2 The “Energy Union“: Fixed Goal or Open Process?

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1 Introduction

In the 1950s, the energy resources coal and nuclear energy were closely linked to both economic reconstruction and the start of European integration along with its vision for a flourishing future of Europe. Although the struggle for a common solution in energy policies was important in the early phase of integration, the founding members did not follow up on those issues after the successful start of the first integration communities (ECSC, EEC, Euratom) at the end of the 1950s. This is all the more surprising taking into account the continuously existential dependence on secure access to energy sources for the dynamically developing economies in Western Europe.

In the beginning of the 1950s, the main mobilization tool for the founding fathers Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer for stabilizing common interests was the competition for the contested coal reserves. In contrast, the widely differing assessment of nuclear energy by the six members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) rather divides than unifies: the French solicitation for a nuclear community did not lead to an integrational push that would have gone beyond the founding of Euratom. The almost complete vanishing of common energy politics as a part of the European Community’s unifying interests in times of heavy energy shocks during the 1970s or in times of regained courage to
complete the economic project of the “common market” in the mid-1980s respectively, therefore seems even more surprising.\textsuperscript{1}

After brief and outward oriented initiatives at the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, starting in 2014, the European Commission – under the leadership of President Jean-Claude Juncker – put energy as an old but also new common project at the centre of its work program which received a clear-cut shape by defining the establishment of an “Energy Union” as its aim.\textsuperscript{2}

Since safety, economic efficiency and future potential of energy supply are doubtlessly of significant concern to all member states, the concrete conditions for an energy union are crucial for the realization of common plans. Like in all integration steps a sufficient number of companions and weighty coalition partners are decisive to realize a project.

If this holds true for the project of the energy union and its implications towards its realization will be discussed below. Through this particular example, findings will also be gained on the question in what way European ambitions can be translated into political reality – despite strong heterogeneity and diverging interests among the member states. The result will give hints about intra-community adjustments necessary to further develop a project that will doubtlessly be a community issue in the upcoming years.

At the beginning of this article, an outline of the Commission’s 2014/15 proposals on the establishment of an “Energy Union” including the corresponding measures will be given. This will be followed by an overview of the reasons for implementation deficits during the last five years. The yearly reports of the Commission on the “Energy Union” serve as major indicator for the ability to adapt to those difficulties. To conclude this article, a classification will serve to assess whether the “Energy Union” as a community project has been accepted by the member states and respectively how likely an implementation will be in the years to come.


2 The energy union: the Juncker model

When EU or national representatives proclaim a thematic union within the framework of European integration – examples include the defence union, social union or economic and monetary union – two opposing reactions are regularly observed: enthusiasm and categorical refusal. The history of European integration is full of ideas for thematic unions. Nobody could possibly accuse Jean-Claude Juncker – one of the most experienced European politicians of the last decades – of naivety in integration policy. His proclamation to build an energy union within the European Union was formally supported by the member states in the European Council and therefore needs to be examined seriously. The context in the mid of the second decade of the 21st century seemed to be promising to bring the idea forward of an energy union within the European Union since especially the national interests to make common progress seemed mobilized:

(a) It was already after the so-called gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine in 2005 and its impact on European member states that dependency in energy imports of fossil fuels came to awareness. As a consequence, EU partners agreed to integrate an “energy article” into the Lisbon treaty (Art. 194 TFEU). At the latest, after the Russian military intervention in Ukraine – starting in spring 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine – all EU members were sensitized to the issue that more common attention had to be given to future energy supply.4

(b) The nuclear disaster in Fukushima in March 2011 was another crucial event. It revealed the technological dependence in the energy sector and led to worries about issues re-

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related to nuclear energy, including nuclear power plants in neighbouring countries. The completely heterogeneous, uncoordinated national reactions to the Japanese nuclear disaster made the necessity for a closer consultation in energy related questions most obvious – the German government decision for a nuclear power phase-out was the most remarkable, unilateral step, but not the only one.\(^5\)

(c) The third important impulse was the common goal to change the traditional reliance on fossil energy and commonly work towards the reduction of exhaust emissions. This had already become a manifest community aim in the late 1990s within the framework of international climate negotiations (Kyoto 1997). It was consequently embedded as mandatory climate policy in the general catalogue of the European Union in 2007 (20-20-20) when the goal to gain 20 percent of the energy demand of the European Union from renewable energy sources by 2020 was proclaimed.\(^6\)

The consternation inside the European Union by the mentioned examples indicated that a sufficient number of members might be willing to implement the project of energy union initiated in 2014. At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the energy union project was never primarily an integration project, but a coordination project between the member governments. Hence the term “union” is misleading in this regard. The energy union was supposed to be implemented by the EU members, and moderated but not steered by the Commission. The goal of energy union, as Jean-Claude Juncker described it himself at his inauguration speech in 2014, was the improved coordination of national energy policies by way of main aspects which are briefly outlined in the following.\(^7\)

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The Juncker-Commission put five programmatic dimensions at the centre of the implementation of the “Energy Union” which was part of the area of responsibility of Maroš Šefčovič, the Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union:

(a) Security, solidarity and trust – diversifying Europe’s sources of energy and ensuring energy security through solidarity and cooperation between EU countries

(b) A fully integrated internal energy market – enabling the free flow of energy through the EU through adequate infrastructure and without technical or regulatory barriers

(c) Energy efficiency – improved energy efficiency will reduce dependence on energy imports, lower emissions, and drive jobs and growth

(d) Climate action, decarbonizing the economy – the EU is committed to a quick ratification of the Paris agreement and to retaining its leadership in the area of renewable energy

(e) Research, innovation and competitiveness – supporting breakthroughs in low-carbon and clean energy technologies by prioritizing research and innovation to drive the energy transition and improve competitiveness.”

These five dimensions were anchored as both goal and action scheme for the work program of the European Commission from 2014 to 2019 and were supported by a set of measures.

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3 The five dimensions of European energy policy

(a) Energy security, solidarity and trust
To guarantee energy security in a geopolitical and global context, the goal of diversification of supply and origin of energy sources was central from the Commission’s point of view. Therefore, community considerations have a priority over single member activities concerning supply contracts. The idea was to assess in how far the usage of European potential could possibly lead to new conditions with existing suppliers and to acquire new importers.

With the European strategy for energy security dating from 2014 the central document was already written. Its implementation was one of the fundamental anchor points to improve the current situation in energy security. In particular, dependence-relations with other players were targeted. Russia was and is often mentioned as a key actor in this context.

(b) A fully integrated internal energy market
Despite the announcement of the completion of the internal market by December 1992, the unrestricted action of all relevant market actors as well as access, competition and free flow in the energy sector remains insufficiently implemented to date. The deficits in the European internal market concerning the energy sector are partly connected to national persistence against influencing energy companies, the usage of specific energy sources, missing transnational infrastructure and the interdependence of public and industrial actors.

Using slightly simplified explanation patterns, European Union members can be separated into mainly two groups, either: (1) highly interventionist and engaged in controlling the energy market or, (2) putting more emphasis on the liberalization of the energy market due to their national tradition and in line with the principles of the

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internal market. The previous attempts by the Commission to impact the national energy markets have indeed led to steps of opening since the 1990s. Partly, this had to be done by coercive measures of the Commission (1\textsuperscript{st} internal market package), partly energy players in the internal market and international competitors were called to push back resistance for the sake of future viability. Currently, consumer interests in affordable energy and the linkage to the commonly decided climate policy goals are the main reference points for strategy packages by the Commission in this dimension of the energy union.\footnote{See European Parliament Research Service: A New Deal for Energy Consumer, Briefing, PE 573.896, January 2016, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573896/EPRS_BRI(2016)573896 _EN.pdf (1 May 2019); European Commission: Clean Energy for all Europeans – Unlocking Europe’s Growth Potential, Press Release, IP/16/4009, 30 November 2016, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4009 en.htm (1 May 2019).}

(c) Energy efficiency

Beyond the jointly set target of 20\% energy savings until 2020 – as included in the 20-20-20 decision made in 2007 – the objective was formulated to further develop energy efficiency in all energy demand sectors. To reach this aim, a first energy efficiency plan was decided on in 2011, and in 2014 a political goal has been set to realize energy savings of 32.5\% by 2030.\footnote{See European Commission: Energy Efficiency Plan 2011, COM (2011) 109 final, Brussels, 2011; European Commission: Energy Efficiency and its Contribution to Energy Security and the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy Policy, COM (2014) 520 final, Brussels, 2014.} Heating and cooling of buildings is one of the most important energy consuming sectors in which efficiency improvement potential is significant. But private households and state sector buildings were not yet sufficiently targeted with regard to energy demand and efficiency so far. This is even more surprising since “[…] heating and cooling accounts for half of the EU’s annual overall energy consumption and 68\% of all its gas imports […, m]ean-while, renewables only account for 18\% of energy in the sector […]”\footnote{European Commission: Commission launches Plans to Curb Energy Use in Heating and Cooling, 17 February 2016, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/commission-launches-plans-curb-energy-use-heating-and-cooling (1 May 2019).}
(d) Climate action, decarbonizing the economy

The already existing field of action in the area of climate protection emerging from previous joint decisions by the European Union aims for the general reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in all economic sectors. Emission reduction constitutes an important linkage to renewable energy sources in combination with efficiency improvements. The usage of new technologies or promotional tools for energy saving, carbon dioxide-limiting branches, has been seen as an instrument for that. Moreover, the – not very well working – emissions trading system (ETS) should be reactivated or respectively newly adjusted.\textsuperscript{14} Following the 20-20-20 objectives of the energy and climate package dating from 2007, the intention was to take a leading role in negotiations on the Kyoto follow-up treaty. This would only be plausible, if the European Union gave itself more ambitious and mandatory climate protection goals which, following the Commission’s suggestions, should be embedded in a framework for climate and energy politics by 2030. The Commission’s 2014 suggestion hereof to the member states intended to reduce the emissions by 40\%, the increase of renewable energy sources to 27\% of the overall consumption as well as an improvement of energy efficiency by 27\%.\textsuperscript{15} The year of reference was still set at 1990 meaning that despite internal differences in objectives, the orientation was clear for everyone (1990 as point of reference was more advantageous for the old member states while new members from the Eastern bloc would have preferred 1989 as reference when the old coal-based systems still had their full energy efficiency). In the field of climate protection, the parallel strategy of improvement of already ambitious goals has been perceived as the main line of action which should then be accompanied by international negotiations and the settlement of the Paris Agreement from


2015. The European strategy for low emission mobility complemented these basic goals of the fourth dimension in 2016.\textsuperscript{17}

(e) Further efforts in research, innovation and competitiveness

Apart from the already mentioned detailed aspects, the Commission suggested to improve the scientific potential of the European Union for a common energy policy by supporting European joint research and intensive search for innovation with its experts and research institutions. This was already sketched out through the research programs and the Commission planned additional specific supporting instruments. One example for this is the so-called SET-plan from 2017 (Strategic Energy Technology), which seeks to promote strategic energy technology as one of the central common interests.\textsuperscript{18}

4 National structural antagonisms and European implementation difficulties

When implementing the ambitious objectives in five dimensions, which the Juncker-Commission had set, several aspects are key: (1) the willingness for participation of the members, (2) the development of coalitions of engaged members as well as (3) the leading and controlling competence of the European Commission. Additionally, the coincidence of other inevitable priority tasks for the European Union as a whole had to be achieved. This shows a difficulty for cooperation and integration projects in the European Union which continuously affects the implementation of important projects:

The first year of the newly established Commission was overshadowed by the resurgence of controversy about the solution of the so-called euro crisis. Practically all activities within the European Union until July 2015 – including summits of the heads of state of


government – aimed at resolving the newly escalating dispute with Greece on its conditions to remain in the euro zone. This succeeded in the end at an exceptional, dramatic summit in the beginning of July 2015 that possibly avoided an even bigger impulse of crisis of the dissolution of the euro zone.19

Almost without a transitional period, the settlement of the dramatic culmination of the monetary issues transformed into the escalation of the challenges by migration from the Middle Eastern area through the Balkan route. Originating in the civil war country Syria, the situation of refugees in the neighbouring countries (especially Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) deteriorated increasingly. Consequently, a steadily growing number tried to find shelter in the European Union via Greece. Connected with this was the escalation of the internal controversy about the reception and distribution of asylum seekers within the European Union. This led to the characterization of these internal disputes as the “refugee crisis” of 2015/16.20

Facing these challenges, the Commission was barely able to focus on topics set in its own working program during the first two years in office beyond the euro zone and asylum protection crisis. Especially due to divergences and sometimes contradictory positions of member states chances to make progress in energy policies faded. Necessary common positions and a closely coordinated approach for questions on the future of the energy union could not be realized in a climate of fundamental national disputes, rejection of solidarity and arguments on values within EU institutions.

Although this sketchy identification of causes can certainly not be made solely responsible for the unassertive work on the energy union, the outline of the unfavourable starting conditions nevertheless shows why a significant delay of the overall project was observed. Additionally, member state antagonisms in the area of energy politics due to heterogeneous political constellations (national energy mix) barely allowed for a cohesive approach in respect of the five dimensions. Since the specific national energy mix is admittedly

part of the sovereign authority of decision making the Commission’s claim to influence this through common measures is already problematic. This can lead to symbolic turf battles and blockades in times of scepticism regarding European cooperation and integration. Moreover, high dependencies of some member states on energy imports of specific energy sources or from specific importing countries lead to disruptive preferences in energy politics. Larger interest groups – as seen in the economic and monetary union – practically do not exist in the field of energy politics.

The most evident controversies take place between on the one hand EU member states relying heavily on nuclear energy in their political strategy and energy mix and on the other hand those members opposing the use of nuclear energy. This opposition intensified after the nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima in 2011. Main protagonists for nuclear energy use are France with more than 40%, Sweden with 33% and Slovakia as well as Bulgaria with almost 25% share of nuclear energy in their primary energy source. In contrast to them are countries that use a significant share of renewable energy sources for their energy mix or even primarily rely on renewable energy in their strategy for the future: Sweden and Latvia with 37% each and Austria, Denmark and Finland with around 30% of renewable energy in their energy mix.  

Another quite central divide in energy policies in the EU relates to the dependencies on imports of fossil fuels. Here, Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus as well as Germany form a group with high dependence on fossil fuels and at the same time high import dependence. Another group of EU states has a special position due to its own fossil resources: While the Netherlands or the United Kingdom (still) have large oil and gas resources, Poland and Bulgaria are in a similar position. But since they mainly depend on their own coal as energy resource, they currently find themselves in a defensive posi-

tion in regards to the EU’s ambitious climate goals (Poland has almost 50% and Bulgaria almost 40% coal in its energy mix).24

Facing these complicated energy policy prerequisites, the Commission’s prospects to realize the energy union against the background of unfavourable EU-internal and international conditions seemed low. The ambitious goal of accelerating an energy union in the years from 2014 to 2019 almost equalled a “mission impossible”.

Not only the initial difficulties due to heterogeneous energy mixes took a central role in the Commission’s program’s prospects for implementation, but also the overall economic situation in the EU member states in the wake of the world financial crisis. While some countries like Germany recovered significantly by the mid of the decade, others suffered far longer from the repercussions of this massive economic decline. Also, the consequences of the euro crisis since 2010 with rapidly rising debt ratios in EU countries limited the willingness among EU members immensely to address necessary reforms in their own energy economies. The goal to liberalize energy markets through a progressing separation of suppliers and grid operators in order to achieve lower energy prices for private and industrial consumers – which had already been anchored in the 3rd energy internal market package in 2009 – faced unfavourable preconditions.25 National preferences towards economic recovery were prioritized in almost every case. Additionally, the requirements for the financing and the political implementation of changes in the energy economy imply high initial investment costs and financial burdens for the consumers due to a difficult economic framework. This turned out to be counterproductive for the transition to renewable energies (the German example had a deterrent effect insofar).

The usability of the leverage effect of political climate commitments and international agreements to reach national concessions to noticeably increase energy efficiency did not last. In the aftermath of the Paris Agreement in December 2015, the United States of America and China demonstrated that they would accept economic

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24 See ibid.
repercussions as well, if necessary. However, with the inauguration of United States President Donald Trump in 2017 and the demonstrative withdrawal from the climate protection agreements, EU partners had to ask themselves again in how far European cost-intensive efforts for climate protection were justified in contrast to the focus on national interests as displayed by the U.S. administration. The same question came up in Europe’s relation towards China as a technological and economic competitor. Besides its commitments in the Paris Agreement, China actually continued to appear as central emitter of climate-damaging gases particularly due to its intensive use of coal for its industries.

5 Record of implementation steps: the annual reports on the energy union

Considering this background and looking at the four reports of the Commission on the realization of the energy union available so far, it is striking that the Commission is definitely able to adopt opposing frameworks from an energy policy point of view. Moreover, the evaluations in the reports often seem hopeful, however, especially the third and fourth report of 2019 develop a tendency to misjudge reality.

After years of inevitable obstruction of the project “Energy Union” by work on the euro and the refugee crisis, the Commission’s reports moved hopes into the centre that pressure by the citizens to set more ambitious climate policy goals could impel the governments to take measures in the Commission’s interest. The Commission

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indicates the complexity of economic repercussions by measures towards efficient and renewable energy policies in its reports. However, it suppresses the insight that in times of complex economic and fundamental social upheavals, the societal willingness to merely support the EU’s energy policy ambitions is very limited in many EU member states. The call against the governments to contribute to the commonly made commitments to energy and climate policy goals (diversification, increasing efficiency, competitiveness) in the annual reports by the Commission seem to be rather business like appeal without belief in realization. The sparse feedback by the member governments to work on other more urgent problems is hidden in the reports.29

The necessary internal political constellation for ambitious energy policy programs – willingness to compromise and concessions to common projects – has impaired in numerous member states since 2014 as populist tendencies increasingly gained influence which are more likely to put emphasis on national preferences (as seen in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic or Italy).30 Thus, common projects like the ambitious realization of the energy union were displaced from the political agenda of many member states.

Concerning this matter, the year 2017 is surely one of the most informative for the assessment of the feasibility of energy policy ambitions when the European Union’s capability to act was jeopardised in the aftermath of the Brexit vote of June 2016 and the impending dominance of the nationally oriented Front National in France. Once again, the aim for an energy union, which was confronted with complex framework conditions anyway, vanished almost completely from the priority lists of most member states. Eventually, the Commission could only capture ambitions in its


yearly reports. The constant work on new strategy papers and detailed suggestions, as mentioned with the five dimensions, are an expression of the effort to prevent the failure of the overall attempt to build an energy union. However, since necessary national supporting measures in a substantial and not only rhetorical way could barely be recorded, the Commission could hardly point to substantial progress in its annual reports.

Looking at implementation steps and progress in the area of the five dimensions it can be said that some single aspects were actually enhanced, while the general project stagnated. Without mentioning all facets of the five dimensions at this point, some central aspects of each dimension will be highlighted to give an impression about what kind of progress has been made on the way to the energy union so far:

(a) Looking at energy security by diversification strategies, barely any progress can be seen as potential additional suppliers in the European neighbourhood are currently facing crises themselves. Especially North Africa – with Libya at its core – is an example for failed attempts to diversify suppliers of fossil fuels. The same holds true for the continuously instable Near and Middle East (Syria, Iran, Iraq). While new gas supply infrastructure from the Caspian region has long been targeted but still not extended, there is not much scope for fast diversification of supply. 31 Over the medium term, energy security of the EU is therefore continuously dependent on traditional suppliers for fossil fuels (oil and gas) like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Scotland) in the West, which are complemented with growth potential from Norway. 32 In the East, energy imports from Russia will continuously represent a fundamental pil-

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lar for energy mixes in the field of fossil fuels. The project Nord Stream 2, which has been developed as a private infrastructure project between German and Russian companies, however, represents the fundamental disputes within the EU on adjusting and redirecting of infrastructure, though without having diversification in mind. The supposed “potential” for diversification through supply with liquid gas resources from the U.S. (LNG shipping) presents no quantitative diversification alternative for the EU as a whole to date. The potential volume of LNG is too small in relation to the needs. As a consequence, looking at energy security for the EU from a diversification perspective, no progress can be seen for the energy union so far – and chances for change are small.

(b) The progress towards the completion of the internal energy market is still dubious. The realization only developed gradually since changes in the before-mentioned national preferences are not apparent. The resistance against the required initial opening tasks by the Commission continue to exist which is why a lack of substantial changes can be seen. Main progress can be found in the expansion level of the mutual flow of electricity – the expansion of the “power grid” between EU members. Here, progress is made in the

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33 Russia’s share in fossil fuels ranges from 40% in gas, over 32% in oil to 30% in coal. See ibid.
expansion of regulatory and backflow electricity as well as in the usability of different directions of flow in the electricity grids. Constraints occur as soon as economic competitors in the European internal market see their market position endangered by unlimited flow and backflow of electricity. The internal energy market continues to be extremely limited structurally and infrastructurally due to constrained competition at most national markets. By fencing off economic disadvantages through a complete liberalization of the internal energy market, governments and national energy suppliers still work together successfully. Fundamental change, however, is not in sight.

In the field of energy efficiency and energy savings, the main progress is currently made in programmatic steps. The Commission’s efforts to use the leverage of climate policy self-commitments of all members for reduction, efficiency improvement and connection of energy with climate politics until 2030 have already been partly successful on a political level. But common decisions to limit energy use systemically in the important sectors of transport and housing are still missing so far. Neither the ETS nor a general pricing of carbon dioxide emissions are used as common instrument for the reduction of energy consumption or its more efficient usage. Implementation steps are mostly outstanding. Whether the ambitious common decisions will be worked

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on or not by following governments in EU member states until 2030 remains completely open.\textsuperscript{40}

(d) The significant factor of influence in the area of \textbf{climate protection} has already been mentioned. Political letters of intent with confessions to the reduction of emissions that lie more than a decade ahead became an increasingly important topic in the political debate. The lasting commitment to ambitious European goals, however, is unclear given that they cover such great periods of time. Besides the objective of reducing carbon dioxide emissions until 2030, the final effort of the outgoing Juncker-Commission with Miguel Arias Cañete, the Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy in charge, referred to the aim of climate-neutrality for 2050. But this ambitious aim to agree on limiting harmful emissions to the level of producing climate-neutral energy was not supported by all EU members.\textsuperscript{41} The chances of realization, according to previous experiences, will increasingly depend on the question, if member states see a domestic advantage for themselves. European common goals cannot replace national preferences as long as they have serious economic consequences for member states.

(e) The dimension of \textbf{research and innovation} is a dimension that was given only subordinate importance in the short period under review from 2014-2019.

Looking at the fourth report by the Commission published in April 2019 against the background of this cursory characterization of the implementation steps on the way to a European energy union, a striking contrast can immediately be identified: Just before the European elections in May 2019, the outgoing Commission con-


cludes about its efforts that “the Commission has fully delivered on its vision of an Energy Union strategy guaranteeing accessible, affordable, secure, competitive and sustainable energy for all Europeans.” In this quintessence of the introduction, the political will of Jean-Claude Juncker’s European Commission and his Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič becomes evident: They eventually want the progresses made on the way to an energy union to be anchored as their common legacy, even if a closer look on the details argue against such a positive view.

What also strikes in the self-evaluation of the European Commission on its way to the energy union are two things: (1) The Commission primarily picks out such intentional declarations in its evaluation that can be used as proof for steps into the ambitioned energy policy future. Here, especially the climate policy with its objectives for 2030 are stressed. Obstacles are mentioned, but their weight was not further taken into account. (2) The fundamentally heterogeneous interests of the EU members are barely considered a basic obstacle for the completion of the common energy union.

On the one hand, this indicates that current insurmountable barriers are perceived, but not digested. On the other hand, the demonstrative ignorance of basic obstacles lead to the accusation that the Commission presents its work inappropriately positive without acknowledging fundamental obstacles.

6 Assessment and conclusion

In energy policy cooperation, temporarily even integrational steps in the area of controlling and planning have been relevant for the European integration process, especially in the beginnings with the ECSC. Despite the established practice of setting-up common political goals, energy policy still relies in the sphere of member state competence. For decades, energy politics almost vanished from the cooperation and integration spectrum within the EU. In so far, ex-

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ternal impulses – including threatening of the energy security from outside the Union – have repeatedly been taken as reasons to talk about political reactions. To date this, however, has not led to greater communitarization of the energy policy.

Against this background, the Juncker Commission’s aim from 2014 to realize an “Energy Union” seems to be a very ambitious project. Facing difficulties in this field through heterogeneous interests and almost unchangeable national antagonisms, the Juncker Commission must accept the criticism that it wanted to realize a project that predicted already its own failure. The mentioned details show how difficulties for the European integration and cooperation process through disproportionate rhetoric and contextual ambitions can endanger an important project for European integration. There is no doubt about the necessity for repeatedly closer coordination of national energy policy and intensified efforts especially in conjunction with climate politics.

Although, the need for the creation of a European energy union within the EU seems to be dubious as long as the member states have no self-interest in it and the self-commitment to such a framework is missing. As pointed out clearly in the last (fourth) report by the Commission on the realization of the energy union, the distance of the Commission from the realities and necessities of the member states raises doubts, whether the Commission meets the requirements to promote the integration process at all. Despite its claim of having been successful in its effort to promote the energy union, the Juncker Commission will have to live with the fact that it has reached substantially too less in important disciplines like energy security, diversification and progress in the internal energy market. Presumed progress in areas like climate protection partly only consist of letters of intent by the member states – implementation steps are completely a national responsibility for the years to come.

Without any doubt, the Juncker Commission with its ambitions on the way to an energy union focused on a project which will be of importance in the future, even if a precise evaluation of its effects will only be possible with some temporal distance – in so far, the next Commission will also partly be measured on the progress. It is in the interest of the citizens of the European Union, that the incoming Commission will design a follow-up program based on the real-
istic, heterogeneous structures of interest in the member states that contains concrete steps towards closer European energy policy with clear advantages for its citizens and states. In times of increasing criticism on European projects, these two aspects – identifiable clear advantages for the citizens as well as acceptable consequences for the member states – will have to be perceived as scale for all upcoming efforts. The aim needs to be a better coordination of national energy efforts within the European Union, including intensified efforts for closer cooperation in energy foreign policy – this important focus according to Art. 194 TFEU has not been sufficiently addressed in the project of the energy union so far.

If the next Commission is able to combine external and internal energy policy aspects as systematically as its predecessor did successfully with urging climate goals, prospects for an intensified cooperation in European energy policy are promising that they really deserve the name “Energy Union”.