The Conference „Regional Approach to Energy Security” was held on 27 March 2015 in Bucharest, Romania. The event was jointly organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

The aim of the Conference on Energy Security in South-Eastern Europe was to represent a platform for sharing of experiences at the regional level and to clarify the perception of and facilitate a common understanding of the concept of energy security in the region, starting from areas that have real potential to possible venues for action.

The event strove to identify effective policies and encourage inter-state coordination with a view to reduce specific common energy security vulnerabilities stemming from resource scarcity, supply predictability and overdependence.

Besides the representatives of the Romanian MFA and RACVIAC member countries, representatives of the European Commission, NATO, the European Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), energy specialists and representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Bucharest took part in the debates.
**H.E. Mihnea Constantinescu**, Ambassador-at-large for energy security, opened the Conference by introducing the keynote speakers and welcoming all participants.

During the opening session, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Bogdan Aurescu, and RACVIAC Director, Ambassador Branimir Mandić, welcomed all participants from RACVIAC member countries, as well as speakers from NATO (International Staff) and EU Commission and other guest speakers and participants.

**Minister Aurescu** said: "In recent years we have witnessed significant adverse developments such as financial, economic instability, disruption in the supply of energy derived from political unrest and armed conflicts not only in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in our neighborhood, in Ukraine. Recent events have shown that access to energy is not just an economic, but a security issue, as well”.

Mr Aurescu reiterated Romania’s support for the process of Euro-Atlantic integration in the region. "Romania, as a member of EU and NATO, constantly promotes regional processes to strengthen democracy and support efforts to stabilize security in Southeast Europe, including through dialogue like the one proposed by RACVIAC”.

He also said that, in addition to EU instruments in the energy market integration and consolidation, the NATO model for addressing security-related issues can contribute significantly to the potential for regional dialogue on energy security.

In conclusion, Mr. Aurescu emphasized the importance of the meeting and congratulated the organizers for launching this important topic, which will present a great challenge in the future. He mentioned the good relationship between Romania and RACVIAC and that Romania intends the to further support RACVIAC’s activities.

**Ambassador Mandić** expressed thanks to the Romanian MFA as a co-organizer of the Conference and for all its support and hospitality. Referring to RACVIAC’s mission to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South-Eastern Europe, he stated how much he appreciated having a conference on this topic. He said threats to energy security include political and economic instability and, consequently, prevent the proper functioning of the state.

Having in mind the goal of enhancing cooperation on security in South East Europe (SEE) within the regional and broader international framework and ways of contributing to the advancement of the countries in the region on their path towards the EU and Euro-Atlantic integrations, RACVIAC will continue to serve as a platform for policy makers, experts and analysts to identify and discuss solutions and exchange best practices on issues related to energy security.

Events such as this one are a good opportunity for promoting a transparent dialogue about the various aspects of regional energy security, based on a common strategic vision, the needs and potential of the region.
The first session entitled “Energy Security Challenges and Opportunities in South-Eastern Europe” was moderated by H.E. Miheala Constantinescu, Ambassador-at-large for energy security. Mr. Constantinescu introduced speakers in this session, Ms Monika Zsigri, expert from Directorate-General for Energy - European Commission, Mr Răzvan Nicolescu, president of ACER - former energy minister of Romania, and Mr Radu Dudău, Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Bucharest and Executive Director of Romania Energy Center.

Ms Monika Zsigri, representing the Directorate-General for Energy in the European Commission, reported on the new EU Energy security Strategy 2014 and the necessity of cooperation in the field of energy security. Ms Zsigri mentioned three main objectives of the Energy Union - sustainability, competitiveness and energy security. However, there are further steps to ensure competitive, secure and sustainable energy to all EU citizens and businesses through deepened integration, cooperation and coordination of both the external and internal aspects of energy policy, she said, adding that not only regional cooperation, but also the supra-regional approach has to be taken in account in this context. If there is no new infrastructure within the next 20 years, not only the SEE region but also Western Europe will encounter energy-related difficulties. She emphasized that it is necessary to identify a limited number of priority infrastructure projects, which should be realized according to mutual interests. As a minimum set of projects she cited, for example, the South-East Corridor, the Central-East Corridor and the Adriatic Corridor. The EU tries to support some of the regional and supra-regional projects to enhance the independence and stability of the European Energy Supply. Ms Zsigri also presented the so-called “Stress test” exercise which was launched by the European Commission in June 2014, with the goal to evaluate the resilience of the national gas transit systems to potential disruptions. The stress test was made for winter 2015, but it also showed the lessons learned for the mid- and long terms. One of the conclusions of this test was that „Crisis management by market & institutions on disruption during a cold winter” would affect nearly all EU countries – but that still cooperation is the best way to face it. She also suggested that RACVIAC takes in consideration the work on improvement of energy and climate policy diplomacy, as an external aspect of energy security.

Mr Razvan Nicolescu, representing the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) and former minister of energy of Romania also expressed his satisfaction that this Conference took place. Mr Nicolescu mentioned that, in order to create a functional Energy Union, it is necessary to create an internal market.
An effective European energy market needs firstly the improvement of interconnections to guarantee a constant supply. Secondly, Europe has to find a joint definition of vulnerable supply point or vulnerable consumer. To secure an equal access to energy for all citizens, it is necessary to offer energy for a price which is proportionate to the salaries. Thirdly, a coherent regulatory approach has to be established, which means that the currently existing twenty eight national bodies have to be harmonized within the EU.

Mr Radu Dudău, Assistant Professor at the University of Bucharest and Romanian energy expert presented some of the potential energy supply options in SEE, focusing on gas pipelines. He showed different options for gas transport from the Russian Federation, the Black Sea and neighboring countries to SEE and WE. In that context, he emphasized the importance of cross-border cooperation and political willingness for completion of the projects related to construction of pipelines.

He also mentioned the new dimension of energy security and the threat to critical infrastructure in general. Not only the planning and construction of supplying infrastructure, but also the protection of these facilities have to be taken into consideration, including from a cyber security perspective. Finally, he pointed out that, for managing the challenge of energy security in the SEE region, the reduction of corruption and the evaluation of the existing Energy Community Treaty are of essential importance.

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Speakers in the second session entitled “Energy-Strategic issue in the regional security framework” were Mr Valeriu Nicuț, State Secretary within the Romanian Ministry of Defence; Mr Michael Ruhle, Head of Energy Security Section – NATO; H.E. Marek Szczygiel, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Romania, and Mr Adrian Davidoiu, Director General - Strategic Affairs Department, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This session was moderated by Mr Radu Dudău.

Mr Valeriu Nicuț, State Secretary, Ministry of Defense of Romania, talked about the importance of energy security as a national duty. All security-related ministries and institution have to cooperate to establish and enhance the security of critical infrastructure and energy supply. He remarked his concerns that energy supply is used as a tool for political disputes. Mr Nicuț talked about the impact of energy supply on military operations and he suggested that this could be one of the subjects for discussion. A mix of national, EU and NATO initiatives can improve energy security but, on the other side, too many initiatives related to the topic make it more difficult to find joint solutions.
**Mr Michael Ruhle**, Head of the Energy Security Section in the Emerging Security Challenges Division in NATO’s International Staff stated that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization provides training and education related to this topic and, because of its importance, it is Alliance’s intention to enhance those efforts. He said that NATO intends not only to conduct trainings within the military, but also to invite and involve the private sector. He mentioned that when talking about energy security in terms of protection of critical infrastructure, it is a national responsibility to protect it, but NATO can help in that respect, especially in cases of terrorist attacks, piracy or natural disasters. It is very important to develop cooperation between the private sector and the governments and, through training, to develop awareness regarding energy security.

**H.E. Marek Szczygiel**, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Romania, mentioned the importance of this topic for Poland. He explained that the history of establishing the new EU-Energy Security Strategy 2014 was launched by the former Prime Minister of Poland, Mr Tusk. This idea of a strong and unique Energy Union requires still a lot of effort to be invested in order for it to come to life. In accordance to the statement of Mr Razvan Nicolescu, representing the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, he repeated that combined negotiations are a much better approach than a country by country approach. The current instable situation in Ukraine and sanctions imposed as the outcome show once more the urgent requirement of diversification of supply. The immoderate dependence of Europe on Russia in the area of energy supply has to be reviewed. Regarding the realization of the new energy supply project, he suggested that some small projects on interconnectivity might be more economical than fundamental projects.

**Mr Adrian Davidoiu**, Director General, Strategic Affairs Department, MFA of RO, put particular emphasis on the EU energy initiative and mentioned once again the importance of the Conference organized by the Romanian MFA and RACVIAC – Center for Security Cooperation. Once again, it was highlighted that cooperation, interconnectivity and the exchange of energy are some of the most important elements in order to establish the sustainable and secure supply of energy. From his point of view, in addition to EU and NATO, the Black Sea Area and its resources have become more important when it comes to guaranteeing Europeans Energy Security.

During both sessions, the representatives from RACVIAC member countries had an opportunity to give an overview about the current situation in their respective countries regarding the energy projects on energy supply and future plans. In a very open and transparent way, the participants reported on the existing national problems and the involvement in regional and supra-regional projects. They all agreed that the establishment of a future dependable energy supply is only possible through common international efforts, without any physical and political borders. Also, all participants emphasized that regional cooperation is of paramount importance for the development of the sustainable energy sector, as well as the
creation of a stable regulatory framework, in order to establish a resilient and diversified energy market. Taking into consideration that each country faces its own specific challenges and that they are more oriented towards national approaches rather than looking at the regional dimension, the spirit of working together, supporting and complementing each other should be more pronounced.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This event provided the opportunity for dialogue between the participants about the various aspects of regional energy security. All participants recognize the importance of the regional dimension for cooperation in the field of energy security. Closer co-operation among the key players in energy security, involving experts and policy makers, seems to be crucial for energy stability. The cooperation should be established through joint work and especially when it comes to implementation of the concrete projects. Interactive efforts by national institutions and international organizations are needed, whenever possible. Energy security, as one of most important comprehensive challenges for the highly energy dependent society, has to be taken into account together with some other issues like nutrition, water supply, global warming and pollution of the environment, as a big challenge for whole Europe. Further steps to ensure competitive, secure and sustainable energy to all citizens and businesses through deepened integration, cooperation and coordination of both the external and internal aspects of energy policy should remain to be the main objectives for EU and countries from the SEE region. Energy security is a cross-border issue without any differences between members of the EU and other European countries. Therefore, the establishment of cooperation on energy on the political as well as on the operational level is of essential importance. The adoption of a legal framework like the EU- Energy Security Strategy 2014 and the evaluation of the Energy Community Treaty are important for the strengthening of the European position. Additionally, the joint approach of European countries has to be used more intensively to encourage negotiating with potential energy producers. Diversification of producers, providers and delivery modes and routes speaks in favor of this proposal. Only the development of collective strategies and the implementation of these strategies on the supra-regional level can lead to a successful energy policy. Therefore, it is necessary to dedicate collective projects and to support their realization without pushing national interests too much. One important step to reach the goal of highest independence is to enhance interconnectivity, which can be increased also on the regional level. The equal access to energy has to be regulated by the responsible national bodies, in accordance with their international counterparts. The relation between prices for energy and salaries has to be taken in account when offering energy. Physical security of energy supply is another big challenge which has to be taken in account and where many measures need to be taken. Some of the existing critical infrastructure belongs to energy supply facilities. Protection of that infrastructure is a challenge for all security-related organizations and institutions.
The ambitious aim to reach a hundred percent self-sufficient energy supply can’t be reached in the near future, but using all of the proposed measures more intensively might bring us closer to this ambitious goal. Establishing a balanced mixture of energy production, by using all kinds of available resources, might bring both the SEE region and Europe closer to a reliable and secure supply. All regions have their own strengths and possibilities which can be better used for producing energy. Not only the production and transport of energy is of great value, but also energy efficiency has addressed.

We have to be aware that energy security, as one of the main security challenges, has to be able to increase the development of the European economy, and to provide social peace and, thereby, security.

The exchange and sharing of experiences and best practices, as well as the common development of strategies and planning and executing of practical projects provides many topics for this comprehensive, multidimensional challenge. In that sense, all participants agreed that there should be a follow-up activity to this Conference.

The organizers, the Romanian MFA and RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, proposed to continue with the activities related to Energy Security in the RACVIAC programme 2016, with Romania as a RACVIAC member state and as a leading nation in regards to future activities related to energy security, taking into consideration all proposals from the speakers and participants. All partners and participants are invited to make proposals for the next year’s topic, and are most welcome to host a conference on that topic as well.

Compiled by the IRC Pillar and Col Franz Gaugl
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