

7 EU Countries Push For Binding Energy Savings Targets to Combat Russia Reliance

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — Ministers from seven European Union countries urged the bloc's executive to propose a binding energy savings target next month, a sign of how Ukraine's gas crisis is forcing lawmakers to find more ways of easing EU dependence on Russian gas.

Environment and energy ministers from Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal said the crisis in Ukraine, which transits about half the gas Russia sends to Europe, has highlighted the EU's reliance on imports.

"A target is essential to highlight the importance of energy efficiency, and a strong political commitment is crucial," the ministers said told European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso in a joint letter seen by Reuters.

"The current situation in Ukraine emphasizes the importance of reducing dependence

on imported oil and natural gas."

The ministers said the Commission's proposal should reflect its January impact assessment on the EU's 2030 energy and environment goals as well as the European Parliament's proposal for an energy efficiency target.

The impact assessment outlined scenarios for increasing Europe's energy efficiency by between 30 to 35 percent, while in February the parliament called for a 40 percent goal as one of three binding targets for 2030.

That would compare with a current non-binding 2020 goal of a 20 percent energy saving beneath projected levels, which the bloc is not currently on track to meet from a patchwork of EU and national measures such as applying standards for electric appliances and new buildings.

Barroso is due to discuss the issue on Wednesday with energy commissioner Günther Oettinger and Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard, who is strongly in favor of an energy saving goal as part of efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Trading Concerns Eased

In January the Commission outlined two climate and energy goals for 2030 — to cut greenhouse gases by 40 percent compared with 1990 levels and to raise the share of renewable energy to 27 percent from 20 percent projected in 2020.

It said then it was not ready to announce an efficiency target ahead of a July review of a 2012 law to improve the EU's energy savings.

The Commission's previous concerns about how an efficiency goal could undermine the bloc's flagship climate policy, the Emissions Trading System, or ETS, have eased, said Marion Santini of the Coalition for Energy Savings, a lobby group of businesses, workers' groups and environmental campaigners.

She referred to recent statements by EU officials which said reform plans for the ETS would mean it could withstand any shocks from increases in energy efficiency.

Britain is opposed to setting a 2030 efficiency goal, arguing a single 2030 emission target would allow countries more flexibility to pick the most cost-effective way to cut emissions while maintaining secure and affordable energy supplies.

But the seven ministers said a separate efficiency target was needed to save energy in sectors not regulated by the ETS, such as transport, buildings and private households.

"Delivering energy efficiency will have an upfront cost of investment — but this will be offset by returns in the form of energy savings worth 1 trillion to 2 trillion euros from 2020 to 2030," said manufacturers group the European Alliance to Save Energy in a separate letter to Barroso backing a 40-percent savings goal.

EU leaders are working towards an October deadline to reach political agreement on the 2030 goals amid wrangling between eastern and western nations about who should pay

for emission cuts and whether the bloc is risking the competitiveness of its industries by acting before other major economies.

See also:

[Russia Turns Off Ukraine Gas Supplies as Talks Collapse](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/06/17/7-eu-countries-push-for-binding-energy-savings-targets-to-combat-russia-reliance-a36493)

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