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Studies on how best to integrate Malta to European grid underway - Commissioner



Technical and feasibility studies are currently being carried out to see the best and most cost effective way of how Malta can be integrated into the European gas market, Gunther Oettinger EU Commissioner for Energy said this afternoon.

Addressing a news conference at Villa Francia in Lija, Commissioner Oettinger said the tests should be concluded within the next 1.5 years.

He said that although plans for the integration of Malta into the European gas market in the next five to eight years were ambitious, they were also realistic.

This would make the island more diverse and less dependent.

Bringing gas to Malta, Mr Oettinger said, was essential to diversity and for a good energy mix but with a population of 430,000 Malta was not a business case so co-financing would be necessary.

He also spoke about plans for the interconnector between Italy, Sicily and Malta and said these were concrete and should materialise in the next two to three years with co-financing from the EU.

The aim was to connect Malta to the European electricity grid by 2014.

As regards the 2020 plan for Europe to produce 20 per cent renewable energy, Malta had a clear strategy to reach 10 per cent and that would be accepted because not every member state was the same due to their strategic location.

20 per cent was the overall European target but every country had to do what it could.

Resources Minister George Pullicino said that 3.4 per cent of Malta's 10 per cent renewable energy would come from the offshore wind farm at Sikka l-Bajda and 2.5 to three per cent from waste. The remainder would come from solar projects and other investments.

Between 2006 and 2013 Malta would have invested €37 million in incentive schemes for households and local industry in terms of renewable energy.

Mr Pullicino said that during the "good" working lunch with the Commissioner and Finance Minister Tonio Fenech, discussions also revolved around the situation in Cyprus.

Cyprus was similar to Malta in that it was also an isolated energy network.

Recently, it lost 30 per cent of its electricity generation due to an incident next to a power plant.

This was considered to be an eye opener about how fragile countries, like Malta, in the periphery of the EU were and what could be done for them to become part of the European grid.

Asked about the extension to the Delimara Power Station, which would be operated by heavy fuel oil, Commissioner Oettinger said

that the highest level of standards possible always had to be achieved without jeopardising security of supply.