Šefčovič impresses MEPs ahead of vote on new commission

Written by Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 21 October 2014 in News

European commission vice-president nominee for energy union Maroš Šefčovič has won the support of parliament's two largest political groups following his hearing.

The Slovakian official had originally been entrusted with the transport portfolio, however, earlier this month, MEPs rejected Alenka Bratušek as the next vice-president for energy union, leading to the subsequent withdrawal of her candidacy.

This resulted in a reshuffling of the proposed college of commissioners as Bratušek needed to be replaced by another female Slovenian nominee. Parliament has indicated it would refuse to support any commission that had fewer female candidates than Barroso's outgoing team.

Juncker finally accepted the nomination of Violeta Bulc, granting her the transport portfolio that was originally intended for Šefčovič. In his role as vice-president for energy union, Šefčovič will oversee the incoming transport commissioner's work.

In his hearing, the vice president-designate outlined his commitment to climate change policy and
energy efficiency, telling MEPs he aimed to develop an EU policy for renewables so as to promote 'green growth' throughout Europe.

"I'm particularly glad to hear that Šefčovič took the EPP group's agenda on board" - Krišjānis Kariņš

His objective will be to reinforce coordination between member states so as to pool their resources and prevent short-term energy shortages. In addition, one of his main priorities will be to negotiate a new global climate agreement.

Krišjānis Kariņš, the EPP group spokesperson on industry research and energy, praised Šefčovič's focus on efforts to "diversify sources of energy, generate less regulation and strengthen industry’s competitiveness in order to keep jobs in Europe".

"I'm particularly glad to hear that Šefčovič took the EPP group's agenda on board," said Kariņš, adding that he expects the candidate to "actively fight against Europe's dependency on external sources of energy".

His comments were echoed by the EPP group's environment spokesperson Peter Liese, who highlighted the commissioner-designate's support for "30 per cent energy efficiency as a binding target for 2030", as well "his positive outlook for the [COP21] climate conference in Paris".

Dan Nica, S&D group spokesperson on industry, energy and research, was also pleased with the focus on energy efficiency, saying, "we welcome his clear commitment to [this target]".

"[The S&D group welcomes Šefčovič's] engagement on prioritising investment and ensuring that a competitive European industrial sector can indeed thrive alongside a green economy" - Dan Nica

He added that "[the S&D group welcomes Šefčovič's] engagement on prioritising investment and ensuring that a competitive European industrial sector can indeed thrive alongside a green economy".

The Romanian deputy praised Šefčovič's performance in the hearing, pointing to the Slovakian official's statement that "the status quo is unacceptable", saying "we fully agree with him" on this point.

Matthias Groote, the S&D spokesperson for environment policy, believed it was "vital that environment and climate policy not only become a part of the energy union, but a priority", adding that Šefčovič has "formulated a clear and sustainable vision on energy and climate policy".

The new vice-president for energy union will have a busy few months ahead with preparations for the COP21 climate change conference which is due to take place in Paris at the end of 2015.

Groote seemed confident in Šefčovič, describing him as "a candidate who will make sure that climate policy will not fall behind energy policy, especially with the upcoming [...] conference".

MEPs are set to vote on the new commission on Wednesday.
About the author

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist and editorial assistant for the Parliament Magazine

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