from Slovakia to Austria was

unthinkable just 25 years ago. A common currency or a banking union were also considered totally unrealistic. But as **Nelson Mandela** said: *“It always seems impossible until it’s done”*.

3. The five pillars of a new European Energy Union

So, how should we do that? What should a new European Energy Union look like?

I would like to build, together with you and Member States, a new European Energy Union based on five pillars:

a) Security, solidarity and trust

The EU is a major energy market with half a billion consumers. The EU imports 53% of its energy. That costs us € 400 billion a year. We are the biggest energy customer in the world. Do we behave like that? Do we pull our international weight accordingly ? Are we able to push for fairer prices and more balanced market conditions ?

Definitely not. Our inability to speak with one voice clearly limits our influence. It is time for a more assertive **European**

Energy diplomacy where our energy interests feature permanently amongst our top foreign and trade policy priorities. Better **energy policy coordination** is necessary to resist undue pressure from third countries and to avoid market distortions due to agreements with third countries not respecting EU rules. I am in favour of a European debate leading to a consensus in order to give a mandate to the European Commission to negotiate international agreements on behalf of the EU with third countries.

Building up the Energy Union also means close cooperation with **our neighbours** with a view to better integrating the respective markets. Let me emphasize the importance of the **Energy Community** in this respect.

We must explore **common purchasing of gas**. Of course we have to respect the competition and WTO rules. But I believe we should try it and I want to see Europe using the € 400 billion argument more vehemently.

Real co-ordination also means that no Member State should modify its energy system without prior consultation of its partners and without analysing the potential consequences on their systems.

A further important element is the **diversification of supply** both as regards routes and energy suppliers. We should work intensely on the Southern Corridor to get Caspian gas to Europe. We must further develop our partnership, with Norway, promote the project of the Mediterranean gas hub, including developing energy cooperation with

Algeria. Moreover, the development of LNG terminals opens new possibilities of imports.

b) A competitive and completed internal market

A completed internal market will represent the backbone of the new European Energy Union. This requires increasing cross-border flows, more regional cooperation and a better connected infrastructure. EU legislation needs to be improved, reinforced and fully applied. We need to maintain the

competitiveness of EU industry and to secure affordable energy prices for households, in particular the most vulnerable ones.

We need to have adequate energy **infrastructure** with good interconnections, in particular to integrate renewables into the grid and to unlock energy islands. Structural Funds, CEF, joint investments and the future Juncker Investment Package can contribute to the financing of these energy infrastructure projects.

c) Moderation of demand

To keep our energy bills in check and improve our energy security, we need to moderate our energy demand. **Energy efficiency** has to be perceived more as the "first energy resource". The cleanest megawatt is the one saved. Energy efficiency should be significantly enhanced beyond 2020. Improving energy efficiency will not only increase energy security, but also enhance the competitiveness of European industries. I fully support the President-elect's commitment to energy efficiency and agree that our priority areas

should be buildings, transport and products.

d) Decarbonisation of the EU energy mix

I want to continue the successful reduction of **greenhouse gas emissions**.

We need to be ambitious with our targets for 2030.

I am fully committed to make the EU the world number one in **renewable energies**.

Already in 2012 the EU had installed about 44% of the world's renewable electricity.

We also have the global leadership in renewables technologies. This is also

about showcasing our industry and creating more than 4 million "green jobs". Member States will, of course, keep the right to decide on their energy mix.

At the international level, all efforts should be undertaken to reach a meaningful international climate change agreement at the end of **2015 in Paris**. The EU has long been the driving force in the UN climate negotiations and this should remain so!

e) Research and innovation

Further investment in research and innovation is crucial. In particular, the EU needs to step up its efforts to bring new, high performance, low-cost, low-carbon energy technologies to the market. New technologies and solutions are vital to achieve the EU2030 objectives in energy, climate, economic and social policy, and beyond.

So these are the five building blocks on which I believe we will be able to create a resilient Energy Union, coupled with a forward-looking climate change policy. We cannot, in my opinion, have one without the other. I am convinced that an integrated approach will enable the Union to harvest both the environmental and economic benefits and tap into the job potential for "green growth".

4. Conclusions

Chairmen,

Honourable members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago, I had my hearing on Transport and Space. Today, I will do my best to win your support for the new portfolio attributed to me last Wednesday. I will not pretend that I became an energy expert overnight.

But I did my best to prepare as much as I could for this hearing.

If I get your support, I will do my utmost to make sure that we will build a European Energy Union together. A lot can be accomplished in 5 years.

I believe that all of us owe to our citizens to make sure that the vision of a European Energy Union becomes a reality.

Thank you!