

FSR Regulatory Policy Workshop Series 2025-2026

ENHANCING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

12 February 2026

Townhall Europe - Sq. de Meeûs 5, 1000 Brussels

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To connect online (listening only)

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Introduction

Energy networks play an essential role in promoting competition, decarbonisation of energy demand and security of supply; they now need rapidly to adapt to a more decentralised, digitalised and flexible energy system. The European Grids Package and the Energy Highways initiative, proposed by the European Commission in December 2025, aim at bringing a truly European perspective on infrastructure planning, while accelerating permitting procedures and ensuring a fairer allocation of costs regarding cross-border projects. The Workshop will discuss the Commission's proposals with regards to enhancing European energy infrastructure planning, speeding up European energy infrastructure projects implementation and the European Energy Highways.

Energy networks play an essential role in promoting competition – thus improving energy affordability –, decarbonisation of energy demand and security of supply. While the current regulatory framework has successfully supported market integration across the EU and delivered remarkable results, energy networks now need rapidly to adapt to a more decentralised, digitalised and flexible energy system in a fast-evolving geopolitical context.

To this end, on 10 December 2025, the European Commission proposed a **European Grids Package** and the **Energy Highways initiative**^[1], with the aim of enabling energy to flow more efficiently across all Member States, integrating cheaper clean energy and accelerating electrification, so as to lower energy prices and support affordable living for all Europeans.



It will hopefully ensure secure and reliable supply as Europe moves away from Russian energy imports to achieve energy independence.

The European Grids Package proposes a new approach to energy infrastructure by introducing a more centralised approach to infrastructure planning, accelerating permitting procedures and ensuring a fairer allocation of costs regarding cross-border projects. The aim is to allow the best use of our existing energy infrastructure and, in parallel, accelerate the development of grids and other physical energy infrastructure across the EU. The European Grids Package comprises two legislative proposals (to amend the TEN-regulatory framework^[2] and to accelerate permit-granting procedures for energy infrastructure projects^[3]) and two guidance notes (on efficient and timely grid connections^[4] and on contracts for difference^[5]).

The legislative proposals aim at strengthening EU-wide cross-border infrastructure planning, at maximising the use of existing infrastructure and accelerating the delivery of energy infrastructure projects on the ground.

With respect to infrastructure planning, according to the European Commission, the European Grids Package proposes to: (i) move to a EU cross-border energy infrastructure planning framework that enables a more coordinated and robust identification of needs; (ii) require the Commission to develop, within two years, a comprehensive central EU scenario consistent with EU energy and climate targets and delivering a cost-efficient, competitive and secure system at EU level, on the basis of which ENTSOs and ENNOH will then identify the infrastructure needs, subject to a binding methodology defined by the EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators; (iii) establish a 'gap filling' process, to be initiated by the Commission, when a cross-border capacity need has been identified, but relevant project proposals for addressing such a need have not been put forward; (iv) improve the coordination between the planning of distribution grids and the planning at transmission level, as internal network elements significantly influence cross-border infrastructure development, which in turn affects cross-border trade; and (v) incentivise the greater uptake of smart electricity grids, innovative and digital technologies and network efficiency measures, at both network and users' level, in line with the 'energy efficiency first' principle, to maximise the use of existing infrastructure before investing in new capacity, in order to achieve an affordable and sustainable energy transition and ensure energy security.

With respect to implementation of energy infrastructure projects, the European Grids Package proposes: (i) the establishment of a EU level framework to simplify and accelerate permitting procedures for all grid infrastructure, renewable energy projects, storage projects and recharging stations, and further strengthening the provisions for PCI/PMIs; (ii) that renewable energy projects over 10MW redistribute benefits to the local population, beyond energy communities; (iii) the establishment, by the 2026 Energy Infrastructure Forum, of a platform for EU distribution network planning that will provide visibility at distribution level on future plans and related manufacturing

needs across Member States; (iv) to explore additional ways of financing infrastructure where needed, including by requiring the use of part of the congestion income, for investments in interconnectors on the PCI/PMI list; (v) to provide more transparency and certainty in the way costs and benefits are assessed and shared; (vi) to strengthen the security and resilience of our energy infrastructure, by integrating physical and cyber security considerations into cross-border project planning from the start, by promoting resilience and security-by-design for new infrastructure, by enhancing transparency in ownership to avoid dependency on high-risk foreign entities, and by ensuring that the physical and cyber security and resilience enhancements of existing infrastructure are eligible for Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) financing while preventing overlaps with other EU financing support.

At the same time, the Energy Highways Initiative has identified eight Energy Highways to address the most urgent energy infrastructure needs that require particular additional short-term support and commitment for implementation to address bottlenecks:

- Pyrenean crossing 1 and Pyrenean crossing 2 [Better integrate the Iberian Peninsula with power interconnectors across the Pyrenees to France];
- Great Sea Interconnector [Connect Cyprus with continental Europe to end its electricity isolation];
- Harmony Link [Strengthen power links with the Baltic states];
- TransBalkan Pipeline (TBP) reverse flow [Improve energy supplies in the Balkan region and eastern neighbouring states];

- Bornholm Energy Island [Turn the Baltic Sea into an offshore interconnector hub];
- Improve price stability and energy security in south-eastern Europe;
- SouthH2 Corridor [The South hydrogen corridor];
- Southwest hydrogen corridor from Portugal to Germany.

Many of the Energy Highways hold PCI or PMI status in the second Union list of PCIs and PMIs published on 1 December 2025, which features 235 cross-border energy infrastructure projects within the EU and with third-country partners such as the Celtic Interconnector, the Black Sea Interconnection Cable, Estlink 3. Under the TEN-E framework, all PCIs and PMIs in the Union list benefit from several advantages, including priority status and streamlined permit granting procedures as well as eligibility to apply for financial assistance under the CEF.

In the European Grids Package, the Commission indicated its commitment immediately to fast-track the Energy Highways through enhanced political coordination, drawing on the Regional High-Level Groups, mobilising support of European coordinators where relevant and working closely with the Energy Union Task Force, extending outreach beyond EU Member States where necessary. Each project will be prioritised at EU level, and the Commission will support Member States in giving them the same priority nationally.

To ensure effective cross-border cooperation on permitting, the Commission will focus on identified interconnector priority projects, strengthening its support to Member States in identifying joint procedures for an effective and efficient permitting process. Moreover, to strengthen the administrative capacity of permitting authorities and the digitalisation of renewable energy permit granting procedures, the Commission will provide support to Member States through dedicated actions that will complement the permitting regulatory framework.

Against this background, this Workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss the proposals presented in the European Grids Package and the Energy Highways Initiative.

The Workshop will be correspondingly structured in three sessions:

- Session I, in the morning, will look at the proposed measures to improve planning of energy infrastructure in Europe;
- Session II, also in the morning, will focus on the proposed measures to ensure timely implementation of the planned projects.
- Session III, in the afternoon, will discuss the framework being proposed for the Energy Highways.

Sustainability assessment

The FSR assesses the sustainability and carbon footprint of all its Workshops of the Regulatory Policy Workshop Series. This Workshop is run 'in presence' to promote more effective interaction and discussion. Participants travelling to Brussels by car or by air will be encouraged to offset any carbon emissions related to their travel. It is considered that, in this way, a suitable balance is achieved between the effectiveness of the policy dialogue and the net carbon footprint of the event.

Gender balance statement

At FSR we actively work to achieve gender-balanced representation at all our events. As a platform that connects diverse voices and perspectives in the sector, we firmly value inclusive and gender-balanced panel debates and training courses.

Available at:

[\[1\]](#) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'European Grids Package', Brussels, 10.12.2025, COM(2025) 1005 final.

[\[2\]](#) Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on guidelines for trans-European

energy infrastructure, amending Regulations (EU) 2019/942, (EU) 2019/943 and (EU) 2024/1789 and repealing Regulation (EU) 2022/869, Brussels, 10.12.2025, COM(2025) 1006 final.

[3] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives (EU) 2018/2001, (EU) 2019/944, (EU) 2024/1788 as regards acceleration of permit-granting procedures, Brussels, 10.12.2025, COM(2025) 1007 final.

[4] Commission notice, Guidance on efficient and timely grid connections, Brussels, 10.12.2025, C(2025) 8473 final.

[5] Commission guidance on the design of two-way contracts for difference, Brussels, 10.12.2025, C(2025) 8479 final.

Draft Programme

- 09.00 – 09.15 Welcome and introductory remarks
Leonardo Meeus | Florence School of Regulation
Alberto Pototschnig | Florence School of Regulation
- 09.15 – 09.45 Keynote addresses: the European Grids Package
Joachim Balke | Head of Unit, Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation, Directorate-General for Energy, European Commission
Nicola Pochettino | Director, Energy and Environment, European Investment Bank

SESSION I – ENHANCING EUROPEAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Moderator: **Catharina Sikow-Magny** | Florence School of Regulation

- 09.45 - 09.55 Setting the scene
Catharina Sikow-Magny | Florence School of Regulation
- 09.55 – 10.40 Enhancing the planning of European energy infrastructures
Edwin Haesen | Head of System Development, ENTSO-E
Piotr Kuś | General Director, ENTSOE
Rafael Muruais Garcia | Head of the Energy System Needs Department, ACER
- 10.40 – 11.10 Contributions from FSR Donors and general discussion
Lucie Boost | Secretary General, GIE
- 11.10 - 11.30 Coffee Break

SESSION II – SPEEDING UP EUROPEAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS' IMPLEMENTATION

Moderator: **Marzia Sesini** | Florence School of Regulation

- 11.30 – 11.45 Setting the scene
Alberto Pototschnig | Florence School of Regulation
- 11.45 – 12.00 Streamlining energy infrastructure project implementation
Gérald Vignal | Programme Manager, RTE
- 12.00 – 12.30 Contributions from FSR Donors and general discussion
Danielle Devogelaer | Elia Transmission Belgium
- 12.30 - 13.30 Lunch break

SESSION III – THE ENERGY HIGHWAYS OF EUROPE: A TOP PRIORITY LAYER

Moderator: **Tooraj Jamasb** | Director of Copenhagen School of Energy Infrastructure

- 13.30 – 13.45 Setting the scene
Marzia Sesini | Florence School of Regulation

- 13.45 – 14.15 The EU energy highways
Abel Enriquez | Secretary General, ENNOH
Esther Bollendorff | Senior EU Gas Policy Coordinator, Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
- 14.15 – 14.45 Contributions from FSR Donors and general discussion
Cristina Bohnekamp | EU Affairs & Organisations, Enagás
- 14.45 – 15.00 Concluding remarks
Leonardo Meeus | Florence School of Regulation
Alberto Pototschnig | Florence School of Regulation