

EU Commission calls for 'Airbus of batteries'

18 September 2017



European Commission Vice-President for energy Maros Sefcovic gives a press conference on the Clean Energy package at the EU headquarters in Brussels on November 30, 2016

Europe must produce its own batteries for electric cars to avoid crashing out of the race with the United States and China, a senior member of the European Commission warned Monday.

"We have to recognise that the United States and China are moving a lot faster on [electric mobility](#) than we are," European Commission Vice-President in charge of energy Maros Sefcovic told Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper.

Just like in the 1970s, when aerospace firms from across Europe joined forces to face down American competitor Boeing, "we need an Airbus for batteries," he added.

European firms have yet to commit to large-scale battery production, until now judging it cheaper to import lithium-ion cells from Asia.

"This technology is too important to import it from overseas," Sefcovic said.

EU carmakers announced a slew of electric models for the coming years last week as the IAA car show opened in Frankfurt.

But sales of pure electric and hybrid vehicles have yet to take off as the public has been slow to warm to the technology and vital infrastructure like charging points remains thin on the ground.

"Our aim is to bring a lot of cars with alternative power onto the streets as quickly as possible," he added, if necessary supporting firms with up to 2.0 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) of public funds for research and development and building the needed infrastructure.

Complementing that carrot with a stick, commissioners may include a quota for a certain proportion of sales to come from [electric cars](#) in a draft transport law, as a "signal" to carmakers, energy [firms](#) and the general public, Sefcovic added.

The move would follow China's example, where foreign carmakers have been wrangling with Beijing over the level and start date of a similar quota.

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