



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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*Mr Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu
President of the Senate
Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 1-3,
Sector 5
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an EU strategy for liquefied natural gas and gas storage {COM(2016) 49 final}.

This proposal forms part of the Energy security package implementing the Energy Union and it identifies specific actions designed to improve gas security of supply, in particular through diversification and through the completion of a well-functioning and fully integrated EU gas market.

Looking at the EU overall, the level of diversification, access to sufficient liquefied natural gas (LNG) import and storage capacity is good. However, the energy security stress tests¹ showed that there are still vulnerable regions, especially the South-Eastern part of the EU, where one sided supply dependence and missing infrastructure do not yet allow for a competitive and secure gas supply. The stress tests also highlighted that in case of a supply crisis, LNG and storage are the two main elements of the gas system that are relied upon to replace missing volumes of gas. Therefore, the actions identified in the LNG and storage strategy aim at allowing all Member States to have access to liquid regional gas hubs with a wide range of sources, including LNG, and to sufficient storage capacity on a regional basis with a particular focus on vulnerable regions.

The Commission is pleased that the Senat shares the view that LNG plays an important role in contributing to diversification of gas sources in regional markets and the EU overall, thereby leading to improved security of supply and enhanced competitiveness with potential downward pressure on wholesale gas prices.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/news/stress-tests-cooperation-key-coping-potential-gas-disruption>.

The Commission fully recognizes the importance of domestic EU gas sources in this regard, including the potential of new sources in the Black Sea that can enhance security of supply not only for Romania but for the entire region. In this regard, the Commission concurs that regional cooperation is of the utmost importance in order to come to a common understanding of the situation, the challenges and options and to openly discuss potential infrastructure solutions to find agreements that are beneficial to all.

The Commission presented the Communication on the EU strategy on liquefied natural gas and gas storage to the Energy Working Party of the Council and the European Parliament is currently drafting an own-initiative report that is expected to be voted on towards the end of the year. The Commission has already launched several work streams based on the actions defined in the Strategy. Work under the specific regional groups in the Baltic Sea Region² and South-East Europe³ has also started as a consequence. These work streams will be followed by further actions with the aim of fully implementing the Strategy.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Miguel Arias Cañete
Member of the Commission*

² Under the BEMIP (Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan) high level group.

³ Under the CESEC (Central East South Europe Gas Connectivity) high level group.