



PKEE

Polski Komitet Energii Elektrycznej
Polish Electricity Association

Press release, 30th March 2022

How to develop the heating sector to ensure better air quality?

Discussing the matters relating to the link between pollution and district heating systems, and the impact that the proposal for the recast Energy Efficiency Directive plays in this regard, was the main objective of the debate organised by Euractiv in cooperation with the Polish Electricity Association (PKEE). The meeting, attended by the European Union officials and the representatives of Brussels-based associations, took place on 30th March 2022.

Patryk Demski, Vice-President of the Management Board for Strategy and Development at TAURON Group and Member of the PKEE Management Board, who opened the event, emphasised that Polish energy groups have been undertaking numerous initiatives intended to prevent and reduce the adverse influence of the sector on natural environment. - *This has translated into a measurable goal. Poland has not only significantly reduced its emissions in the last decade, but also increased its power generation from renewables. Moreover, Poland exceeded the 2020 target regarding the share of renewable energy. This proves that Poland takes energy transformation very seriously and strives to reduce emissions and, in consequence, improve air quality - he noted.*

Mr Demski also mentioned that we need to remember that district heating is based on heating plants and combined heat and power plants, which must meet strict environmental requirements set by the EU law. - *It is a very effective technology, dedicated mostly for urbanized areas. Therefore, we believe that covering heat needs should be done primarily through the use of district heating, wherever possible. This model ensures a high efficiency of raw material consumption, improves the living comfort of citizens and reduces the problem of near-ground emissions - he added. - It is worth mentioning that in Poland there is a well-developed district heating system: approximately 40% of households are connected to district heating networks – he said.*

According to Mr Demski, the “Fit for 55 package” should properly reflect the role of heating systems – in particular district heating – in the fight against winter smog. We agree with the Commission that heating sector has a potential to actively participate in the EU climate goals, but appropriate transitional period must be ensured. - ***We expect that the timeline set in the requirements regarding efficient district heating presented in the Energy Efficiency Directive will also provide appropriate time to adjust investments plans. Due to the long duration of investment processes in the power sector and the need to transform the system while maintaining reasonable and socially accepted prices for heat from new sources, we would propose introducing a new definition of an “effective heating system” from 2030 and withdrawing the eligibility condition of high-efficiency cogeneration. Otherwise further development of heating systems might be very difficult and, as a consequence, the improvement of air quality will be seriously hindered - he said.***

Mr Demski pointed out that the Polish heating sector is facing enormous challenges, but a process of transition is already underway. - *Members of the PKEE, including TAURON, are actively involved in the transformation of district heating systems. It is worth underlining that Poland has made enormous efforts to diversify sources of natural gas imports in recent years - he stressed. - We are also interested in hydrogen, which will probably play an important role in the future. As an example of what TAURON does, I can mention the project called Hydrogen Poland. Its aim is to establish a consortium combining the scientific and industrial potential, whose competences can cover the whole hydrogen value chain. The green hydrogen will then be used mostly, but not exclusively, for bus fleets and will help to reduce the emissions in Polish cities - he mentioned.*



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During the high-level panel, its participants – Piotr Sprzaczak, Director of the District Heating Department, Polish Ministry of Climate and Environment; Claudia Canevari, Head of Unit, Energy efficiency, DG ENER, European Commission; Ciarán Cuffe MEP, Member ITRE Committee, “Energy performance of buildings” Rapporteur, European Parliament; and Margherita Tolotto, Senior Policy Officer for Air Quality and Noise, EEB – discussed how to solve the problem of the countries in which one of the main causes of poor air quality is the use of old and inefficient coal or wood-burning stoves in households. Moreover, the debate focused on the revisions of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Directive on Energy Efficiency, which will affect the district heating.

Piotr Sprzaczak, Director of the District Heating Department indicated that Poland is keeping the pace in switching the fuel mix of individual heaters, especially through programmes like the "Clean Air Programme". – *The heat pump market in Poland grew by 88% last year, which is a considerable amount. I've recently heard that Warsaw has installed more heat pumps than London* - he added.

In the opinion of Claudia Canevari, Head of Unit, Energy efficiency, DG ENER, European Commission, half of the energy we consume is to heat our buildings: homes, offices, public and private buildings, and also to produce the industrial goods and services that we depend upon. - *The heating and cooling sector is of course a source of greenhouse gas emissions, and is clearly in the spotlight of green transition* - she clarified.

Commenting on this statement Ciarán Cuffe, MEP has stressed that we need to move towards clean fuels for district heating. - *We need to electrify everything that we can and move to cleaner sources of electricity. I strongly believe that we can tackle the issue of air quality in the EPBD by encouraging homeowners to switch to cleaner energy systems* - he underlined.

Following the discussion, Margherita Tolotto, Senior Policy Officer for Air Quality and Noise, EEB said that in her opinion EU needs to be considering air quality deeper in the ongoing legislative processes, for instance in the Energy Efficiency Directive and the Energy Taxation Directive. - *We need to keep in mind that air quality is not just a side effect of policies that pertain to other topics. It needs to be considered a priority in all decision-making processes* - she said.

Event page:

<https://events.euractiv.com/event/info/how-to-develop-the-heating-sector-to-ensure-better-air-quality>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1kFHYHHzKs>