
BULGARIA AIMS TO CAJOLE COUNTRIES ON CLEAN ENERGY GOALS

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EU energy and climate talks will get tougher as of Thursday.

That's when the bloc's 28 energy ministers meet in Sofia as the Bulgarian government tries to see how much countries are willing to move on the most sensitive part of the jumbo Clean Energy Package — clean energy targets.

Now the Bulgarian presidency [of the Council of the EU] is facing a really serious challenge to maintain the pace of discussions and to make maximum progress on those files, said Bulgarian Energy Minister Temenuzhka Petkova, speaking at a POLITICO event in Sofia on Wednesday.

At stake are the EU's renewable energy and energy efficiency goals for 2030, which the Council and the Parliament are currently discussing as part of wider efforts to revamp the two directives underpinning those aims. The institutions are also in the midst of negotiating the so-called Governance Regulation, which is meant to set up rules to monitor countries' progress in meeting these goals.

It's all aimed at ensuring the EU meets its 2030 goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent, as the bloc pledged to do in the Paris climate agreement. The dispute is a familiar one, with ambitious targets set by Parliament and backed by some green member countries, largely in Northern Europe, while poorer and more coal-reliant countries in Central and Eastern Europe balk at the cost.

Negotiators have tackled the more technical aspects of the files, but Bulgaria hopes ministers will show their cards on Thursday on the political aspects and offer the presidency guidance as it tries to close the three issues.

Bulgaria's main message so far: You have to give a little to get a little.

Such [political] guidance is necessary since the final compromise on the renewables and energy efficiency would require the Council to make a step further from its position and to show flexibility to the proposals of the Parliament which could indeed contribute to the overall goals of the Energy Union, according to discussion notes prepared by Bulgaria ahead of the ministers' meeting.

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