

# INTERVIEW ANDREJ PLENKOVIC

Member of the European Parliament



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*Andrej Plenkovic is a Member of the European Parliament from the HDZ, Croatian Democratic Union (EPP). In the last HDZ Government, he was State Secretary for European Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and was particularly active in the EU membership referendum campaign. Mr. Plenkovic was recently elected Vice-chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Ukraine of the European Parliament.*

## **What is your opinion on the importance of EU Foreign Affairs in current energy-related issues?**

To set the preconditions necessary for our citizens' well-being, we need to ensure a sustainable growth for the European economy. To achieve this goal, we need stable resources and sufficient energy. In 2012 the EU managed to provide only 46.6% of its energy demand. A coordinated support is required to secure our energy supply. In my recent visit to Ukraine, I have witnessed fragility of economic relations due to a political crisis. However, the European Foreign Affairs' role embraces a wide variety of activities including energy security through our economic diplomacy.

## **What is the meaning of energy security from your perspective? How important is it for European economy?**

Various factors influence the security of energy supply: import dependency, geographical diversification of energy imports and diversification of energy sources. All of these factors influence the extent to which a country is vulnerable and to which our economy depends on the political situation of other countries. However, one of the biggest strengths is that the EU protects the interests of all Member States, and securing a stable energy supply is very high on the priority list of the EU Foreign Affairs.

## **What are both short and long term solutions?**

Jean-Claude Juncker, as President of the EC, has set ten policy priorities. One of them is "A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward Looking Climate Change Policy". Juncker states that we need to diversify our energy sources and reduce the high-energy dependency of several of our Member States. Besides diversifications, strong partnerships with fuel exporting countries should be established. It is a difficult task because not only diplomatic skills but also large investments in infrastructure are needed. It is important to have a vision of European energy supply system in the future: EU dependency on energy carriers imported from neighbouring areas should be reduced in the long run.

## **It means that we have to meet our energy demand locally with the RES we have at our disposal.**

We should not only increase energy security but also reduce our carbon footprint, shifting to a zero-carbon society. The Euro-

pean Council in October 2014 confirmed the EU target for 2030 for 40% greenhouse gas emission reductions, fully in line with the ambitious 2050 objective: -80 to 95% compared to 1990 levels. This will not only help to mitigate global warming but also secure millions of new high-tech jobs that will boost growth, investments and help restore Europe's competitiveness. Moreover, a big proportion of the additional €300 bn investments that the Commission plans in the next three years will be earmarked for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

I also believe that coordinated support is crucial in achieving ambitious goals in any field. Therefore, local-level actions are equally important as large-scale European strategic infrastructure projects. There are many successful examples of so-called bottom-up approach in project development. Small-scale renewable energy projects can create jobs for young educated people and boost local economy.

## **The EU commitment in environmental protection has an impact on European economy.**

World leaders have agreed to fight global warming and to have a new global agreement on GHG reduction by the UN Climate Summit in Paris in 2015. The EU is currently leader in these negotiations, trying to persuade other countries to commit to this target. However, there is a challenge at the EU level in mitigating the targets because of the higher costs of the final products. The EPP group of the European Parliament tends to find this the optimal solution to ensure that the EU will remain a leader in environmental protection while our products will remain competitive on a global market.

At the same time, actions at the local level are crucial to inform citizens on the benefits of such an approach. Therefore, I would also like to point out the role of energy agencies and in general of local and regional stakeholders who promote energy efficient solutions at the local level. They play a valuable role by raising public awareness and by implementing concrete projects that have positive effects on both our environment and our economy.

*Member of the European Parliament*

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