

Sustainable and Smart Gas Infrastructure for Europe

We, the signatories of this initiative, gathered in Bucharest on the 1st and 2nd of April 2019, collectively aim to maximise the potential of the natural gas infrastructure to accommodate increasing shares of near-zero carbon hydrogen and renewable gases.

We acknowledge that further developing a well-functioning internal gas market and an adequate implementation of the EU strategy on liquefied natural gas and gas storage will contribute to increasing security of supply and efficiency of the energy system.

We acknowledge that addressing climate change requires all actors from the public and the private sector to take coordinated, bold action to curb greenhouse gas emissions in order to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

We are aware of the challenges and, at the same time, of the opportunities we are confronted with as to the transformation and modernisation of the energy system in light of the Paris Agreement.

We take note of the Communication “Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy”, launched by the European Commission last year in November and welcome the broad debates on this in different Council formations. We reiterate the European Council Conclusions from March 2019 that “emphasises the importance of the EU submitting an ambitious long-term strategy by 2020 striving for climate neutrality in line with the Paris Agreement, while taking into account Member States’ specificities and the competitiveness of European industry”.

We recognise that gas offers the necessary characteristics as energy carrier that can be transported over long distances, and can easily be stored for longer periods, while being used also by end-use sectors which would be challenging to be fully electrified.

The signatories of this initiative recognise that an increase of the share of renewable and decarbonised gases in the EU energy mix in the next decades would support achieving the greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

We are also convinced that the gas infrastructure will have to play its role in the decarbonisation of the energy system, by preparing itself to transport growing shares of other gases than natural gas, such as hydrogen, biomethane, synthetic methane and by addressing the issue of vented and fugitive methane emissions.

We acknowledge “The Hydrogen Initiative” launched in Linz in September 2018 as a stepping stone to raise political awareness on the potential role of renewable hydrogen as an energy storage solution as well as a sustainable climate neutral energy carrier and feedstock.

Building on the renewable energy targets agreed at EU level and on the Hydrogen Initiative, we intend to analyse the potential role of the gas infrastructure in the future energy system, in order to transport and store near zero carbon hydrogen and renewable gases. We agree to analyse the potential also with a view to providing an estimate of the share of hydrogen and renewable gases that could support the future decarbonised energy systems.

We are interested in exploring opportunities for more integrated operations of electricity, gas and heat networks, in order to facilitate the most cost-effective integration of renewable energy sources. We acknowledge the importance of digitalisation for this process and for providing consumers with more diversified choices. We will further encourage the development of smart energy infrastructures in this respect.

Having in mind the long lifetime and capital intensity of gas infrastructure assets, we seek to encourage new plans to take into account the evolutions of gas consumption and the presence of hydrogen and biogas to reduce the risk that future projects would become stranded assets in the medium or long term.

We are ready to explore opportunities and take the necessary action to use existing infrastructure to transport growing shares of hydrogen and renewable gases across Europe.

We dedicate ourselves to promote innovation, research and development, which are needed to accelerate the deployment of near zero carbon hydrogen and renewable gases, both at transmission and at distribution level.

We stress the need to explore the necessary regulatory framework for the injection of hydrogen and renewable gases in the gas grid. Moreover, we highlight the importance of exploring investment and funding opportunities with both European and international financial institutions.

We also underline the importance of analysing the opportunity of coexistence of various types of gas infrastructure dedicated to natural gas, to admixtures of natural gas and hydrogen or to pure hydrogen.

We strive to facilitate the implementation of regulations and standards developed in relation to the use of biomethane and biogas.

We consider it important to investigate how the injection of hydrogen and renewable gases will influence gas quality and end-use appliances and we support the development of the necessary codes and standards.

We also agree to explore opportunities for international collaboration on near-zero carbon hydrogen and renewable gases with a view to increase their share in the overall energy supply.

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