



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 18.6.2021
C(2021) 4606 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and repealing Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 {COM(2020) 824 final}.

The proposal put forward by the Commission has been assessed against its effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and proportionality as regards the timely development of sufficient energy infrastructures to enable delivering on the EU's energy and climate objectives. In full respect of subsidiarity and Member States' right to decide on their energy mix, the proposal for a revised TEN-E framework builds on regional cooperation strengths across Member States and evidence-based processes to identify and help implement projects of common interest (PCIs) that contribute to the development of energy infrastructure priority corridors and thematic areas.

The Commission welcomes that the Senat agrees on the need to align the current TEN-E framework to the EU energy policy objectives in particular the 2030 and 2050 targets and the climate neutrality objective under the European Green Deal. In line with the considerations of the Senat, the proposal aims to support the prominent role of electrification in the future energy mix, as well as help decarbonise the gas sector by facilitating the uptake of renewable and low-carbon gases, including hydrogen. The Commission proposed to include hydrogen transport infrastructure and certain types of large-scale electrolysers in the scope of the TEN-E Regulation to facilitate European-level planning for hydrogen infrastructure. Although not eligible for Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) financial assistance under the future TEN-E Regulation, electrolysers would be already eligible for financial assistance as cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy under CEF II (so-called cross-border RES window).

In order to simplify and improve the efficiency of the TEN-E Regulation several measures have been identified to reduce compliance and regulatory costs, such as streamlining of reporting obligations, more efficient monitoring and opting out of pre-consultation requirements if already covered by the national rules under the same or higher standards as in the TEN-E Regulation. Further in line with the points raised by the Senat, the proposal

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introduces a simplified inclusion in the Ten Year Network Development Plans (TYNDPs) for existing Projects of Common Interest (PCIs).

The existing TEN-E framework has been successful in delivering a secure and well-interconnected natural gas grid in Europe. The Commission expects that by the early 2020s, when the gas Projects of Common Interest currently under implementation will be in operation, Europe should achieve a well-interconnected and shock-resilient gas grid and all Member States will have access to a diversified range of suppliers, including to the global liquefied natural gas (LNG) market.

The Commission's assessment showed that the continued policy support for such projects is no longer justified considering the improvements in infrastructure connections, technological developments and market functioning achieved over the past years and in view of the expected decline in natural gas demand to fulfil our climate ambition and decarbonisation objectives.

Instead, the Commission proposed the introduction of dedicated hydrogen infrastructure category, which could be newly built or fully repurposed gas assets for transporting hydrogen only. It also proposed a smart gas grids infrastructure category that will cover network upgrades necessary for the integration of renewable and low-carbon gases from the distribution level into the transmission grid to replace natural gas. Through investments such as digital systems and components integrating information and communication technology, control systems and sensor technologies and equipment, smart gas grids will enable reverse flows of renewable and low-carbon gases from the distribution to transmission level.

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,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Kadri Simson
Member of the Commission*