

COMPETITIVE ENERGY

Energy is the cornerstone of any economy. If we want to talk about the competitiveness of Slovakia and Europe, we must also talk about how much energy costs, where it comes from, and whether we will have enough of it 10 or 20 years from now.

Energy security is an issue that has accompanied me practically since my first day as Minister of Economy. Many of the negotiations I have taken part in at the European level have focused on energy security and the future of Europe's energy system.

Over the past few years, Slovakia has experienced a major geopolitical shift. For decades, we were an important transit country and gateway for energy commodities flowing towards Western Europe. Today, as a result of the changed geopolitical reality, the diversification of supplies and the EU's gradual move away from Russian energy sources, we find ourselves in a very different position – geographically at the end of several supply routes. This change affects both energy prices and the competitiveness of our economy.

The price of energy is therefore becoming one of the key issues for European competitiveness. European industry is competing with countries where energy costs are

often significantly lower. If we want to successfully deliver the green transition, we cannot simply expect businesses and households to pay more for it. The low-carbon transition must also deliver more stable and competitive energy prices.

We are actively working to diversify energy supplies and are preparing for a complete phase-out of Russian gas in line with European rules. A key condition for success, however, will be the timely completion of European energy infrastructure needed to ensure secure access to alternative supplies.

Energy security today is no longer simply a question of where we buy our gas or electricity. It is also about the infrastructure we build, the energy sources we support and the price at which energy will be available to citizens and businesses.

Slovakia has one of the cleanest electricity mixes in Europe, is a net exporter of electricity and has a well-connected power grid with neighboring countries. Around 85% of our electricity comes from zero-emission sources, with nuclear power forming the backbone of our energy system. Following the launch of Unit 4 at the Mochovce nuclear power plant, this share will increase further, while we are also preparing a new

nuclear power project in western Slovakia.

This gives us a unique opportunity. Once our planned projects are completed, Slovakia could become the world leader in the share of electricity generated from nuclear power. This would give Slovakia something very few countries can claim globally: a specific, long-term and sustainable competitive advantage in energy.

I do not see nuclear energy and renewables as competing technologies. They are complementary pillars of the energy system of the future. Europe should focus primarily on reducing emissions, ensuring security of supply and delivering competitive energy prices – not on favoring one particular technology over another.

But we also need to look further ahead. The world today is increasingly revolving around artificial intelligence, and countries are competing to become leaders in this field. Ultimately, competitive advantage may depend not only on AI capabilities, but on having enough electricity to power them.

AI technology can advance dramatically within a single year. A new power plant, transmission line or major data-center infrastructure, however, cannot be built in



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a year. That is why we need to plan our energy systems well ahead of time and consider their development in the context of rapidly growing electricity demand driven by digitalization and artificial intelligence. In the future, having sufficient energy may become a major competitive advantage.

Modernization of electricity grids and smart networks is equally important. Projects such as ACON and Danube InGrid show that Slovak companies are among Europe's leaders in this field. Grid investments are a foundation of energy security and economic development.

Finally, the energy transition cannot succeed without public trust. New energy sources, grids and storage facilities require open dialogue with citizens and local communities. The green transition will only retain political and social support if people and businesses can see its benefits reflected in their energy bills.

Our task is therefore not to choose between energy security, competitiveness and decarbonization. We must bring them together. Energy must be secure and affordable, low-carbon energy must be competitive, and the energy transition must be economically sustainable.

Europe needs more than climate ambition. It needs an energy strategy that will allow it to remain an industrial and technological powerhouse. Slovakia can contribute to that future: clean electricity, nuclear energy, modern grids and expertise. If we use these strengths wisely, energy does not have to be our weakness. It can become one of our greatest competitive advantages – and a foundation for Europe's technological future.