Press release | 19.07.2013

New EU rules governing state subsidies for energy

Full speed ahead back to nuclear power!

The European Commission is preparing to review the guidelines for state aid in the energy sector. Even though the Commission's proposals will probably only be unveiled after the German Bundestag election on 22 September, the Greens have already obtained a draft version of the new rules. This draft text has been pre-decided by the EU commissioners for competition and energy - Joaquin Almunia and Günther Oettinger. It provides for limitations on the promotion of renewable energies and paves the way for subsidies for the construction of new nuclear power stations.

Rebecca Harms, Co-Chair of the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament, said:

"The pro-nuclear camp around the European Commissioners Günther Oettinger and Joaquín Almunia, is leading the charge for a U-turn on energy policy. Its motto is: Nuclear power? Yes please! And if not in Germany for the time being, then at least in the United Kingdom, Czech Republic and elsewhere, if you please. The planned subsidy rules will supposedly make the construction of new nuclear power stations worthwhile again. Ailing nuclear groups are to be set back on the rails thanks to high state subsidies.

Undaunted by the risks involved and in ignorance of how unprofitable nuclear power stations are and of the skyrocketing costs of newly built nuclear facilities, the Commission's motto is full speed ahead back into our atomic past. Yet by advocating this approach they are clearly riding roughshod over the views of a majority of EU citizens.

Germany not only needs a new government, it finally needs a responsible member of the European Commission. Merkel and her man in Brussels must go!"

Claude Turmes, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament (Luxembourg) MEP green energy expert, added:

"The proposal made by Oettinger and Almunia is also totally unacceptable with respect to support for renewable energies because the vested interests of major industrial groups are being given preference over citizens' interests. The fact that the leading energy companies in Germany own less than 10% of renewable energy capacity is a thorn in the side of Commisioner Oettinger, so he intends to replace the citizen-friendly German Renewable Energy Act (EEG) with a conglomerate-friendly EU-wide tendering model. The intention is to snatch power back from citizens – in Germany 90% of all renewable energy is owned by private individuals, farmers and SMEs – and put it firmly back in the control centres of huge energy companies.

The Commission's thrust is also an affront in institutional terms, because an applicable directive adopted as recently as 2009 by 27 governments and the European Parliament is being reinterpreted on the sly where renewable energies are concerned. Moreover, with respect to nuclear power, the Commission is trying to give precedence to the outdated Euratom Treaty dating from 1957 over modern-day environmental laws and legislation governing the EU internal market. And that is absurd!"

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