

THE EUROPEAN ENERGY UNION: A CHANCE FOR FRANCE

Yves Bertoncini | *Director of the Jacques Delors Institute*

Thomas Pellerin-Carlin | *Research fellow, Jacques Delors Institute*

Between 2007 and 2017, a European Energy Union has emerged, incomplete and imperfect, but real and beneficial. It makes us more independent, creates jobs, improves purchasing power and protects us from climate change, air pollution and blackouts. We however still have a long way to go to fulfil the ambition set by Jacques Delors. In the energy sector as in others, true French patriotism consists in engaging France in Europe.

On the ruins of the Second World War, the Founding Fathers of Europe sought to make war between Europeans unthinkable and materially impossible. This mission has been accomplished, to the extent that peace is no longer an argument that speaks volumes to the Europeans of today. Among the new borders of European integration, there is one that is making progress: the European Energy Union.

European integration in the 1950s was based on coal and nuclear power, through the ECSC and Euratom Treaties. After this positive start, half a century was lost. The wake-up call came in 2007 when the 27 Heads of State and Government embarked upon a true European energy policy, influenced by the need to fight climate change. Within ten years, a European Energy Union emerged, incomplete and imperfect, granted, but real and beneficial.

The European Energy Union aims to ensure the energy security of Europe, to fight climate change and to keep energy affordable by creating a real common energy policy (approved by 73% of Europeans). To succeed the transition towards an efficient and clean energy system, Europe is progressing through energy efficiency and renewable energy, two tools approved by 90% of Europeans.

The European Energy Union has already seen some striking and too little known achievements. Among the three goals adopted in 2007 for the year 2020, two have already been reached and the third one is within our grasp!

- Europe is the only continent in the world to have managed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions: the goal of -20% by 2020 was reached and exceeded in 2014 (-23%).

- The same applies for energy efficiency, which we improved by 23%, thanks in particular to the standardisation of energy-consuming products and appliances and to the improvement of the energy performance of buildings.
- The goal of 20% of renewable energy in the European energy mix by 2020 is within reach, as in 2015 we managed to reach 17%.

At global level, Europe has paved the way and allowed the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement, a necessary stage in the global fight against climate change.

The European Energy Union makes us more independent. The proactive approach in terms of energy efficiency and renewable energy makes us more autonomous in a world that is ever more unpredictable. By consuming less oil and gas, we are limiting our dependence on the discretionary and destructive power of Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ISIS and Saudi Arabia.

The decrease in greenhouse gas emissions protects the French from catastrophic climate change. We only have to think of the droughts destabilising Syria, the Sahel and Central Africa, sparking wars and forced emigration. These droughts also affect our farmers and viticulturists to an ever growing extent.

The European Energy Union also saves lives. Some 48,000 French people die every year because of air pollution. The adoption of ambitious measures, including those currently proposed by the European Commission, will protect the French against polluting particles and thus save thousands of lives.

In France, renewable energy represents 200,000 jobs. Energy efficiency creates and saves hundreds

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of thousands of jobs: workers in the building industry and the insulation industry (double glazing, glass wool, etc.). France is home to some of the world leaders such as Schneider Electric and Saint Gobain. Today, we can make Europe the world leader in the energy transition and create hundreds of thousands of quality jobs. This should go hand in hand with a Green Erasmus for apprentices working in energy transition sectors, in order to enhance apprenticeship in France and help thousands of young French people to find a decent job in a promising sector.

There are also gains in purchasing power. The European Union forced industrialists to propose more energy-efficient products, and to affix simple labels with clear information. In this way, a household today can easily decide to purchase a more efficient appliance and save up to €450 per year.

The European Energy Union also secures electricity supply for the French population. Every winter, the French electricity system is on the verge of implosion due to past choices in favour of nuclear power and electric heating. If a blackout has not yet occurred, it is because Europe has created a wholesale electricity market, integrated at European level, with electricity interconnections generated in a coordinated manner,

which guarantees that even at times of the greatest demands, the Belgians, Germans, Italians and Spanish supply France with electricity. Without this effective solidarity, several million French people would have spent several evenings in January 2017 in the dark and cold, and, regularly, our industrial areas would be deprived of power, thus causing temporary lay-offs for employees.

The European Union is a highly imperfect construction. Its Energy Union still has a long way to go to fulfil the [ambition set by Jacques Delors and Jerzy Buzek](#) in 2010. It is for this reason that we continuously propose [avenues](#) for improvement of what can be, and of radical change for what should be. Nevertheless, the progress made in less than ten years is enormous and shows that it is possible to do more for the benefit of all.

If the next President of the French Republic wants to protect the French people against energy insecurity, air pollution, climate change or the announced failure of the energy system inherited from the choices of the 1960s, he or she should engage in an ambitious European Energy Union. In the energy sector as in others, true French patriotism consists in engaging France in Europe.

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