

An approach to the European Union's Energy Diplomacy

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Abstract

Energy has been a concern since the creation of the European Union, as a result of which numerous studies, regulations, directives, and action plans have been developed. The interest in creating an internal energy market has always been fundamental, but over the years, energy challenges have led to the need to shape a coherent external energy policy aimed at diversifying energy sources, routes, and suppliers. The most important instrument of foreign policy is diplomacy, which is manifested even in the energy sector. And at the EU level, since 2015, the directions for action on energy diplomacy have become clear. Thus, supported by a demonstration dedicated to the meanings that can be attributed to the concept, the research will aim to provide an approach to how the EU is involved in theorizing and applying diplomacy in the energy sector.

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Introduction and methodology

Energy diplomacy is a concept often used in current discussions on European energy security, which is characterized by a recent appearance in the vocabulary dedicated to foreign policy despite a marked history of events involving energy resources. If we look back to the 20th century, we can find multiple actions carried out abroad for energy security: the Suez Canal crisis, the negotiations for the construction of oil and natural gas pipelines, such as those on the Druzhba oil pipeline or on the gas pipelines that would connect Austria with Italy (Trieste), the Soviet Union with Germany, Finland with Scandinavia, the Soviet Union with Japan¹ or to facilitate a constructive dialogue between consumers and energy producers: *Euro-Mediterranean Energy Forum*, consisting of 12 countries from Europe, North Africa or East Asia (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey²) or *the Baltic Energy Cooperation*, which consists of 11 Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, and Sweden³). We note that energy resources have naturally given rise to contacts between two or more actors, to the practice of foreign policy and the use of its specific tools, including dialogue, negotiation, partnership, and, agreement (diplomacy).

¹ Frank Bösch, „Energy Diplomacy: West Germany, the Soviet Union and the Oil Crises of the 1970s”, *Historical Social Research*, no. 39, (April 2014): 169-174, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12759/hsr.39.2014.4.165-185>

² “First Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Energy Ministers”, *CORDIS*, last modified June 7, 1996, <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/6277-first-euromediterranean-conference-of-energy-ministers>

³ Dalia Streimikiene, “Monitoring of energy supply sustainability in the Baltic Sea region”, *Energy Policy*, No. 35, (2007): 1658, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2006.05.011>.

This research will be dedicated to the concept of energy diplomacy, as perceived by the literature and as reflected in European Union regulatory documents, but also in its practice, a concept that deserves special attention because it bears the characteristic of complexity springing from multidimensionality connected to the evolutions of the constantly changing energy landscape. The hypothesis of the study reflects the indissoluble link between energy, national/supranational security agenda, and foreign policy, a link that the European Union assumes with interest, both in theory and in practice. The resulting research question is: *What are the indicators that certify the EU's interest in energy diplomacy?* The verification of the stated hypothesis and the identification of the answers to the above-mentioned question will be done through *the analysis of the definitions* offered by the specialized literature, thus constituting the context of our discussion, followed by *the analysis of the official documents* adopted by the European Union which refer to external actions in the energy sector (theoretical part), supplemented by *the analysis of some statistical data*, justifying the indication of certain characteristics of energy diplomacy (multidimensionality, for example), but also by *the analysis of the effective way of conducting energy diplomatic activity* (actors involved, tools used - practical part).

Consequently, in the elaboration of the demonstration, an important role will be played by the *quantitative method* because it will try to identify multiple approaches to the concept and numerous Community documents indicating directions for action in this branch of diplomacy, but also by the *qualitative method* given the fact that a content analysis of all the available sources will be performed, either primary (treaties, regulations, reports, organizational charts, statements, press releases, etc.) or secondary (specialized literature). Last but not

least, the *comparative method* will be useful to identify similarities and differences between different attempts of definition, between regulatory documents, or between Member States' practices.

The option of dedicating this research to the concept of energy diplomacy as perceived in the European Union is due to the lack of studies dedicated exclusively to this topic, which provides a fertile ground for analysis. We are talking about a branch of diplomacy that still acquires meanings from specialists, whose opinions are often contradictory. There is no generally accepted vision, and we aim to make a synthesis of the definitions offered over time, to find them reflected at the EU level, and to identify new features, new guidelines in this regard.

I. Energy diplomacy in the existing literature

Most of the studies dedicated to energy diplomacy are characterized by a fairly recent appearance (after 2010) and address this issue from multiple points of view, so there is no generally accepted definition of our concept, as we have already mentioned in the introduction. According to *Goldthau*, the author of many types of research in the field, the term could have the following meaning: "the use of foreign policy to secure access to energy supplies abroad and to promote cooperation in the energy sector."⁴ We identify in its definition two purposes and the fact that the actors involved are the states (which he calls "primary units of analysis").⁵ The perspective of this specialist is criticized by two other authors who consider the objectives and the actors who can carry out

⁴ Andreas Goldthau, „Energy Diplomacy in Trade and Investment of Oil and Gas“, *Global energy Governance. The new rules of the game*, (London: Brookings Press, 2010), p. 27.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

this kind of diplomacy limited. *Chaban and Knodt* start from the pillars of energy security as set out by the European Union (EU): sustainability, competitiveness, and security of supply, and consider that a third, namely sustainability,⁶ must be added to the two objectives identified by Goldthau. Moreover, they underline that supranational actors or transnational companies operating in the energy sector should be added to state actors.

The following authors, *Huda and Ali*, find interesting applicability of energy diplomacy by referring to transnational pipelines, which can create a framework for solid cooperation, becoming a diplomatic tool for conflict resolution.⁷ In their approach, they relate to the perspective of two other researchers about pipelines and their role in facilitating contact between states. *Le Billon and Savage* believe that despite "the complex setting up, huge financial cost and high level of confidence involved in building a cross-border pipeline", it could contribute to "a rapprochement between neighboring countries throughout the project development stages."⁸ Thus, these pipelines become "peace pipelines" or carriers of stability in intergovernmental relations.⁹

In her attempt to identify the differences between the concept of energy diplomacy and that of energy governance, *Anna Herranz Surralles* synthetically highlights objectives, tools, and actors with competence in the field. According to

⁶ Natalia Chaban, Michèle Knodt, „Energy diplomacy in the context of multi-stakeholder diplomacy: The EU and BICS“, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50, No. 4 (April 2015), 461, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836715573541>

⁷ Mirza Sadaqat Huda, Saleem H. Ali, "Energy Diplomacy in South Asia: Beyond the security paradigm in accessing the TAPI pipeline project," *Energy Research & Social Science*, No. 34, (December 2017):205, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.07.013>

⁸ Philippe Le Billon, Emily Savage, "Binding pipelines? Oil, armed conflicts, and economic rationales for peace in the two Sudans", *African Geographical Review*, 35, No. 2, (February 2016): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2015.1113551>

⁹ *Ibidem*.

Anna, the goal can be defined considering the national interest of securing energy resources through diversification and contact with external suppliers. The modalities indicated for the development of energy diplomacy actions are the bilateral intergovernmental agreements, but also the political, legal, and economic instruments that substantiate the energy infrastructure projects or trade agreements. The actors involved in such an activity in the energy sector listed by Anna are the public authorities and the energy companies.¹⁰

Furthermore, *Andrea Prontera* in her critique of the attempts to define the energy diplomacy of the European Union, considered to oscillate between two poles: geopolitics/market, bilateral/multilateral energy diplomacy, external governance/energy diplomacy¹¹ indicates three points of interest: *triangular diplomacy* (negotiations that led to the conclusion of energy agreements between governments, between governments and companies, or only between companies; the stated purpose is to support national companies); *multilateral or "ex-ante" diplomacy* (practiced by governments or international organizations in an attempt to create rules and negotiate treaties) and *network diplomacy* (involving a range of actors from governments, companies, international organizations to local authorities, or NGOs to facilitate political processes and project implementation).¹² We notice a rather complex categorization offered by this author, which goes further and brings into discussion other concepts such as *hexagonal energy diplomacy*, which could characterize the current dynamics of the

¹⁰ Anna Herranz-Surrallés, „An emerging EU energy diplomacy? Discursive shifts, enduring practices”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 23, No. 9, (September 2015): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1083044>

¹¹ Andrea Prontera, „Forms of state and European energy security: diplomacy and pipelines in Southeastern Europe”, *European Security*, 26, No. 2, (April 2017): 274, DOI: 10.1080/09662839.2017.1313233.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 281-282.

European energy sector (a network of mutually beneficial links between national governments, companies, local communities, and the EU institutions).

An accessible and comprehensive approach to the concept of energy diplomacy is pursued by *H. Zhao*, who sets out four ways to indicate the connection between energy and diplomacy. The first meaning is that of energy as a source of diplomacy (*energy-driven diplomacy*), used mainly by countries that benefit from such energy resources in order to achieve political and security objectives.¹³ The second category is the *energy-oriented diplomacy*, which can be carried out by both importing and exporting states to achieve energy interests (either security of supply, as is the case in the European Union, or promotion of the role played in the international energy market)¹⁴. Third, the author refers to the diplomacy carried out by states, institutions, or international organizations to encourage competition, cooperation, and energy integration.¹⁵ Here we may include negotiations on territories rich in oil and gas resources located on the border between two states or of the seas that hide important deposits by riparian states. Also, it can be added the negotiations on pricing, pipelines, and transit through certain territories, as well as on the creation of regional energy integration frameworks. The fourth category identified by Zhao is that of *multilateral energy diplomacy and global energy governance*, namely energy dialogues carried out in international organizations or multilateral energy cooperation mechanisms. He brings the example of OPEC, IEA, IEF, ECT with specific

¹³ H. Zhao, "Energy Diplomacy from Bilateral Diplomacy to Global Energy Governance" in *The Economics and Politics of China's Energy Security Transition*, (London: Academic Press, 2015), p. 122.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 129-131.

competencies, but also of the organizations that are increasingly involved in energy issues such as the G20, the UN, or the EU.¹⁶

Part of Zhao's categorization is taken up by *Steven Griffiths* in his attempt to discuss energy diplomacy in the recent context of transition to low-carbon economies. He considers that “diplomacy is one of the tools of foreign policy that can be leveraged to support a country’s energy interests during a global energy transition,”¹⁷ emphasizing both the multilateral aspect important for aligning the transitional interests of the actors involved and the bilateral one, which seeks to fulfill national interests. The debate on the importance of renewable energy in diplomatic activity is becoming increasingly consistent at the level of official speeches and the level of specialized studies.¹⁸

The fund, represented by the increase in global energy demand, but also by the common commitment to improving the quality of the environment and combating climate change, gives renewable energy sources the quality of global priority. Statistics show they have gained momentum in the energy mix of many countries, and the outlooks identify considerable long-term growth. For example, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) stated in a 2017 report that the climate targets set out in the Paris Agreement could be met by increasing the share of renewable energy in the primary energy mix from 15% (2017) to 65% in 2050.¹⁹ In a much more recent report, conducted in April 2020, IRENA pays even

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 131.

¹⁷ Steven Griffiths, “Energy diplomacy in a time of energy transition”, *Energy Strategy Reviews*, No. 26, (November 2019), p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esr.2019.100386>

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Adnan Z. Amin, “The Age of Renewable Energy Diplomacy”, *IRENA*, November 2017, p. 1, https://www.irena.org//media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Articles/2017/Nov/eda_reflection_age_of_renewable_energy_en.pdf?la=en&hash=0E2C03219A614C89B06AB0ADDD57939EDD738F6

more attention to renewables to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero given the cost reduction in the last decade and the insufficient exploration of these sources which can be quite widely used, whether we are talking about electricity, heat or synthetic fuels that can replace fossil fuels in industry and transport.²⁰ Narrowing the scope of the discussion to the European plan, the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 was recently adopted, which led to a reconsideration of the objectives, including renewable energy.

In this context, there are discussions about adapting energy diplomacy to new developments. Thus, a sub concept is derived, that of *renewable energy diplomacy*, which refers to the creation of interstate links through such resources, links understood as ways to strengthen cooperation and streamline national energy systems. According to IRENA Director-General Adnan Z. Amin, "the potential of renewables to improve energy access, spur sustainable economic growth and create jobs where they are needed means that a sustainable energy future is not only a necessity, but a common path towards peace and prosperity."²¹ Renewable energy diplomacy has even become a mainstay of foreign policy in some countries, as is the case in Japan, which aims to get involved in "global efforts against climate change through promotion and expansion of renewable energy."²²

²⁰ IRENA, *Reaching Zero with Renewables. Eliminating CO₂ emissions from industry and transport in line with the 1.5° C climate goal*, Abu Dhabi, 2020, 15, accessed December 28, 2020, https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2020/Sep/IRENA_Reaching_zero_2020.pdf

²¹ Adnan Z.Amin, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

²² ****The Age of Renewable Energy Diplomacy and Japan's Course*, Opening Remarks by Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, 4 April 2018, p. 3, accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000350974.pdf>.

The context of the Pact adopted by the European Commission raised a new concept assimilated to energy diplomacy, namely the *diplomacy of the European Green Pact*. The text of the document devotes an important section to defining the ecological transition that the European Union is planning through cooperation, both with global partners for the development of the international carbon market and with neighboring actors with whom it intends to conclude partnerships or think strategies. The future applicability of diplomacy is also visible by mentioning summits, partnerships, strategies, alliances, climate, and environmental initiatives, oriented towards China and Africa.²³ The continent in the south of Europe is at the heart of European concerns about outsourcing the European Green Pact. Vulnerability to climate change, but also the biodiversity and renewable potential that characterize African countries lead the Union to consider options to support their transition to a carbon-free future in line with the Paris Agreement. Here we can include the "Green Energy Initiative",²⁴ which would establish financial cooperation essential for sustainable economic diversification, as well as other instruments that the EU uses to support Africa's sustainable development. Consequently, this diplomacy carried out in the context of the Ecological Pact will involve dialogue, working with partner countries to bring them on the same path of sustainability, and transforming the EU into a global leader that will make the agenda known internationally.

II. Energy diplomacy and the European Union regulatory framework

²³ ***European Commission, *Pactul Ecologic European*, Brussels, December 11, 2019, pp. 23-24, https://eurlex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d1651c2211ea8c1f01aa75ed71a1.0020.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

²⁴ *Idem*, *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa*, Brussels, March 9, 2020, 4, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0004&from=FR>.

At the EU level, references in official documents to what we now call energy diplomacy appear when dependence on external energy resources becomes a problem. We return to the Commission's first report containing considerations on improving the Community's external relations with energy suppliers in 1972, which called for discussions with exporting countries and regions and negotiation of cooperation agreements. Less than a year later, an event precipitates the course of things in terms of energy security and determines the adoption of directions of action, which I would categorize as a precursor to what we now call energy diplomacy of the European Union. OPEC's decision to impose an embargo on states that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War and the negative impact on some European states led to the European Community recognizing, in the context of the Copenhagen Summit in December 1973, the need to negotiate with the oil-producing states and conclude cooperation agreements with them for mutual benefit.²⁵

The 20th century has been marked by international oil and gas events in the Middle East, and the year 1979 marks the second major crisis amid the Iranian Revolution, the declining Iranian oil production, and the rising barrel prices. In this context, the Community discourse reintroduces the leitmotif "constructive dialogues with oil-producing states / establishing contacts with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council" for energy security reasons, as can be seen in the documents issued at the time. The Green Paper adopted in 2000 still emphasized the essential nature of oil for the economy despite the crises that have marked the field. The figures indicated consumption of approx. 690 mtoe,

²⁵ *** Commission of the European Communities, *Bulletin of the European Communities*, No. 12, 1973, p. 11, <http://aei.pitt.edu/57092/1/BUL104.pdf>.

production of approx. 320 mtoe, and the difference, more than half of what was needed, came from imports (Middle East - 45% and Russia - 40%).²⁶ Overall, the European Union's energy dependence was rising, forecasts were unsatisfactory as they exceeded 70% for 2020-2030, and the EU was in a position to devise a strategy for a secure energy future. In addition to the internal measures related to demand management, completion of the single energy market ideal, and orientation towards the development of new energy sources, some external measures were also required to encourage, on the one hand, the construction of new oil and gas transmission routes and on the other hand, the efforts of dialogue with the producing countries so that the European Union "makes its voice heard."²⁷ This type of dialogue was to "facilitate the improvement of pricing mechanisms, the conclusion of agreements and the use of reserve stocks for mutual benefit."²⁸ There were discussions about establishing a partnership with Russia in the energy sector, but the result was the establishment of the first strategic dialogue in the energy field with this country, identified by experts as a "diplomatic platform for maintaining the supplier-consumer relationship."²⁹

On 30th October 2000, at the initiative of the Presidents of the Russian Federation, France, and the European Commission, this mechanism for bilateral cooperation was established. It aimed to answer all the questions related to one of the strongest pillars of EU-Russia relations since the 60s: the energy pillar.

²⁶ *** Commission of the European Communities, *Green Paper. Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply*, Brussels, November 29, 2000, p.3, p. 39, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52000DC0769&from=EN>.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Patrick Truffer, "The EU-Russia Energy Dialogue – or the problem of imposing sanctions", *Offiziere.ch*, 18 July 18, 2014, <https://www.offiziere.ch/?p=17272>.

According to an evaluation report for 10 years period, the dialogue between the two actors proved to be effective because it contributed to a better knowledge of the markets and to the clarification of the misunderstandings regarding the rules that guide them, but also because it opened the way to negotiate agreements (such as in the nuclear sector.)³⁰ Extremely focused discussions were also held on the energy resources that the EU imported from its eastern neighbor: natural gas, oil, coal, and uranium in order to prevent supply disruptions, improve energy efficiency, increase nuclear security or modernize energy infrastructure. An important item on the agenda was the creation of a Roadmap over a long-time horizon, respectively 2050, which became a reality in 2013. The vision of the document was extremely ambitious, so by 2050, cooperation between the European Union and Russia had to lead to the creation of a common energy market or a Pan-European Energy Area. Meanwhile, in 2014, the mechanism for bilateral cooperation was suspended at the initiative of the European Commission on account of developments in the region (crisis in Ukraine).

In period 2000-2015, numerous instruments have been adopted to create an internal energy market and a coherent external dimension of EU energy policy. Among the most important is another Green Paper, adopted in 2006 which proposed a strategy for safe, sustainable, and competitive energy. Among the key areas for action, foreign energy policy needed to be outlined in terms of internal progress and the diversification of supply sources (with a focus on the Caspian Sea region, North Africa, and the Middle East). As a tribute to the aim of

³⁰ Günther H. Oettinger, Sergey I. Shmatko, *Joint Report EU-Russia Energy Dialogue 2000-2010: Opportunities for our future Energy Partnership*, Brussels/Moscow, (November 2010): pp. 6-9, <https://russiaeu.ru/sites/default/files/user/2010-EnergyDialog%20-report11-10th%20anniversary-en.pdf>.

supporting external action in the field of energy, the European Council of June 2006 reinforced the idea of using all the available instruments (including CFSP and CSDP) and emphasized the need of drafting documents for the development and implementation of external energy policy under close coordination of Council, Commission and High Representative (an Action Plan and a Strategic Review).

The European Commission, in turn, draws up a series of communications during this period setting out principles for action to manage external energy relations (bilateral negotiations, agreements, cooperation with Russia, cooperation with third countries, supplier or transit countries, energy partnerships such as those between Africa and Europe), but keeping unchanged the idea that "the external energy policy needs to reflect the interconnectedness of the internal energy market and the interdependence of the EU Member States."³¹ However, the Union's vulnerability to shocks remained quite high given the repeated crises in Russia. It was necessary to think of a strategy to ensure resilience to shocks and, implicitly, energy security. Thus, in 2014, the *Energy Security Strategy* was adopted, and a year later the *Energy Union Strategy*, which proposed ways to secure energy policy both internally and externally. The innovative element highlighted in the last strategic document is that of energy and climate diplomacy. According to this document, "The EU will use all external policy instruments to ensure that a strong, united EU engages constructively with its partners and speaks with one voice on energy and

³¹ *** European Commission, *On security of energy supply and international cooperation – The EU Energy Policy: Engaging with Partners beyond Our Borders*, Brussels, September 7, 2011, p. 4, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0539&from=en>.

climate”, “the Commission, the HR / VP, and the Member States being responsible for the revitalization of the EU's energy and climate diplomacy.”³²

However, the year 2015 is defining for the explicit expression of the option for energy diplomacy at the level of the European Union through the adoption of the *Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on Energy Diplomacy*, which also included an *Action Plan* in this regard. This plan outlines the directions for an efficient energy diplomacy, as follows: “strengthen strategic guidance through regular high-level engagement, establish and further develop energy cooperation and dialogues, support efforts to enhance the global energy architecture and multilateral initiatives, strengthen common messages and energy diplomacy capacities.”³³ The plan also briefly mentions some issues related to climate, which are of great importance in the European Ecological Pact, namely the relationship with third countries based on the export of technology and know-how needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions³⁴. Climate reporting in the Energy Diplomacy Plan is due to the fact the Council recognized climate diplomacy as an “inherent part”³⁵ of foreign policy, as a “strategic priority in diplomatic dialogues”, and energy diplomacy as “a way to support the transition to a sustainable energy mix”, which promotes renewable energy sources and

³² *** European Commission, *A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy*, Brussels, February 25, 2015, p. 21, https://eurlex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:1bd46c90bdd411e4bbe101aa75ed71a1.0001.03/DOC_1&format=PDF

³³ *** Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on Energy Diplomacy*, Brussels, July 20, 2015, pp. 5-8, data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10995-2015-INIT/en/pdf.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³⁵ *** Council of the EU, *Council conclusion on climate diplomacy*, July 20, 2015, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/07/20/fac-climate-diplomacy-conclusions/>,

energy efficiency measures.³⁶ We are talking about synergy or a complementarity between the two concepts necessary to achieve both climate goals and other energy goals such as energy security.

New climate and energy realities will naturally lead to a partial shift in diplomatic attention, from the security of fossil fuel supply and multilateral energy governance to energy transition management. Therefore, there were discussions regarding the implementation of the Energy Diplomacy Plan adopted in 2015 under these concerns, both at the official level and at the level of specialized studies. In its program for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from 1 July to 31 December 2020, Germany proposed to endow the European Ecological Pact with an active external energy component and to update the Energy Diplomacy Plan to “attract new partners for green energy imports and raise awareness among fossil fuel exporters of the opportunities presented by a new energy world.”³⁷ In general, the intention was that through diplomacy, regional and international efforts should be directed towards the same goal of combating climate change, but in a differentiated way according to the responsibilities assumed by each actor to achieve the common goal (principle of common but differentiated responsibility).³⁸

The report on the state of the Energy Union in 2020 demonstrates the EU's mobilization before putting these proposed changes on paper. It notes, within the diplomatic dimension, ministerial meetings with China and Canada, actions of

³⁶ *Idem*, *Annex. Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy*, Brussels, February 26, 2018, p. 7, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6125-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

³⁷ *Idem*, *Together for Europe's recovery. Programme for Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 1 July to 31 December 2020*, p. 23, <https://www.eu2020.de/blob/2360248/e0312c50f910931819ab67f630d15b2f/06-30-pdf-programm-en-data.pdf>.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

EU delegations in non-EU countries, cooperation with the G7 and G30 presidencies, and multilateral involvement in the International Renewable Energy Agency and Clean Energy Ministerial and Mission Innovation. We can conclude that the aim of this EU diplomacy in the context of climate concerns is to promote globally its position on climate transition, to create investment opportunities, and “to help its partners to translate their vision [...] in actionable policies and measures” in the field.³⁹

This redefined goal will complement for the moment the classic meaning given to energy diplomacy. The debate on the future of natural gas, for example, is intense because we are still talking about a high dependence on a single supplier, an increased interest in the EU's gas infrastructure projects (see Projects of Common Interest), but also about its quality of having the lowest CO₂ intensity among fossil fuels.⁴⁰ At least in the short term, by 2025, it is expected that there will be an increase in imports of natural gas due to the decrease in its production and the increase in consumption caused by future closures of coal and nuclear power plants.⁴¹ According to the scenarios (Stated Policies Scenario conducted by the IEA), globally, natural gas production will increase in the period 2020-2025, followed by a significant decrease in the next five years. Also, its role in generating electricity will be relegated to the background by 2030 due

³⁹ *** European Commission, *2020 report on the State of the Energy Union pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action*, Brussels, October 14, 2020, p. 16, https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/report_on_the_state_of_the_energy_union_com2020950.pdf.

⁴⁰ Schalk Cloete, *An independent Global Energy Forecast to 2050 (part 3 of 5): fossil fuels*, October 18, 2019, <https://energypost.eu/an-independent-global-energy-forecast-to-2050-part-3-of-5-fossil-fuels/>

⁴¹ Peter Zeniewski, „A long-term view of natural gas security in the European Union”, *IEA*, March 13, 2019, <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/a-long-term-view-of-natural-gas-security-in-the-european-union>,

to the boom that renewables will take. They will contribute in a proportion of 40% to the power supply as indicated in the projections.⁴²

Consequently, the current situation and short-term forecasts indicate that natural gas will remain in the energy rankings both globally and in the European Union. Thus, in addition to efforts to transform the role of natural gas in the road to de-carbonization (the transition to hydrogen, biogas, synthetic gas), of infrastructure (for the transport of new gases), and technologies (for carbon capture, storage, and use), it will continue to support the security of supply in the sense conceived over the years and, implicitly, diplomatic tools will be used in this regard.

IV. Actors involved in the practice of EU's energy diplomacy

To be able to understand the concept of "energy diplomacy", beyond the arguments offered by the literature, it is useful to turn our attention to the applied part which is reflected at the EU level. The characteristic of complexity in terms of definition is justified in European energy governance, which can also be described by the same attribute. It is well known that both the national and the supranational play an important role in the conduct of the European Union's energy policy. Member States make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Community's energy targets, but they manage their resources according to their own needs, as mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty. Therefore, in addition to the general meaning of the foreign energy policy offered by the European Union, we

⁴² IEA, *Changes in natural gas production in the Stated Policies Scenario, 2019-2030*, last updated: October 12, 2020, <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/changes-in-natural-gas-production-in-the-stated-policies-scenario-2019-2030>.

will also find specificities at the national level according to energy needs and interests. Specialized studies include the category of those responsible for energy diplomacy at the EU level the European Commission together with its Commissioners and Directorates, the European External Action Service together with the High Representative, also with its delegations, the European Parliament, the EU Council, each Member State “with their own governments, parliaments, ministries of energy and diplomatic missions,”⁴³ but also the transnational corporations and the companies.

We will linger on the European Commission, which is actively involved in the making of the European energy policy. Since the 1960s, this institution has tried to exploit energy challenges and provide recommendations for solving various problems facing the Union: energy dependence, vulnerability to supply disruptions, environmental problems, etc. Its activity is carried out with the help of a large number of departments, directorates, and agencies. The tasks in the energy field are mainly carried out by the Directorate-General for Energy, DG Climate Action, and DG Environment. The most important Directorate for the discussion is the first mentioned, which has attributions that cover both the internal and the external dimension, both the strategic dimension and the one that refers to clean transition, energy efficiency, innovation, or the one that focuses on nuclear energy. The purpose of the Directorate is therefore a complex one, dedicated to the elaboration of energy legislative proposals, the implementation of specific policies and strategies, the proper functioning of the internal energy market, and the safe exploitation of domestic energy sources. The

⁴³ Natalia Chaban, Michèle Knodt, *op.cit.*, p. 462.

other two directions mentioned complement the activity in the energy sector given the concerns related to achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

The European Commission was also the authority that began to emphasize the need to strengthen energy security by promoting multilateralism, diversification of supply sources, suppliers, routes, energy dialogue, and negotiation on the construction of cross-border interconnection pipelines, as we have noted in the discussion related to the theoretical part. Its competence in foreign energy policy, although minor at first, has gradually progressed, receiving specific responsibilities. For example, in 2011, the Foreign Affairs Council decided to endow it with a mandate to negotiate a treaty with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan for the construction of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline. At the time, this mandate for action was considered the first "operational decision of the Union, part of a coordinated and united external energy strategy" and involved a series of diplomatic actions such as discussions between representatives of the three actors aiming to make legal commitments or to conclude bilateral agreements for the construction and operation of the pipeline.⁴⁴ The Commission's work on external energy policy is supported by the Council (external affairs and energy configurations), but also by the European Parliament through important decision-making and budgetary tasks for the implementation of energy policy.

The discussion on energy diplomacy cannot exclude the Union's diplomatic service, namely the European External Action Service, whose activity is divided between Brussels through experts, and the rest of the world through

⁴⁴ ***European Commission, "EU starts negotiations on Caspian Pipeline to bring gas to Europe", September 12, 2011, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_11_1023

embassy delegations. He is headed by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who has also been Vice-President of the Commission since 2009. He coordinates the Union's foreign policy instruments, ensures its external representation, and participates in meetings and the preparation of specific documents. This is the case of the *Energy Diplomacy Action Plan*, a plan presented to the Council by its two authors, the Commission and the High Representative. These authorities received the task „to ensure the follow-up of the EU Energy Diplomacy Action Plan, in close consultation and coordination with the Member States and in accordance with their respective roles and competencies as determined by the Treaties.”⁴⁵

Moreover, it is interesting to consider how the Member States think about diplomatic activity in this sector. According to specialized studies, energy diplomacy is the result of an important process of determining national energy priorities, carried out both at the level of experts in the field and the level of ministerial officials'.⁴⁶ Established following the cooperation and coordination of the structures responsible for foreign affairs, energy, environment, natural resources, etc., external energy priorities are to be met by the diplomatic missions of the states depending on the size of the state and the number of diplomatic representatives sent to the post. In the case of small missions, we are talking about diplomats with extensive expertise, who can manage multiple areas of cooperation, including energy, and in the case of large-scale missions, there may

⁴⁵ *** Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Energy Diplomacy*, Brussels, July 20, 2015, p. 2, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10995-2015-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁴⁶ Valentin Katrandhiev, "Energy Diplomacy Revisited" in *Foreign Affairs Research Papers*, No. 13, (June 2020) pp. 26-27.

be diplomats whose training is specifically energetic.⁴⁷ Furthermore, there are states, such as the United Kingdom, which employ professionals without diplomatic degrees but with expertise in areas of interest. For example, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) mentions positions such as: energy policy officer in charge of strengthening energy ties with the state hosting the diplomatic mission, energy and environmental policy advisor tasked with promoting commitment to the transition to a low-carbon global economy or energy and climate policy analyst involved in preparations for one of the most important climate events, namely COP26, November 2021.⁴⁸ The picture of the actors involved in energy diplomacy specific to European countries is complemented by another function that we find, especially among the countries of Central Europe. It is the so-called “ambassador-at-large” or, in translation, the ambassador with special tasks, respectively a high-ranking personality, whose accreditation is not limited to a single state, but can cover a group of countries or even a region and whose activity is dedicated to a special mission. From a historical point of view, this diplomatic function was first introduced by the USA, in 1949, in order to replace the presence of the Secretary of State at certain international conferences or negotiations.⁴⁹

Gradually, the quality of representatives with special tasks was taken over by other actors such as the EU and its Member States. For the energy sector, we can mention:

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁸ HM Government, *View Vacancy – Climate and Energy Policy Analyst*, 2020, <https://fco.tal.net/vx/mobile-0/appcentre-ext/brand-0/candidate/so/pm/4/pl/1/opp/12351-Climate-and-Energy-Policy-Analyst/en-GB>.

⁴⁹ Filip Turčinović, „Some Specificities of the Ambassador at Large Diplomatic Institute” in *American International Journal of Social Science*, 5, No. 3, (June 2016), p. 42, http://www.aijssnet.com/journals/Vol_5_No_3_June_2016/7.pdf.

1. Ambassador with special tasks for climate diplomacy (Marc Vanheukelen, European External Action Service);
2. Ambassador with special tasks for climate and energy policy (Kaja Tael, Estonia, Pál Ságvári, Hungary);
3. Ambassador with special tasks for energy security (Václav Bartu Czech Republic, Anita Orban, Hungary, Mihnea Constantinescu, Marius Cristian Bădescu, Romania);
4. Ambassador with special tasks in the nuclear sector (Darius Degutis, Lithuania, responsible for expressing regionally and internationally the Baltic's position on the Astravets nuclear power plant).

These diplomatic representatives work in their foreign ministries and are responsible for representing state energy interests abroad, supporting dialogue with various partners on energy issues, and, consequently, improving energy cooperation and connections with external partners in the field.

V. Conclusions

We can conclude that the research hypothesis mentioned at the beginning is verified based on the analysis dedicated to the concept of energy diplomacy. The functioning of society is intrinsically linked to the existence of an energy source, of an energy market characterized by several indicators: consumption, production, and distribution. Where the energy potential is lower, the interest in securing the energy supply of the citizens, respectively of bringing the energy resources through networks (electricity) or pipelines (oil, natural gas) outside the borders is bigger. This is where foreign policy and its instrument, diplomacy,

come into play because access to such external energy sources can be achieved by establishing contacts, conducting negotiations, and concluding agreements, either bilaterally (between governments) or at the multilateral level within international diplomatic forums) or at another level indicated by specialized studies (between governments, companies, institutions, etc.) This idea is found in the attempts to define the concept of energy diplomacy (as in the case of Goldthau or Anna Surralles) and applies to the European Union, which pays more and more attention to the subject both in its normative documents and at the level of application (through the way the EU works to promote its energy interests).

The research focused on these two indicators, which are important for demonstrating the EU's interest in energy diplomacy, and outlined a rather complex example of analysis, given that we are talking about an organization in which competence over energy policy is shared (between EU institutions and the Member States). The orientation towards an external dimension of energy policy has been manifested since the last century in times of crisis and awareness of dependence on external sources of supply but has found its embodiment in the many tools developed for the proper functioning of the European energy market. It is important to emphasize the EU's view that the coherence of external energy policy depends on the smooth running of things internally, and efforts have been made in both directions. Despite all these concerns expressed in documents prepared by the Commission, adopted by the Council, etc., the explicit expression of the option for energy diplomacy appears only at the presentation of the Energy Union Strategy and, subsequently, the Energy Diplomacy Action Plan, which indicates the directions in this domain. The traditional meaning

provided at that time, namely the security of fossil fuel supply, has transformed in just a few years, the foreground is taken by the energy transition, by achieving climate neutrality under the European Ecological Pact. The EU is also increasingly involved in this regard, as noted in its reports, and it is diplomatically promoting its global position in the process of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero. We deduce that, at least in the short term, the classic meaning of diplomacy will coexist with the new outline, given that certain fuels, such as natural gas, play a significant role in ensuring the energy security of some states. There are even gas infrastructure projects that the EU supports financially.

Once we have observed the Union's perception of this concept, it is important to understand how the theory is implemented. And here the discussion is characterized by ambivalence as we are talking about several authorities with diplomatic responsibilities at the EU level as a whole, but also about a specific organization of the Member States. The main carriers of this ability are the European Commission and the High Representative, as indicated in the documents adopted in this field, and at the Member State level, the task of energy diplomacy cannot be analyzed outside the foreign ministries and diplomatic missions in which we find various functions, sometimes dedicated exclusively to energy interests.

In conclusion, the European Union provides a fertile ground for analyzing the concept of energy diplomacy through the historical context that presents the particularity of concerns about the development of an external dimension of energy policy, through the current regulatory framework, which indicates directions for action in this field, but also through how this activity is

carried out (actors and tools). Moreover, the constant changes that are taking place in terms of energy on the European continent (see the current concern for the global transition and the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy) are stimulating discussions on energy diplomacy, which receive so many meanings depending on so many contexts.

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