

15th meeting of the Commission Expert Group on electricity interconnection targets

Brussels, 22 November 2018

Summary minutes

1. Welcome and the presentation of the agenda

The Chair of the Expert Group, Ms Catharina Sikow-Magny, Head of unit for networks and regional initiatives in the Commission's Directorate-General for Energy, opened the morning session and presented the agenda.

2. Session on electricity interconnectors with third countries - finalisation of the report

The Experts shared their comments on the draft final report as circulated ahead of the meeting. The final version of the report will discuss the role of electricity interconnections with neighbouring countries, present the existing, ongoing and planned interconnectors, and discuss various cooperation frameworks between the EU and its neighbouring countries. Finally, the report will present the Experts' assessment and specific recommendations.

The ENTSO-E was asked to provide and verify the latest available technical data. As a conclusion, the Expert Group finalised and adopted the report.

3. Session on public acceptance - Discussion on the draft report

The Chair opened the session and invited Ms Oana Langa, to present the proposed draft structure of the chapter on public acceptance, which reflects the input received from the Experts on key elements for public acceptance. The chapter starts with the current challenges in the implementation of necessary transmission projects and reiterates the brief recommendations made in the first Report on electricity interconnection targets. The chapter would then continue with a recollection of the existing regulatory and policy framework for public involvement in planning and implementation of Projects of Common Interest. Going more in-depth, the chapter continues with a section dedicated to citizens' concerns with the planning and implementation of projects. The basis for this section is a table that summarises the Experts' main take on what ultimately affects citizens and local communities in this process. The chapter finally concludes with a proposal from the Expert Group for an online collaborative platform, an online tool, which would ultimately increase transparency for decision making in infrastructure planning and implementation

The experts welcomed the basic structure and agreed with the main goal of the chapter, which is to produce a series of practical recommendations which would tackle the current challenges faced by promoters and ultimately ensure a better the implementation of our interconnectors.

In discussing how to complement the draft structure, the experts agreed the need to add a few elements and clarifications. In their opinion, there is a need to explain what public acceptance and opposition are, and how opposition should be treated as an opportunity to improve practices in implementation.

The Experts also raised the need of running a critical assessment of the current framework in order to build the argument for what is tools are missing in order to mitigate citizen's concerns. As it stands right now, the table summarizing the concerns would need to be further refined and complemented. The concerns should not be presented in a negative/ positive way, but rather should provide for a comprehensive picture of elements to be factored in by promoters and authorities when planning and building a project. Solutions to reasons to oppose possible mitigation measures would constitute practical steps and deepen the understanding of such rationale.

After an extensive discussion, the experts agreed that the collaborative open data interactive tool would be one of their many recommendations. In order to avoid the risk of being too prescriptive on how such tool should be designed, the detailed parameters and suggestions for its governance would be moved to an annex to the chapter.

The Chair concluded that the Experts' further input would be needed in drafting the first draft of the chapter on public acceptance. In order to have a full picture of what the concerns are and the corresponding recommendations, the experts asked to share practical experience from transmission system operators, as well as a few recommendations and their view of the online tool.

4. Next steps

The next two meetings of the Expert Group will take place on 25 January and 14 February 2019. The exact date will be confirmed in due time. The Experts will be asked for further contributions on the work stream for public acceptance ahead of the next meeting.

Present

Commission: Catharina Sikow-Magny (Chair), Tomasz Jerzyniak (Policy officer), Oana Langa (Policy officer)

Expert Group members:

Apostolos Gkizas (ACER),

Robert Schroeder (ENTSO-E),

Maria Concepcion Sanchez Perez (ENTSO-E),

Maria Chiara Cavarretta (ENTSO-E),

Anne Boorsma (ENTSOG),

Paulina Beato,

Yannick Phulpin (Eurelectric),

Nikolaos Vasilakos (European Renewable Energies Federation),

Daivis Virbickas (LITGRID AB),

Morris Bray (National Grid),

Antonella Battaglini (RGI),

Tor Eigil Hodne (Statnett),