

Climate and Energy Policy – challenges, solutions and opportunities for collaboration

YPIN workshop

Falenty, Poland

October 14th - 16th, 2016

The Young Polish International Network (YPIN) organized a two-and-a-half-day workshop in Falenty outside of Warsaw (Oct 14-16, 2016) with a focus on topics pertaining to the climate and energy policy in Poland and Germany as well as at the European level. This event brought together international experts and participants who came to the meeting in Falenty from several European countries. The workshop was supported by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

This briefing note shortly presents topics of the workshop and the challenges that were discussed. Since participants of the workshop were non-experts, one of the key goals was to raise awareness about various dimensions of the climate and energy policies. This was done via open discussions that were based on presentations delivered by invited speakers and provided materials in three languages- English, German and Polish. Another goal of these discussions was to brainstorm about potential solutions and future joint initiatives that could be undertaken to overcome some of the most burning issues presented.

Sessions devoted to the energy and climate topic were led by Mr. Dariusz Szwed and Mr. Georg Brodach. There was also an open session held about energy policies with discussions that were based on articles from the Polish-, German- and English-language press.



Dariusz Szwed is an advisor for international relations to Mr. Biedroń, the president of the city of Słupsk. He is also a cofounder and a head of the program board of the Green Institute. Mr. Szwed is one of the cofounders of the Green Party in Poland and he was an active member until 2013. In early 2000s he was an expert working for the Polish Ministry of Environment in the areas of information access and participatory decision making.



Georg Brodach is the chair of AMISA2. He served as a Senior Vice President of ABB Europe, Brussels (the power technology company) for more than 14 years and was a ABB's member of the Board of Directors. Mr Brodach was also a member of the Business Advisory Council for Southeastern Europe and Eurasia. Previously he worked for AT&T, the telecom firm and at German business associations. Mr. Brodach is also one of the founders of the Young Polish International Network (YPIN).

Both sessions that were led by invited experts significantly intertwined with each other. For instance, a discussion in the session led by Mr. Brodach (Sunday) strongly built upon arguments already presented during the Friday panel, led by Mr. Szwed and debated during an open discussion panel (Saturday). Thanks to such a construction of the workshop sessions, the participants had an opportunity to deepen their knowledge on the topic and get to know different perspectives, that of a politician, eco-activist, lobbyist as well as a regular citizen that has limited technical knowledge of the subject, but is aware about its importance.

Mr. Szwed presented current trends in climate and energy policies. He started with noticing that the international community is aiming at increasingly ambitious targets. We are moving from 20-20-20 of the first climate and energy package to be achieved by 2020 (numbers refer respectively to 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels); acquiring 20% of EU energy from renewables; 20% improvement in energy efficiency) towards 40-27-27 expressed in the second climate package to be achieved by 2030. He presented the main outcomes of the Paris COP 21 Conference and stimulated discussion around decarbonization of the current economy by means of increased reliance on renewable energy. Mr. Szwed argued that many rich countries try to move away from coal-based technologies that hurt climate and some of them also make attempts not to finance any coal-based solutions. One example here is Norway with its sovereign wealth fund policy which avoids investing in any climate-damaging ventures and companies.

While most of the participants agreed that coal-based economy poses a significant threat to the climate and contributes to the global warming, the opinions whether renewable sources of energy constitute a feasible alternative to coal were more divided and during the whole weekend the group did not agree on a single, joint conclusion. Though renewable sources of energy offer enough power to meet growing demand of the world, the key challenge seems the stability and reliability of energy supply. One of the potential solutions to that problem that was mentioned, were future "smart" car batteries, which would be connected with the "smart" power grid. Such a smart grid and connected electric cars would work as a buffer.

Such a “smart” system would allow charging car batteries when general energy demand in the network is low and giving energy back to the grid during peaks of power demand. The participants agreed that such smart solutions and technology advancement, e.g. smart grid and improved quality of batteries, could address some of the current shortcomings. Nonetheless, a relatively slow technological progress in the area of battery-efficiency, a low take-up of electric cars and batteries’ low storage capacity left some of the participants less optimistic about viability of this solutions, at least in the short- to mid-term. Another potential solution to the challenge of volatility was stronger participation of prosumers in energy production (combination of energy producers and consumers). While it was agreed that prosumers will not help fully eliminate the volatility problem, as they will experience similar weather conditions at the same time, their growing number could contribute to falling prices of green energy, hence enhance its popularity.



It was remarked by our experts that the development of renewable energy sources is an excellent opportunity to advance the local economy and to build up valuable know-how which could be exported in the future. This is especially important in Poland where the expenditure on R&D was only 0.93% of GDP. This was considerably below the EU average of 2%. At the same time import of energy and commodities for the production of energy (oil, LNG etc.) could be lowered. Mr. Szwed pointed to the social importance of renewable



energy for local communities. New renewable energy sources could lead to the creation of new workplaces, protection of consumers against oligopolies and monopolies as well as intergenerational solidarity (not creating waste). Mr Szwed was challenged on his optimism for renewable energy sources and their development, but he refuted the arguments by comparing possible future developments in the

renewable energy field to the advancement made during last two decades in the mobile phone industry. One did not expect to have smartphones with constant Internet access,

interactive maps, speech recognition, touch screen, build-in GPS and a high quality camera in the year 1996. Also today, maybe we are not visionary enough about the future of renewable energy.

The open discussion sessions were dedicated, just like the sessions with the invited experts, to energy and climate related topics – the Energy Transition in Germany and Nuclear power in Poland. The sessions started with the presentation of relevant press releases and then were followed up by discussions. The Energy Transition in Germany was debated in terms of the definition and goals as well as the impact on Germany and its society and the possible lessons and inspirations for Poland. Another aspect that was analyzed was the relation between international security and energy policy and supply, whether clean energy will lead



to a more peaceful and secure world. It was agreed that new ways of thinking about renewable energy are much needed both in Poland and around the world and that the German example is worth following. This discussion was also taken further during the Sunday session, which stressed importance of open dialogue within each country but also between countries, for instance in the EU, as well as the evidence-based policy that relies on data. The latter is especially difficult, because cost-benefit analyses of introducing new solutions and abandoning old ones are extremely difficult (even more so, when long-term effects are taken into account). One of the conclusions was that pure cost effectiveness of energy production does not seem to be a decisive argument for choosing a given method of power generation. Other aspects, such as environmental sustainability and intergenerational solidarity, should be also takes into account.

The second topic of the open discussion session, which was also followed up during the Sunday workshop, focused on nuclear power plants and questions whether nuclear power should have any future in Poland. The debate touched on such points as a nuclear plant in Żarnowiec, which currently is put on hold, the need for extensive local participation in the decision-making process for any nuclear power plant, the fear from the 1986 Chernobyl accident (still alive even though the participants were below 30 years of age and do not remember it) and Germany's changing position on the utilization of the nuclear energy during recent years. It was also mentioned that nuclear power plants are currently located

in many neighboring states, which weakened an argument of nuclear power opponents that building a nuclear power plant in Poland poses a significant risk for the society and environment. Majority of the group was surprised by a number of nuclear power plants operating in countries such as France, UK, Russian and Ukraine (respectively 58, 15, 35, 15) and a total number of nuclear power plants in Europe (185 as of 2016).

Participants did not come to a conclusion whether Poland should or should not construct a nuclear power plant, which seems to reflect well the feelings in society at large. An argument against the utilization of nuclear power that was shared by all participants related to nuclear waste that is produced by such power plants. Nuclear waste constitutes burden, which is difficult to monetize, especially in the long term and will pose a challenge for future generations. Storage of such waste is dangerous and costly, and potential leakages could have severe consequences for large population. Moreover, the groups also pointed out that such objects as nuclear power plants and nuclear waste storage facilities could become targets for potential terrorist attacks, which has to be taken into account in the current situation. On the other hand, Poland's energy security and energy independence sounded as strong arguments for constructing such a power plant.



The two-and-a-half-day workshop in Falenty organized by YPIN was a successful event and led to an increased awareness among participants about climate and energy policies, their challenges, possible future development and impact on the economy, international security, health and equality. The workshop helped present and analyze pros and cons of various solutions related to power generation and climate and allowed discussion that incorporated Polish and non-Polish viewpoints and experience.

We would like to thank the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Warsaw for its support. The YPIN also extends its sincere appreciation to speakers, guests and all the YPIN members, who contributed to the event and helped make it happen.