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## EU PARLIAMENT SET FOR WAR OVER ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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EurActiv (20 November 2017)

Lawmakers in the European Parliament have finalised the text of a crucial energy efficiency law ahead of an important vote on 28 November. But political infighting both between and within the main political groups means the result is far from certain.

MEPs last week tabled their final compromise amendments for an upcoming vote on the Energy Efficiency Directive. The result of the vote will form the basis of the Parliaments joint position ahead of trilateral talks with the European Commission and EU member states in the Council.

Adam Gierek, the Polish rapporteur on the directive, has bowed to pressure from his own political group, the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), and suggested amendments that mirrors the partys line as well as past Parliament votes on energy efficiency.

Sources familiar with the file suggest that Gierek actually surrendered de facto control of the report to the rest of his group, including the author of the environment committees opinion, Swedish MEP Jytte Guteland.

Polish MEP under pressure on crucial EU energy saving law

An update of the EUs Energy Efficiency Directive risks coming undone as a result of political infighting between the Polish lawmaker charged with helming the European Parliaments revision of the legislation and much of his own political group, EURACTIV.com has learned.

Back on track

The new set of amendments indeed bears little similarity to Giereks previous drafts, as they now include a full 40% efficiency target, as well as binding national targets. Article 7 of the directive, which governs annual energy saving obligations on energy sales, is also beefed up in terms of obligations and timeframe.

Arianna Vitali, an energy expert at WWF Europe, said: After a rocky start, the S&D group have rallied behind strong amendments on energy efficiency.

But shadow rapporteur Markus Pieper has tabled amendments on behalf of the European Peoples Party (EPP) and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, which are in stark contrast to the ambition shown by the S&D.

Not only does the German MEP back an indicative 30% target, along the lines of the European Councils so-called general approach brokered in June, his proposed Article 7s timeframe is slashed

and a number of industry-focused exemptions are introduced.

### Unacceptable amendments

The Coalition for Energy Savings today published an assessment of Piepers amendments and calculated that, if implemented, they would cost Europe 690,000 jobs and reduce GDP by      by 2030, compared with the Commissions original proposal.

Gas imports would also increase by 15% and residential greenhouse gas emissions would grow by 12.4%. The coalitions appraisal criticises the amendments for maintaining loopholes proposed by the Commission and for even adding new ones.

S&D MEP Miroslav Poche told EURACTIV.com that the EPPs alternative proposals are unacceptable and that the Article 7 amendment would render the whole article meaningless.

The Czech lawmaker insisted that Giereks final proposal has his full support.

### Vote hunting

As things stand, the EPP/ECR position will be defeated in the industry committee vote (ITRE), so Piepers ultra-conservative stance has been interpreted as an attempt to reach out to the far-right of the political spectrum, including the Europe of Nations and Freedom group, as they are the only factions that oppose strengthening the Commissions initial proposal.

The S&D can currently count on the full support of its own MEPs, a prospect which was not guaranteed a number of weeks ago when Giereks previous draft threatened to split the socialists along east-west lines. Now it also has the support of the liberal ALDE, the Greens and the Spanish faction of GUE.

If Pieper is unable to lure enough support for his proposals then the S&Ds position will be adopted by the Parliament, either directly or in a full plenary session. Whether MEP Gierek will then be mandated to negotiate in trialogue with the other institutions at this stage remains unclear.

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