

## Kučinskis: It is necessary to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection

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On Wednesday, 17 February, Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis met President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker in Brussels.

The Head of Government of Latvia expressed gratitude to the European Commission for its support in the implementation of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, through which much has been achieved at a regional level to prevent energy isolation of the Baltic States. "The gas infrastructure projects to be implemented in our region are of utmost importance for Latvia. At the same time, we have to think about the most effective solutions to reduce the dependence of the Baltic States on Russia."

At the meeting, the officials also discussed the European Commission's proposals to strengthen the Energy Union, including energy independence and security, which were adopted yesterday on 16 February.

The Prime Minister also expressed hope that the forthcoming proposal of the European Commission on sharing the burden will be balanced for sectors that are not included in the Emissions Trading System, stressing that "we need to find a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. 79% of Latvian emissions are produced in sectors such as transport, agriculture and small-scale power energy; therefore it is an important issue at the national level," said the Prime Minister.

During the meeting, M. Kučinskis also addressed the issue of snow crab fishing and acknowledged "We do hope that the EU will jointly come to a common understanding of both short-term and long-term solutions to the continuation of fishing."

As in the negotiations with President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz and President of the European Council Donald Tusk, Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis also presented the priorities of his government to the President of the European

Commission and confirmed that the foreign policy direction of Latvia will not change.

From February 17-19, Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis is paying a working visit to Brussels where he will meet the heads of EU institutions and participate in the European Council meeting. The European Council will be held from 18 -19 February, and the EU Heads of State and Government will discuss two main topics - the United Kingdom's deal and the migration issue.

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