

EVENT REPORT
TRANSATLANTIC CLIMATE ROUNDTABLE

In the spirit of solidarity - an External Energy Policy for the EU?

On 16 March 2011, the EU Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation hosted an event on the prospects for a common EU external energy policy. The roundtable discussion took place just after the disaster of Fukushima which led to intense debates in many member states regarding their future energy mix, particularly with regard to the role of nuclear power. If the European Union is to embrace its 20% renewable energy goal, cooperation with neighbouring countries will be an important element of this transition.

The event was part of the [Climate Network](#) programme. The main speakers included Olivier Silla, Deputy Head of Unit International Relations & Enlargement, [DG Energy, European Commission](#) and Sascha Müller-Kraenner, Managing Director of [The Nature Conservancy in Europe](#) and author of an issue paper on [The external relations of the EU in energy policy](#). The debate was chaired by Bastian Hermisson, Head of EU and North America at the Heinrich Böll Foundation's headquarters in Berlin.



The Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in 2009, has broadened the European Union's foreign policy instruments and has introduced a special section on energy while outlining the most important responsibilities and overall energy policy goals of the EU: the functioning of energy markets, security of supply, energy efficiency, the development of new and renewable forms of energy and the interconnection of transmission networks. This also marks the principle of energy solidarity, ensuring that if one member state faces severe difficulties in supplies, others will aid it.

So far the external energy policy of the EU had mainly been a national affair, determined by the individual member states and their industry. This seems to change, however: In its [Energy Strategy 2020](#) the European Commission names the strengthening of the external dimension of the EU energy market as one of its five priorities. An ever increasing demand for energy, volatile prices and unreliable supplies clearly indicate the need for a common EU external energy policy.

One prominent example for this is the [Desertec](#) initiative which is supported by the Mediterranean Solar Plan and based on the principle of generating electricity from solar energy where it are most abundant, namely in the north African desert. Yet, the establishment of an adequate energy infrastructure and a political stability in North Africa will affect this quest. Another challenge is of course the different national energy policies pursued in the different member states: while Germany has decided to phase out nuclear power, France takes a very different stance on this particular topic. The political will of the member states to better coordinate and integrate their respective energy policies will thus be crucial to increasing the weight of the EU in global governance structures related to energy.