

FOREWORD

by Jacques Delors

Extract from:
Sami Andoura,
"Energy solidarity in Europe:
from independence to interdependence",
Studies & Reports No. 99,
Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, July 2013.

The European Union is a political construction which needs to submit positive projects to its citizens. While the crisis in the euro area focuses all the attention, a positive agenda is needed in the whole of the European Union, turned to an outside changing world. The next European elections will take place in May 2014. The EU will need to be able to promote a positive agenda based on a handful of concrete projects and policies. The European Energy Community that we propose is one such project.

The deep-seated changes impacting a European energy sector in a state of transition – concerning not only its structure and its competitiveness, along with the requirements of sustainable development – all carry a fully-fledged project for a European energy policy. This major challenge also requires in-depth changes in society and in the way we produce, transport and consume energy. This project also has the merit of having a practical relevance to citizens and consumers, given the persistence of acute social problems linked to access to stable and affordable energy for all. Its success implies as such the full participation of all the active forces of civil society in Europe.

A great deal of progress has been made since 2007 towards a common European energy policy. But these progresses should not make us forget the risk linked to the current, worrying trend towards a forceful return to nationalism in the energy field in Europe, whether it be in the context of national energy transition processes clashing with one another, or unilateral approaches around the development of renewable energy sources and security of electric power supply. Those unilateral national political decisions ignore the existing real interdependence with neighbouring countries, not consulted, and may destabilise the European energy system altogether, sometimes leading to unnecessary and costly investment for citizens.

In this context, a European Energy Community must be built first and foremost on common and concrete steps regarding the three main aspects, as basis of the European Single Act which led to the creation of the single market, which are the stimulating factor of competition among industrial players, the strengthening factor of cooperation among member states, and the uniting factor of European solidarity among all actors.

Where “**the stimulating factor of competition**” is concerned, it is by completing the integration of a competitive and integrated internal energy market of European dimension that industrial energy players will be able to become competitive on the European and international level, and that energy resources can be better optimised in the EU.

Where “**the strengthening factor of cooperation**” is concerned, mandating cooperation between responsible national actors should become structured and inevitable, building on the strengths and weaknesses of each. Political, economic and structural cooperation among neighbouring countries, a missing link in today’s policy, would have energy infrastructures (transport, distribution, and also common planning), on a regional basis between neighbouring countries within the EU, for its foundation stone. If this cooperation proved successful, many others might follow, whether the joint funding of these infrastructures, ambitious research and development programmes, etc.

And lastly, where “**the uniting factor of solidarity**” is concerned, security of supply demands a common approach in a spirit of solidarity through collective internal mechanisms of prevention and management of supply crises in the areas of gas and electricity, but also through the diversification of energy sources and resources. This, in particular, because certain member states, which are still excessively dependent on a single foreign supplier, cannot manage to diversify their energy mixes. This involves developing the pooling of common supply capacities in exceptional circumstances, what an interconnected market should allow, but also to negotiate at EU level the necessary framework agreements with suppliers and transit countries. The success of such a project would also illustrate further progress of the EU common foreign policy.

Back in 1951, six European countries decided to pool their interests in two key areas of the economy in order to create a Community designed to replace conflict with cooperation and animosity with prosperity. Energy was one of those areas and solidarity was one of its founding principles. Almost sixty years later, energy is still a major political and economic priority, of course, but the common rules permitting us to achieve the goals of our own era need to be further enhanced. It is up to us to reinvent those rules together, and they must be equal to the new challenges that Europe has to address. Vague formulas or barren proclamations will not be enough if Europe wishes its citizens to go on believing in its ideal. The imperatives of energy solidarity remain essential, and as such must inspire the necessary changes in future European energy policy.

Jacques Delors

*founding president of Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute,
former minister and former president of the European Commission (1985-1994)*