

Commission: Council of Ministers for Energy and Ecological Transition

Subject: What solutions are available to provide the EU with a sustainable, independent energy supply, while its traditional model of sourcing is being challenged?

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Belgium is a country with 11.59 million inhabitants belonging to the European Union. It borders the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Germany and the nearest sea area is the North Sea. It has been an independent country since 4 November 1830 following the Belgian revolution. It is a stable regime with a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy under the principle of representative democracy. Decision-making power does not lie exclusively with the federal government and the federal parliament. Alexander De Croo is the Prime Minister and has the title of Head of Government, although this title could also be given to King Philippe of Belgium. Member of the European Union since its creation. Belgium is totally dependent on foreign sources of energy, especially natural gas, oil and coal, whereas in the 19th century the Belgian energy sector contributed strongly to the economic development with the expansion of coal mining. Belgium's consumption of primary energy is clearly above average, being 2.5 times higher than the world average. Obviously, the sources of energy supply are being questioned in view of this Belgian consumption.

First of all, the energy sector has to face the major energy challenges of the beginning of the 21st century such as climate change, energy efficiency and energy transition. Currently there is a debate that is not yet closed in our country. Since the vote in 2003 of a law that prohibits the construction of new power plants and therefore the closure of existing ones, we are asking ourselves the question of the future of the Belgian nuclear industry, which occupies an important part of the electricity production in Belgium, our country has 7 reactors, and the relevance of closing the power plants in operation. We represent a country that is a major user of natural gas. We have the city of Zeebrugge, which is the hub of natural gas transport in Belgium, with its LNG port and its liquefied natural gas processing facilities. Belgium has a strategic position as a continental crossroads between the producer countries, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway, and between the consumer countries to the south and east. Belgium is currently second to last among the major EU countries in terms of decarbonisation of electricity production, as most fossil fuels are used in electricity production.

We are of course in favour of sustainable energy independence for the EU, while taking into account the fact that there is a current questioning of its energy supply sources. Let us take the law of 31 January 2003 as an example of our commitment. This law proposes a gradual phase-out of nuclear energy for the purpose of industrial electricity production. Our country tends to want to get out of nuclear power while at the same time putting the issue of nuclear waste ahead of time. Belgium wants to create its own energy so that it is no longer dependent on neighbouring countries such as Russia. To this end, on 19 March 2022, our Prime Minister announced the extension of the two most recent reactors until 2025 and all of this in the context of the uncertainty of the fossil fuel supply due to the conflict in Ukraine. In 2019, our country produced most of its energy from nuclear power (46.6%) and fossil fuels (30.3%), adding to this the fact that our country produces renewable energies which reach 22.7%. These renewable energies are also a point studied in our government, as said before the 22.7% of Belgian energy comes from and all this thanks to

the use of wind (10.2%), biomass (4.4%), solar energy (4.2%), waste (2.6%) and hydro (1.3%).

However, we do not want to leave the energy situation as it is now. We plan to use energy rationally. Most of the gas comes from Norway, 34%; this allows us to be less than 6.5% dependent on gas from Russia given its current situation and we intend to keep the nuclear power plants active to provide electricity. The protection of nuclear power plants so that they remain active throughout the winter by avoiding maintenance shutdowns as much as possible, such as the TIHANGE 2 plant under the control of the AFCN (Federal Agency for Nuclear Control), is therefore essential for Belgium. We will also rely on solidarity with neighbouring countries by exporting energy to avoid a crisis in the European Union. This solidarity will be based more on the transport of liquefied gas, since this does not depend on pipelines, even though the whole of the European Union remains 45% dependent on Russian natural gas imports. Like most countries in the EU, CO2 reduction is becoming a priority in the fight against global warming. Thus, the various industries will have to develop new systems to emit less steam into the air. With this, we will increase the use of renewable energies. "Today, we are giving a boost to energy cooperation. Belgium is a European energy crossroads. Today gas for Germany and tomorrow the energy of the future: renewables and green hydrogen," said Belgian Energy Minister Tinne Van Der Straeten on Twitter. Our goal is to invest in wind energy. The idea is to triple the wind capacity in the Belgian North Sea so that every Belgian household will be supplied with electricity from the North Sea in the near future.

Finally, we mainly count on the effort of citizens to reduce energy consumption, which will lead to lower prices to encourage them, even if awareness campaigns will be created.

Belgium intends to become energy independent by creating new sources of clean supply for our country. We are counting on our great nuclear power and our investment in renewable energies to move forward. The participation of the inhabitants is not indifferent since we are aware that we consume too much energy and the fact that the citizens lower their consumption could support our project. Thanks to the participation of our inhabitants, the price of energy can be lowered even more to protect our consumers from price vulnerability. Finally, we are fully aware of climate change, so Belgium wants to increase the use of renewable energies by accelerating projects such as the deployment of new solar and wind projects.