

Geopolitics of energy and the role of Russia in global power shifts

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At the Flemish Centre of International Policy (FCIP), located in Antwerp (Belgium), Sofie Vanmaele and Dr. David Criekemans wrote a study on the topic of “Geopolitics of Energy and the Role of Russia in Global Power Shifts”.

Two dimensions are first studied in this report, which both constitute major policy challenges with which the European Union, its states and regions, are all confronted;

- First, the main dimensions of the current energy debate (the transition towards a more durable energy system, the ever tighter oil and gas markets, and the politics of scarcity) are explored.
- Second, the relations between the EU and Russia are studied with a focus on the energy dimension. This part starts with a sketch of the background with which this special bilateral relationship should be understood. The report tries to understand the energy dialogue which was institutionalised between the EU and Russia since 2000. Important is that ‘energy efficiency’ is being signalled out as one of the main areas within which the EU and Russia could find a common ground, so as to ‘restart’ their relationship.

The last part of this study investigates how ‘energy’ affects the foreign policy of the Belgian federation, both at the federal level and at the level of the Regions. In Belgium, the policy areas of ‘energy efficiency’ and ‘renewable energy’ are exclusive competencies of the Regions. Only the Regions can also conduct a foreign policy in these areas, not the federal level. Hence, 25 recommendations are made to further enhance the strategic link between ‘energy’ and ‘foreign policy’, both institutionally and with regard to the policy content. Special attention is being given to recommendations for the benefit of the consolidation and further enhancement of the foreign policy of the Regional Government of Flanders.

A last part in the study also formulates recommendations on the way in which Flanders could contribute directly, via the Belgian federation and via the European Union to the bilateral relation with Russia. More than 80% of the trade between Belgium and Russia is actually between Flanders and Russia. Based upon this and other data, the authors argue that also on a political level, the Region of Flanders could further augment its cooperation with (its counterparts in) the Russian federation, within such domains as culture, education, trade, etc. With regard to energy, ‘energy efficiency’ could be an interesting domain within which regional governments in Europe could start a cooperation with their counterparts in Russia. In this context, the case of Bavaria is signalled out as an example.

The report is currently only available in Dutch on the website of the Flemish Centre of International Policy; <http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=.VSBB&n=62482>

However, the authors are exploring the possibility of translating a part of their study in English, so as to make a contribution to the domain in English.

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