



Vision from the High-Level Conference Looking at the Future of the Energy Union Beyond the Crisis:

On 20 April 2023, the European Commissioner for Energy, Kadri Simson, hosted a High-Level Conference on the Future of the Energy Union looking beyond the crisis. The Conference brought together representatives of the EU's 27 Member States and a balanced representation of stakeholders covering energy associations, NGOs, and regulatory bodies at the EU level. The conference provided an occasion to take stock of the lessons learnt from the unprecedented energy crisis of the past year, as well as exchange views on the future of the Energy Union and the energy-related elements of the upcoming updated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs).

The conference was articulated around 2 sessions and 4 panel discussions dedicated to the following topics:

- The role of strategic planning to strengthen energy security and affordability
- Regional cooperation and local involvement to reinforce energy security and affordability
- Removing remaining regulatory and physical barriers hindering the clean transition
- Preserving and reinforcing competitiveness of the EU Energy System

Main takeaways from the conference:

- **The energy crisis caused by Russia's weaponization of energy exports demonstrated that the Energy Union is powerful and resilient.** The EU's effective and coordinated response to the crisis confirmed that Member States are strongest when acting in unity and solidarity. While the EU should exercise caution and ensure preparedness for the coming winter, it is now important that attention is directed towards identifying shared challenges and priorities for the years to come.
- **The unprecedented energy crisis over the past year has underlined that energy security and the clean energy transition are closely interlinked.** Our ambition to accelerate the energy transition and decarbonize the energy sector will not only strengthen economic growth, reinforce the EU's industrial leadership, and put Europe on a path towards climate neutrality by 2050, but also reduce Europe's energy dependence and increase security of supply, with a view of ensuring EU energy sovereignty.
- **Drawing on the experience from the energy crisis, the EU should ensure that monopolistic dependencies on external partners are not replicated in the clean energy sector,** in particular as regards clean technology manufacturing and critical raw materials supply chains. Diversification should be a central objective going forward.
- **Strong governance and strategic planning are crucial to achieve our collective Energy Union objectives providing investor certainty.** The NECPs are an effective mechanism to ensure comprehensive and robust analysis, map remaining bottlenecks to our energy union objectives, trigger internal reflection and boost policy ambition. The Plans provide crucial input to industry and stakeholders, contributing to the necessary regulatory stability and investment certainty towards 2030 and beyond.
- **To lay down a solid basis for future energy policies, certain aspects need to be significantly strengthened in the updated NECPs as compared to the 2020 exercise.** For example, **Member States should dedicate attention to the security of supply, internal market, and competitiveness** dimensions as well as to specific topics such as the need for adequate grid capacity in view of increased electrification and the development of hydrogen markets.
- **Improved and timely involvement of local and regional authorities as well as civil society, the public, and a broad range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of energy policy is key to delivering the clean energy transition.** Local authorities harbour valuable knowledge on how implementation can be improved on the ground that national and EU authorities should leverage. A strengthened multi-level dialogue between the local, national and EU levels can act as a key tool to encourage public ownership of the energy transition and to curb perceptions of the transition as an EU imposed agenda. The EU and Member States should also explore innovative ways of involving local communities in the energy transition, including through various financial

incentives. In the context of the updated NECPs, there is an identified need for Member States to enhance local involvement and public participation by conducting more comprehensive and timely public consultations.

- **There is a need for further identifying and tackling the remaining barriers to the clean energy transition. This is crucial not only to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, but also to secure competitive energy prices for the EU's industry and affordability for citizens.** Tackling cumbersome permitting procedures for renewable energy projects is a critical bottleneck to be addressed. The EU should bring together energy, environment and industry ministers to find a common strategy forward. Another increasingly pressing barrier to the clean energy transition is the electricity grid. Ensuring sufficient investments and appropriate planning of the electricity grid development to support the accelerated deployment of renewables, including offshore wind projects, needs to be a key priority in the coming years. Better coordination and support to TSOs and DSOs is necessary in this respect.
- **We need to seize the opportunity to make the EU a global industrial leader in the clean energy sector and the home of the industries of the future.** For this, strategic support is required to incentivise the deployment of innovative technologies (OpEx support) and boost investments, safeguard joint and integrated supply chains, and ensure a competitive and skilled workforce. The Commission has tabled the Green Deal Industrial Plan to address these challenges. The clean energy transition can be significantly delayed if urgent and collective action is not taken to re-skill and up-skill the European work force. Coordinated action should be taken at EU-level to tackle this major challenge.
- **From a regulatory perspective, there is a need to modernize the EU Energy Union Governance** to reflect the above new policy priorities emerging after the crisis, ensuring that there is firm action to monitor and implement all actions and measures that will need to be taken to transform policies into concrete results.
- **In this vein, "Implementation, implementation, implementation":** focus should increasingly be dedicated to ensuring implementation of existing policies in Member States, for instance by fostering exchanges like this High level conference bringing together Union level, Member States and stakeholders including those representing the local levels.