

Regional cooperation: cornerstone of the Energy Union Governance

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European Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union, Maroš Šefčovič, highlighted today that cooperation among Member States in different regions of the EU will be a cornerstone of the Energy Union Governance. “I am a strong believer that the road to the fully integrated energy system in Europe leads through an improved and intensified cooperation at regional level”, he said while connecting live from Bratislava during his keynote speech at ACER’s Annual Conference 2017.

In his opening speech, ACER Director Alberto Pototschnig underlined the successful experience in the past with regional voluntary cooperation: “Without such an early implementation effort, EU consumers would have had to wait a lot longer, and most probably would still be waiting, before reaping the benefits of an integrated internal energy market”. The Conference, entitled “Regions for the Internal Energy Market”, was structured in three sessions, focussing respectively on which aspects are best dealt at regional level, the geographical scope of regional cooperation and the governance and regulatory aspects.

The “Clean Energy for all Europeans” package presented by the Commission in November promotes strong regional cooperation as the most efficient and effective means to reach the Energy Union objectives. According to the Commission, better regional cooperation among governments, regulators, transmission system operators and even research centres will lead to a fully integrated energy system at EU level, which will bring savings of up to 9 billion euros a year compared to a purely national approach.

What will ACER do in this context?

The November Package foresees a stronger role for ACER in coordinating regional decision-making. Among other new tasks, ACER will oversee Regional Operational Centres for Transmission System Operators (TSOs), supervise nominated electricity market operators and develop the methodologies for the EU wide generation adequacy assessment.

Morten Helveg Petersen, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) underlined in a video message that “ACER’s job is absolutely key in order to ensure a well-functioning energy market that will benefit all energy consumers all over Europe”. However, “ACER should have adequate resources and the tools to conduct oversight, and the Agency currently lacks both,” he said. Petersen also suggested that for a stable funding of the Agency, the institutions should look into the possibility of ACER being able to collect fees for certain services.

The Conference opened with a welcome address by the Slovenian Minister of Infrastructure, Peter Gašperšič. Consumer associations also intervened on their expectations from the regional approach to market integration. One of the highlights of the day was a keynote speech by Norman Bay, former Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission of the United States. The sessions were moderated by Lord Mogg, Chair of ACER’s Board of Regulators; Dr Romana Jordan, Chair of ACER’s Administrative Board; and Mr Andris Piebalgs, Chair of ACER’s Board of Appeal. The concluding remarks were provided by Dominique Ristori, European Commission Director General for Energy.

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