11th meeting of the Commission Expert Group on electricity interconnection targets

Brussels, 26 April 2018

Summary minutes

1. Welcome and the presentation of the agenda for the second term of the Expert Group members' mandate

The Chair, 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 welcomed the experts after the break since the last meeting in November 2017 with Commissioner Arias Cañete. She recalled how the Group's recommendations have been addressed by the Commission (in the Commission Communication on "Strengthening Europe's Energy networks") and updated on the current status of the Energy Union Governance regulation, which makes a reference to the interconnection methodology based on Expert Group's recommendations.

The Chair also reminded the experts in a personal capacity to update their Declaration of Interest forms as required by Article 11 of the Commission Decision of 30 June 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

The Chair presented three topics on which the Commission would like to seek experts' advice during the remaining period of the Expert Group's mandate: 1) sector coupling and its possible implications for electricity network development; 2) the role of interconnectors with third countries in meeting electricity targets and reaching EU's energy and climate objective as well as 3) practices and measures for public involvement to speed up the implementation of the necessary electricity interconnectors. The Chair also explained that the objective of the work on the three topics is to prepare one or three reports with Expert Group's recommendations.

Mr Tomasz Jerzyniak, Policy Officer, presented a detailed agenda for all the topics and recalled the key questions asked ahead of the meeting on all the three subjects.

2. Session on sector coupling and its possible impact on the electricity interconnectors

In the first session three introductory presentations were given: 1) by ENTSOG on the role of gas in sector coupling, 2) by ENTSO-E and ENTSOG on their joint scenarios for the Ten Year Network Development Plan 2018 (TYNDP) and 3) by Brian Vad Mathiesen on the smart energy systems, including the role of heating.

Following the presentation the experts discussed the following issues: the implication of the sector coupling on transmission sector, the role of final energy demand in determining the need for grid infrastructure, the way in which sectors could be coupled (by regulation or on market terms), the contribution of interconnectors to decarbonisation and efficiency gains (interconnectors between countries vs. interconnectors between sectors) and the way in which

sector coupling is reflected in the current TYNDP planning. The experts also noted that an analysis of sector coupling at local/municipal level could be of interest in this regard for example by means of specific case studies. Further, the expert concluded that sector coupling and its potential impact should be well reflected in the TYNDP scenarios for 2020 and that further work should continue in that context. In addition, the experts proposed that some targets or triggers for incentives to sector coupling, similarly to the thresholds for interconnectivity levels, could be useful.

The Chair concluded that the work on sector coupling will focus on the energy final demand and the need for decarbonisation, the relevant infrastructure needed to achieve these objectives and the necessary policy measures. This work should be then reflected in the TYNDP planning. To that end, the experts will look into the scenario development process and the relevant assumptions in the next meeting. In that regard, the Commission will draft a plan with more specific task taking as a starting point the objectives of the Paris agreement.

3. Session on electricity interconnectors with third countries

The introductory presentation was made by ENTSO-E and comprised an overview of all electricity interconnectors between the EU and its neighbours, including the physical capacity of the interconnectors as well as the actual and commercial electricity flows.

In order to analyse the role of electricity interconnectors with third countries the experts discussed the need to analyse the energy generation mix in the neighbouring countries, the neighbouring countries' compliance with EU energy and climate objectives, the role of interconnectors in ensuring market and system adequacy but also risks related to such interconnectors (system interdependencies vs electricity dependency). The experts agreed that a case by case approach would be needed in this regard.

The Chair concluded that in addition to the technical analysis of electricity flows, the Commission will make a presentation in the next meeting on the existing cooperation frameworks between the EU and all relevant neighbouring countries.

4. Session on public acceptance

The introductory presentation was made by RGI and focused on the current challenges to gain public acceptance as well as the relevant elements needed to strengthen public participation. RGI pointed out that public acceptance is a dynamic, reciprocal and multi-layered issue based on trust and identification of common values. To strengthen public participation typically requires projects-specific and tailored solutions.

The experts agreed that trust and respect as well as transparency about the costs and benefits of new transmission projects are paramount criteria. In this regard, the experts highlighted the need for access to relevant information and data but also the need for better explanation of societal costs of delays. At the same time, the experts noticed that several good practices in Europe already exist and are shared among electricity project promoters.

The Chair concluded that the Expert Group will further advise on identifying to explain the European common interest of electricity transmission projects, how to bring more transparency and trust in the existing planning tools such as TYNDP and the underpinning scenarios, as well as how to reinforce the access to relevant open data for interested citizens on the costs and benefits of the European transmission projects.

5. Operational conclusions and next steps

The operational conclusions agreed by the Expert Group and drawn by the Chair are as follows:

- The Commission will prepare a work plan on the three discussed topics taking into account the observations of the Expert Group. The plan will be shared with experts ahead of the next meeting.
- The next meeting will take place in June 2018; the exact day will be agreed using an online scheduling tool.

Present

Commission: Sikow-Magny (Chair), Tomasz Jerzyniak (Policy officer), Lukas Bieber (Trainee), Oana Langa (Policy officer, present during the session on public acceptance)

Expert Group members:

Robert Schroeder and Concha Sanchez Perez (ENTSO-E),

Malcolm Arthur and James Gudge (ENTSOG),

Paulina Beato

Blandine Malvault (Eurelectric),

Liutauras Varanavicius (Litgrid),

Brian Vad Mathiesen,

Auke Lont (Statnett),

Jochen Kreusel (T&D Europe),

Absent

Christophe Gence Creux (ACER),

Helena Božić (CEEP),

Nikolaos Vasilakos (EREF),

Pierre Bernard (FoSG),

Michal Smyk (PKEE),

Cécile George,

Alejo Vidal-Quadras.