



Position on Energy Package “Clean Energy for all Europeans”

Approved by the CPMR North Sea Commission Annual Business Meeting
28 June 2017 – Göttingen, Germany

The regions of the CPMR North Sea Commission (NSC) met in Göttingen (Lower Saxony, DE) on the 28th of June 2017 for the 26th NSC Annual Business Meeting. On behalf of its members, the North Sea Commission wishes to convey the following message:

The regions in the North Sea Commission welcome the Energy Package “Clean Energy for all Europeans”, published by the European Commission at the end of 2016. The package consists of measures to further develop the European Energy Union and specifies targets and measures related to the production of Renewable Energy, increasing Energy Efficiency and the design of the power market. The European Commission aims to put the consumer in the centre of the European energy market.

The North Sea and its surrounding regions and countries are a hotspot for energy transition. Energy activities are shifting more and more towards the coastal areas, oil and gas platforms in the North Sea are being dismantled and major investments are made in off and on shore wind energy parks, solar and bio-energy and necessary infrastructure.

Renewable energy in the North Sea Region plays an essential role in meeting the renewable energy targets of the EU. In its communication “Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond”, the European Commission acknowledges the energy production capacities in the Northern Seas. Furthermore, it proposes that an off shore grid in the northern seas with connections to the Northern as well as Central Europe is among the priority corridors which will make Europe’s electricity grids fit for 2020. In 2016 a political declaration on energy cooperation between the North Seas Countries was signed, here the emphasis lies on coordination at member state level.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission support the European Commission’s emphasis on the importance of the measures proposed in the transition towards a fully decarbonised European

Energy Supply by the year 2050. Still the Regions in the North Sea Commission would prefer to have more ambitious targets for renewable energies and energy efficiency for 2030.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission emphasize the economic impact this transition could have for their regional economies. Traditional energy-related sectors will have to reform, which might cost jobs in the regions where they are situated. Nevertheless, the economic opportunities that emerge from the transition are possibly even bigger than the threats. The Regions in the North Sea Commission are convinced that they are in the best position to take full advantage of the transition.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission are convinced that social acceptance is crucial in reaching the goals that are mentioned in the Energy Package, mainly the targets regarding Renewable Energy and those regarding Energy Efficiency. Without social acceptance, the Energy Union can never be a success story. In this respect, the regions in the North Sea Commission are concerned about the spatial effects the energy transition will have, and the negative consequences this has for the social acceptance of the energy transition. In some of the regions there is growing resistance for example towards the planning of windfarms on land (Drenthe) and resistance to overhead cabling in Lower Saxony, Germany.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission call upon the European Commission to unlock their potential as frontrunners in renewable energy in the European Energy Union. Primary production from renewables in the EU28 has increased by 72,5 % in the decade between 2003-2014. In 2012 80 % of the EU offshore capacity was installed in the North Sea. The regions in the North Sea Commission are ambitious in their targets, however, they do want to achieve them with the support of the citizens.

Critical in achieving social acceptance is the role of consumers as producers. These issues are relatively easily resolved through distributed batteries and communication which will enhance the role of citizens, will further reinforce the role of renewables but will require local engagement to be successful.

The Regions in the North Sea Commission therefore do consider the role of the sub-national regional authorities should be emphasized in the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plans. It is in the regions where the European citizens live, that The citizens feel the consequences of the transition, either economic or spatial, or otherwise. On the other hand citizens are both producers and consumers (prosumers) at the same time and take their own responsibility when it comes to energy transition. The decisions on the implementation of the Energy Union, should therefore be taken as close to the citizens as possible.

The European Commission proposes that the Member States should come up with Integral Climate and Energy Plans. The Regions in the North Sea Commission call upon the European Parliament and the Council to give a clear role of the sub-national regional authorities in this process, where they are empowered to take tailor made decisions with their citizens.

Integrated governance is necessary for the Energy Union to ensure that all energy related actions at European, national, regional and local level contribute to its objectives. A regional approach of the Energy Package is necessary for its successful implementation and will create a greater social acceptance for the Energy Union.