[Energy efficiency first: Commission welcomes agreement on energy efficiency](#)

A political agreement on new rules for improving energy efficiency in Europe was reached today between negotiators from the Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council.

The Commission's proposal forms part of the implementation of the Juncker Commission priorities – in particular "[a resilient Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy](#)". Today's agreement is the third of eight legislative proposals in the [Clean Energy for All Europeans](#) package (presented by the European Commission on 30 November 2016) now agreed by co-legislators. On 14 June a political agreement was reached on the [revised Renewable Energy Directive](#), and on 14 May, the [Energy Performance in Buildings Directive](#) was adopted. Thus progress towards making the Energy Union a reality is well under way and the work initiated by the Juncker Commission is being delivered.

The new regulatory framework includes an energy efficiency target for the EU for 2030 of 32.5% with an upwards revision clause by 2023. This new objective shows the EU's high level of ambition and demonstrates the remarkable pace of change of new technologies and reduced costs through economies of scale. Together with the recently agreed 32% renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 (see [STATEMENT/18/4155](#)), Europe will be equipped to complete the clean energy transition and meet the goals set by the Paris Agreement. Delivering on President Juncker's objective to support the clean energy transition, with today's agreement the EU is helping to create growth, employment and investment opportunities for the benefit of European energy consumers.

Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *"Europe is by far the largest importer of fossil fuel in the world. Today we put an end to this. This deal is a major push for Europe's energy independence. Much of what we spend on imported fossil fuels will now be invested at home in more efficient buildings, industries and transport. The new target of 32.5% will boost our industrial competitiveness, create jobs, reduce energy bills, help tackle energy poverty and improve air quality. Our path to real energy security and climate protection begins here at home, and this deal shows that Europe's determination to build a modern economy that is less dependent on imported energy and with more domestically produced clean energy".*

Main achievements:

- Sets a new energy efficiency target for the EU for 2030 of 32.5%, with an upwards revision clause by 2023;
- Will extend the annual energy saving obligation beyond 2020, which will

attract private investments and support the emergence of new market actors;
- Will deliver real energy savings in the next period 2021-2030 and beyond, coming from new energy efficiency renovations or other measures undertaken in the next decade;
- Will strengthen rules on individual metering and billing of thermal energy by giving consumers — especially those in multi-apartment building with collective heating systems — clearer rights to receive more frequent and more useful information on their energy consumption, enabling them to better understand and control their heating bills.
- Will require Member States to have in place transparent, publicly available national rules on the allocation of the cost of heating, cooling and hot water consumption in multi-apartment and multi-purpose buildings with collective systems for such services.
- Will tackle existing market, behavioural and regulatory barriers in order to increase security of supply, competitiveness of EU industries, reduce energy bills of consumers and health costs for society, thereby also addressing energy poverty and exploiting the positive impacts on economic growth and employment.

Next steps

Following this political agreement, the text of the Directive will have to be formally approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Once endorsed by both co-legislators in the coming months, the updated Energy Efficiency Directive will be published in the Official Journal of the Union and will enter into force 20 days after publication. Member States will have to transpose the new elements of the Directive into national law 18 months after its entry into force.

Background

The revision of the Energy Efficiency Directive is part and parcel of the implementation of the Juncker Commission priorities to build "a resilient Energy Union and a forward-looking climate change policy". The Commission wants the EU to lead the clean energy transition. For this reason the EU has committed to cut CO2 emissions by at least 40% by 2030 while modernising the EU's economy and delivering on jobs and growth for all European citizens. In doing so, the Commission is guided by three main goals: putting energy efficiency first, achieving global leadership in renewable energies and providing a fair deal for consumers.

By using energy more efficiently, Europeans can lower their energy bills, live in more comfortable and healthy dwellings, reduce their reliance on external suppliers of oil and gas, improve local air quality, and help protect the environment. Energy efficiency has to be increased at all stages of the energy chain, from generation to final consumption. At the same time, the benefits of energy efficiency must outweigh the costs, for instance those that result from carrying out renovations. EU measures therefore focus on sectors where the potential for savings is greatest, such as buildings. The EU has set itself a 20% energy savings target by 2020 (when compared to the projected use of energy in 2020). On 30 November 2016 the Commission proposed

an [update to the Energy Efficiency Directive](#) including a new energy efficiency target for 2030, and measures to update the Directive to make sure the new target is met.

More information

[Energy Efficiency](#)

[Energy Union](#)

[Investment Plan for Europe: the Juncker Plan](#)

[European Commission and United Kingdom publish Joint Statement outlining further progress in Article 50 negotiations](#)

The new elements of agreement are set out in detail in points 3 and 4 of [the Joint Statement](#), which also outlines the UK's engagement on the remaining separation issues.

Michel Barnier, the European Commission's Chief Negotiator for Article 50 negotiations, said, *"Today's progress is due to the dedication and commitment of both negotiating teams, whom I would like to thank. We have advanced on some separation issues for which European businesses need certainty, such as customs, VAT, Euratom and certificates for goods. Engagement by the UK on remaining issues such as the protection of personal data and geographical indications is also to be welcomed. Serious divergences remain, however, on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. I would like to recall that the Withdrawal Agreement must contain a fully operational backstop solution for Ireland and Northern Ireland. I will present the state of play of the negotiations to the European Council and the European Parliament. Today marks a step forward in these negotiations but a lot more work needs to be done before October."*

Next steps

Michel Barnier will present the state of play of the negotiations to the European Council (Article 50) which takes place on 28 and 29 June 2018, and

to the European Parliament. Negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement will continue over the coming weeks, together with the discussions on the framework for the future relationship.

The agenda for this week's negotiations is available [online.](#)

Background information

On 28 February 2018, the European Commission published [a draft Withdrawal Agreement](#) between the European Union and the United Kingdom. This draft translated into legal terms [the Joint Report](#) from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government on the progress achieved during phase 1 of the negotiations, published on 8 December 2017, and proposed text for those outstanding withdrawal issues which are mentioned in, but not set out in detail, in the Joint Report. It also included a draft Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland. Both the EU and the UK have recognised that the unique situation of the island of Ireland requires a specific solution. Both sides have already committed to including a legally operable backstop in the Withdrawal Agreement.

On [19 March 2018](#), the EU and the UK published an updated version of the Withdrawal Agreement, outlining (in green, yellow, and white) the areas of agreement and disagreement between the negotiators of the EU and the UK.

On [23 March 2018](#), the European Council (Article 50) welcomed this agreement and adopted guidelines on the framework for the future EU/UK relationship. Discussions on these points are ongoing.

A final version of this Withdrawal Agreement, together with an accompanying political declaration on the framework for the future relationship, should be agreed by the EU and the UK by October 2018 to allow for the timely ratification by the European Parliament, the Council (Article 50) and the UK, according to its own constitutional requirements.

For more information

[Joint Statement, 19 June 2018](#)

[European Council (Article 50) Guidelines, March 2018](#)

[TF50 website](#)

Schengen internal border controls: Council agrees negotiating mandate on

[the amendment of the Schengen borders code](#)

Press contacts

[Verónica Huertas Cerdeira](#)
Press officer (Home affairs)
+32 2 281 45 48
+32 470 88 21 99

On 19 June 2018, EU ambassadors endorsed, on behalf of the Council, a mandate for negotiations on a proposal amending the Schengen border code as regards temporary reintroduction of controls at internal borders. On the basis of this mandate, the Council Presidency will start negotiations with the European Parliament once the latter has adopted its position.

> The Schengen area has brought uncontested benefits to people across Europe. Today's agreement aims to preserve these achievements. It will provide member states with the necessary tools to respond to the evolving security challenges they face while ensuring the proportionality of this response.
>
> *Valentin Radev, Bulgarian minister of interior*

This proposal aims to provide increased flexibility for member states to address serious threats to public policy or internal security and, on the other hand, to ensure that the reintroduction of internal border controls is only used as a last-resort.

To address serious threats to public policy or internal security, the proposed amendment would allow to reintroduce internal border controls under the same reason for a total period of no longer than one year. It would also include a series of safeguards which should be met in order to ensure the proportionality and necessity of these measures, including a risk assessment and consultation mechanisms. When border controls at internal borders are carried out for more than six months, the Commission shall issue an opinion.

On 27 September 2017, the Commission presented a communication on preserving and strengthening Schengen, which was accompanied by a proposal for amending the Schengen Border Code, as well as by a recommendation on the implementation of the current Schengen border code provisions on internal border controls.

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[Visa policy: Council agrees negotiating mandate on the amendment of the visa code](#)

Press contacts

[Verónica Huertas Cerdeira](#)
Press officer (Home affairs)
+32 2 281 45 48
+32 470 88 21 99

On 19 June 2018, EU ambassadors endorsed, on behalf of the Council, a mandate for negotiations on a proposal amending the visa code. On the basis of this mandate, the Council Presidency will start negotiations with the European Parliament once the latter has adopted its position.

> An efficient management of migration includes ensuring we are able to return those who do not have a right to stay. The new visa code rules will give us another tool to respond to those third countries who are not willing to take their own nationals back.
>
> *Valentin Radev, Bulgarian minister of interior*

The updated regulation will modernise the EU visa policy, allow for improved security and increase the available tools to respond to migration challenges.

Better conditions for legitimate travellers

It will provide **faster and more clear procedures for legitimate travellers**, notably by:

- allowing for the lodging of applications up to 6 months and no later than 15 days before the trip
- providing for the possibility of filling in and signing the application form electronically
- defining more clearly which member state is competent for examining an application when the intended visit covers several member states
- introducing a harmonised approach to issuing multiple entry visas to regular travellers with a positive visa history for a gradually increasing period going from 1 to 5 years.

Covering costs of processing

To ensure **member states can better cover costs of visa processing** without representing a deterrent for visa applicants, the visa fee will be increased to 80 euros. The regulation also introduces a mechanism to assess every three years the need to revise the amount of the visa fee.

Better cooperation on readmission of irregular migrants

The regulation also aims to contribute to **improve cooperation with third countries on readmission**. It will introduce a new mechanism for using visa policy as leverage to readmission, which will be used when a third country does not cooperate with member states on the readmission of irregular migrants.

The Commission will regularly assess third countries' cooperation on readmission. Where a country is not cooperating, it will propose to the Council to adopt an implementing decision applying specific restrictive visa measures related to visa processing and visa fee.

Background

The visa code entered into force in 2010. It covers the rules regarding processing of applications and issuance of short stay visas to the EU, that is, visas for stays not exceeding 90 days in any 180 days period.

The Commission presented its proposal for the reform of the visa code on 14 March 2018.

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[The European Union cannot forget its values while developing artificial intelligence, say EU policymakers](#)

The first stakeholders' summit on Artificial Intelligence, organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission, stressed that the EU needs to ensure that artificial intelligence is safe, unbiased and in line with European values. The event, which aimed to discuss the next steps to advance the EU strategy on artificial intelligence, took place on 18 June in Brussels.

Artificial intelligence – a strong priority for the EU

The key EU policymakers on artificial intelligence and European stakeholders, who gathered for the first stakeholder summit, agreed that artificial intelligence holds great promises in addressing societal issues, but also raises a number of challenges around privacy, security, labour, education and ethics.

"Artificial intelligence is a technology which does not have to overcome and overwhelm us," said **Catelijne Muller**, President of the EESC Thematic Study Group on Artificial intelligence, adding that humans should stay in command of artificial intelligence and be able to determine "if, when and how we want to use these technologies in our daily lives."

Artificial intelligence is one of the main political priorities of the EESC's current presidency. As stressed by **Ariane Rodert**, President of the section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption, the EESC is working on two new opinions, one dealing with the consequences of [artificial intelligence on work](#) and the [other](#) giving input on the Commission's proposed artificial intelligence strategy. These opinions are to be in adopted in September.

Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, who gave a key note speech in the summit, addressed the Commission's efforts to start a coordinated action on artificial intelligence, calling it "a strong political priority."

Last week the Commission launched the [European Artificial Intelligence Alliance](#), which aims foster stakeholder involvement in the European debate on AI to shape the European Commission's policy-making in this area.

"We have entered a new era of technological change and Europe needs to lead this revolution," said Ms Gabriel, who also pointed out that despite European capacity in research and innovation, the EU is still lagging behind the United States and China in terms of development of artificial intelligence.

In order to accelerate the development of artificial intelligence, the Commission is aiming to raise 20 billion euros in public and private of investment in artificial intelligence by 2020 and €20 billion per year over the following decade.

Mady Delvaux, EP rapporteur on artificial intelligence, drew attention to a challenge of accessibility. "Who is going to have access to this marvelous instrument?," Ms Delvaux asked, adding that Europe needs to succeed in sharing out the wealth generated by artificial intelligence. "It is a big challenge, and more complicated than the technology itself."

The EU policymakers also stressed that it is crucial not to forget that the European approach to artificial inelegance has to be based on fundamental rights and European values.

The ideas and concerns of civil society

Three parallel working groups with representatives of businesses, academia,

workers and NGOs gave their input on the three pillars of the EU strategy on artificial intelligence: industrial competitiveness, socio-economic impact and legal and ethical challenges. Participants stressed the importance of new forms of education, which not only should allow people to understand artificial intelligence better, but also prepare them to adapt to a changing labour market.

The issue of cohesion was brought up as well, emphasizing the need to make sure that all regions and Member States should benefit from artificial intelligence equally. Finally, participants addressed the issue of human rights and consumer protection, noting that citizens should remain the focus of discussion.

Background: The EESC set up a Thematic Study Group on Artificial intelligence in 2018 in order to ensure continuity in the EESC's work in this field. The EESC adopted its first, own-initiative [opinion](#) on artificial intelligence in May 2017. The Commission's recently presented strategy on artificial intelligence mirrors to a very large extent the proposals put forward by the EESC in that first report.