

Transport and energy ministers discuss meeting decarbonisation targets in the transport and energy sectors

The promotion of energy from renewable sources, energy efficiency and issues related to the common challenges posed by the implementation of mass e-mobility were discussed today at an informal meeting of transport and energy ministers chaired by Minister of Infrastructure Jernej Vrtovec at Brdo pri Kranju.

With energy production and use accounting for 75% of emissions in the European Union, energy ministers agreed this morning that the transition to a greener energy system would need to be accelerated in the future. They discussed two recast legislative proposals, the directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and the energy efficiency directive. The two directives are part of the "Fit for 55" package.

The revision of the renewable energy directive proposes to increase the EU target for the share of energy from renewable sources to 40%.

To cost-effectively facilitate the further growth of renewable energy sources, we need to integrate them in all sectors of the economy, in line with the vision for the future energy system and empower citizens and businesses to use more renewable energy sources.

The directive strengthens existing measures relating to heating and cooling and complements them with new provisions on buildings and industry.

The energy ministers also discussed the recast energy efficiency directive, which proposes higher and binding targets at the EU level for 2030, leading to a 9% reduction in energy consumption by 2030 compared to the new 2020 baseline. Participants in the discussion agreed that, in order to support the achievement of this higher binding target, the indicative national contributions would need to be calculated

based on a set of objective criteria reflecting the national circumstances of each member state.

In their discussions, the ministers could not overlook the rising energy prices across the European Union. As Minister Vrtovec said after the meeting, several factors are contributing to the recent rise in energy prices, such as weather conditions, developments on world energy markets and the post-pandemic economic recovery. "It is understandable that it will be difficult to avoid price pressures for end users. As electricity and natural gas are market goods, EU member states do not have, nor can they have, specific levers to regulate the market component of the price, however countries are taking different approaches to mitigate the impact of price increases in the regulated price component," said the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister Vrtovec said he felt that to mitigate these impacts in the future would include reducing import dependency on fossil fuels by focusing on the use of domestic, low-carbon sources. "There will also be a need to reduce the general amount of energy used by increasing energy efficiency, which will contribute to reducing the costs for the end user and maintain the robustness and full integration of the internal energy market – both for gas and electricity – that through optimised operation can definitely prevent market anomalies", clarified Minister Vrtovec.

This was followed by a joint informal meeting of transport and energy ministers. They discussed policy measures and the regulatory framework for planning charging infrastructure for road transport and measures in the electricity sector. With transport accounting for almost a quarter of EU's greenhouse gas emissions and being the main cause of urban air pollution, the EU is focusing its efforts on supporting the growing demand for road transport, while reducing related emissions and promoting the use of electricity and renewable fuels.

"EU member states should ensure that the combined efforts of market participants and regulators meet future mobility and energy needs in a comprehensive manner, taking into account a whole range of factors such as traffic flow, the road network, electricity markets and grids, in order to create an efficient publicly accessible charging network with broad geographical coverage", emphasised Minister Vrtovec.

The debate showed that the two sectors are about to face an important common challenge. The transport and energy sectors will have to work hand in hand to find and implement solutions to support e-mobility at regulatory, technological and implementation levels. A cross-sectoral approach will be the key to a sustainable transition and to optimising investments in both charging infrastructure and energy networks. This will also enable a sustainable transition to mass e-mobility. However, EU member states have also highlighted their specificities, which will need to be adequately addressed during the process. These are particularly issues of sparsely populated and peripheral regions, where a market-based approach will not lead to adequate answers.

EU member states have drawn attention to a major challenge of ensuring sufficient geographical coverage with charging infrastructure, where large-scale investments are needed. Both public and private funding will need to be combined. Especially in the first phase a key role will be played by public funds, particularly European ones such as the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Connecting Europe Facility, until there is sufficient market interest.

Ministers also called for the development of pan-European and user-friendly solutions: access to information, easy to use systems, price transparency, simple payment methods and digitalisation.

Another important message from the debate was that in the transition to zero-carbon mobility care must be taken to maintain the competitiveness of the transport sector and European industry.

The meeting will continue tomorrow with a debate by transport ministers on the proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of infrastructure for alternative fuels in transport, which is part of the "Fit for 55" legislative package.