Ein Bild, das Text, ClipArt enthält.

Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

Ein Bild, das Text, Schrift, Grafiken, Screenshot enthält.

Automatisch generierte Beschreibung

**Preparation for the**

**Hearings of the Commissioner-designates after the EU elections in autumn**

Elaboration of questions from the sector of energy

Vienna, 04.07.2024

**Content**

[Advancing the system's serviceability 4](#_Toc170813834)

[Hydropower as a cornerstone for system-serving flexibility 5](#_Toc170813835)

[Biomethane as a cornerstone for system-supporting flexibility 6](#_Toc170813836)

[Consumption-related energy production 7](#_Toc170813837)

[Initiatives to expand the network infrastructure 8](#_Toc170813838)

[Financing the grid expansion 9](#_Toc170813839)

[More efficient authorisation procedures for network infrastructure 10](#_Toc170813840)

[Acceleration of authorisation procedures for renewable power generation 11](#_Toc170813841)

[More efficient authorisation procedures for renewable energy production facilities 12](#_Toc170813842)

[Data sovereignty regarding the implementation of smart grids 13](#_Toc170813843)

[Financing of smart grids through DSOs 14](#_Toc170813844)

[Investments in digitalisation for data usage and control by DSOs 15](#_Toc170813845)

[Transparency vs. the protection of critical infrastructure - a general focus 16](#_Toc170813846)

[Measures to improve transnational cyber security 17](#_Toc170813847)

[The commitment to decarbonisation in the Just Transition Mechanism 18](#_Toc170813848)

[Employment criteria for Just-Transition fundings 19](#_Toc170813849)

[Reskilling in line with the Just-Transition-Mechanism 20](#_Toc170813850)

[Further support for socially disadvantaged people 21](#_Toc170813851)

[Ensuring educational standards, possibilities and opportunities in the energy sector 22](#_Toc170813852)

[Ensuring an affordable energy supply 23](#_Toc170813853)

[Stable and affordable electricity in the rail sector 24](#_Toc170813854)

[Model ideas for regulated basic energy supply for disadvantaged communities 25](#_Toc170813855)

[A standardised European definition of energy poverty 26](#_Toc170813856)

[Implementation of fundamental and human rights in energy supply strategies 27](#_Toc170813857)

[Supply obligations of small energy suppliers 28](#_Toc170813858)

[Measures to prevent speculation against the European energy trade 29](#_Toc170813859)

[Measures against speculative behaviour on demand-response markets 30](#_Toc170813860)

[Establishment of a European protective shield to safeguard energy trading 31](#_Toc170813861)

[Reform of OTC trading 32](#_Toc170813862)

[Relief on the capacity market 33](#_Toc170813863)

[Need for a new pricing model for electricity transit 34](#_Toc170813864)

[Regulatory integration of security of supply, affordability and ecology 35](#_Toc170813865)

[Review of the EU electricity market design regarding affordability 36](#_Toc170813866)

[Replacing the Merit-Order 37](#_Toc170813867)

[Expansion of sectors in ETS 38](#_Toc170813868)

[Integrating CCUS into the ETS 39](#_Toc170813869)

[Relevance of CCUS in the context of hard-to-abate processes 40](#_Toc170813870)

[Measures to limit fluctuations in the CO2 price 41](#_Toc170813871)

[Domestic electricity price zones 42](#_Toc170813872)

[Design of the Energy Taxation Directive 43](#_Toc170813873)

[Funding to accelerate the expansion of storage capacities 44](#_Toc170813874)

[Security of raw materials and resources 45](#_Toc170813875)

[Import duties for gas from Russia 46](#_Toc170813876)

[Resource security for a future optimisation of the energy system 47](#_Toc170813877)

[Refinancing the development of European hydrogen networks 48](#_Toc170813878)

[Future uses for hydrogen 49](#_Toc170813879)

[Measures to convert the existing gas infrastructure into a hydrogen infrastructure 50](#_Toc170813880)

[Certification of renewable hydrogen 51](#_Toc170813881)

[Framework conditions for the development of a renewable hydrogen economy 52](#_Toc170813882)

[Funding for the hydrogen boost 53](#_Toc170813883)

[Incorporation of quality criteria for the promotion of hydrogen 54](#_Toc170813884)

[Implementing the Energy Efficiency Directive 55](#_Toc170813885)

[Utilisation of agricultural and forestry residues and organic waste for the production of biomethane 56](#_Toc170813886)

[Binding objectives for renewable gases 57](#_Toc170813887)

[Ensuring a structured, socially responsible and safe shutdown of the gas distribution network 58](#_Toc170813888)

[Measures to support energy communities 59](#_Toc170813889)

[Integrating the Balkan region to improve European security of supply 60](#_Toc170813890)

[Preserving Europe's Transformer Manufacturing Capacity by implementing current Eco-Design Regulations 61](#_Toc170813891)

**Advancing the system's serviceability**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe faces the challenge of making its energy infrastructure more resilient to increasing threats and disruptions. As one of the key measures to ensure system resilience, regulators such as ACER (Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators) play a crucial role. Their engagement and cooperation with other European stakeholders is crucial to strengthen the resilience and security of supply of the energy system**. To what extent do you plan to mobilise the regulatory authority ACER and other European stakeholders to promote the issue of system adequacy in terms of resilience and security of supply in Europe?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What specific dates or deadlines have you planned for this project? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Background** |

Europe is facing major challenges in its energy infrastructure in terms of geopolitical tensions, climate change, technological changes, and the security of energy supply. Dependence on energy imports, especially on natural gas from Russia, makes the EU vulnerable to geopolitical conflicts, as the Ukraine conflict shows. Diversification of energy sources is therefore essential.

Climate change is forcing a shift towards renewable energies, supported by ambitious EU targets to reduce greenhouse gases. This requires major investments in technologies and infrastructure, such as wind and solar parks, energy storage and smart grids.

Advancing digitalisation and smart grids are changing the energy infrastructure, offering efficiency benefits but also increasing the risk of cyberattacks, which require continuous security measures.

Regulatory authorities, such as the ACER, play a crucial role in strengthening the resilience of the energy system and ensuring security of supply. By working closely with national authorities, grid operators and other European institutions, Europe can overcome the challenges and shape a sustainable and secure energy future.

**Hydropower as a cornerstone for system-serving flexibility**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Hydropower plays an important role as a cornerstone for system flexibility in Europe. Despite its importance, the establishment of a new capacity market is being discussed more and more intensely, with hydropower often being overlooked**. What specific measures are you planning regarding the promotion of system-serving flexibility?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Which energy technologies would you promote using to ensure system-supporting flexibility? |

**Background**

The necessary transformation of the energy system away from fossil base load power plants towards volatile renewable energies requires a considerable increase in flexibility in the system. This is because the weather-related production fluctuations of renewable energies must be balanced out. There is therefore a discussion about developing a new capacity market to ensure grid stability. An essential part of this discussion is the debate about the construction of new gas-fired power plants.

In this debate, however, we should not forget that hydropower plants, especially pumped storage power plants, already play a decisive role in promoting system-supporting flexibility. Pumped storage is by far the most important grid-connected storage technology in Austria. Its ability to react quickly to fluctuations in the electricity grid makes it the backbone for system stabilisation in the energy system of the 21st century. This flexibility makes it possible to store surplus energy when production is high and feed it back into the grid when demand is high, thereby ensuring the stability and reliability of the electricity grid.

The relevance of system-supporting flexibility cannot be emphasised enough. Without flexible solutions such as pumped storage power plants, it would be extremely difficult to balance out the fluctuations in renewable energy sources and ensure a stable energy supply. The importance of hydropower and pumped storage technology in should therefore be given particular consideration in the further development of the energy system.

**Biomethane as a cornerstone for system-supporting flexibility**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Biomethane from organic waste and residues can play an important role as a cornerstone for system-serving flexibility in Europe due to its seasonal storability. **What specific measures are you planning to promote the system-serving flexibility of biomethane from organic waste and residues?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The promotion of system-supporting flexibility through biomethane from organic waste and residues is of central importance for the stability and sustainability of the future energy system. With the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies such as wind and solar, which are subject to strong weather-related fluctuations, it is becoming increasingly important to have flexible and reliable energy sources that can compensate for these fluctuations.

Biomethane, which is produced from organic waste and residues, offers an excellent way of ensuring this flexibility. Unlike wind or solar energy, whose production depends on the weather, biomethane can be produced continuously and on demand. This makes it a valuable addition to the energy mix, as it can be used quickly when needed to close supply gaps and ensure grid stability.

Another advantage of biomethane is its dual environmental impact: on the one hand, the use of organic waste and residual materials reduces the amount of waste, while on the other hand it reduces the greenhouse gas emissions that would otherwise result from the landfilling or incineration of this waste. This sustainable use of resources contributes to the circular economy and reduces the environmental impact.

The promotion of biomethane from organic waste and residues is therefore not only a question of energy supply security, but also an important step towards a sustainable and environmentally friendly energy system. Through targeted political measures and investments in the corresponding infrastructure, biomethane can become an integral part of the energy system, providing the necessary flexibility for the system and at the same time offering ecological benefits.

**Consumption-related energy production**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In the ongoing development towards a more sustainable energy supply, the promotion of energy production close to consumption is becoming increasingly more important. Aspects, such as decentralised energy production and storage, play a decisive role here. **What measures are you planning to ensure energy production close to consumption?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The promotion of energy production close to consumption is a key aspect for the sustainability and efficiency of the future energy system. Two key arguments emphasise the importance of this practice: the reduction of transmission losses in the medium-voltage and low-voltage grid and the increase in security of supply.

Firstly, producing energy close to where it is consumed reduces the losses that normally occur when energy is transmitted and distributed over long distances. Transmission losses can be significant and represent a waste of resources and money. When energy is generated directly at the point of consumption, for example through rooftop solar panels or combined heat and power plants in residential areas and business parks, these losses are minimised. This leads to a more efficient utilisation of the energy generated, as less energy is lost on the way from the producer to the consumer. The increase in efficiency not only helps to conserve resources, but also reduces the overall costs of energy supply.

Secondly, decentralised energy production increases the security of supply and resilience of the energy system. Decentralised energy production units are less susceptible to large-scale power outages, as they are not exclusively dependent on central grids. In the event of grid disruptions or natural disasters, local energy sources can continue to supply electricity, making energy supply more stable and reliable. Decentralising energy production reduces the risk of outages and improves the system's ability to adapt to unexpected events. This is particularly important in times of increasing effects of climate change and geopolitical uncertainties.

Overall, the reduction of transmission losses in the medium-voltage and low-voltage grid, and the increase in security of supply through energy production close to consumption contribute significantly to the efficiency, stability and sustainability of the energy system. Targeted political measures and investments in this form of energy generation can help to shape a stable, environmentally friendly and economically favourable energy for the future.

# Initiatives to expand the network infrastructure

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe has a robust electricity grid thanks to a supportive EU regulatory framework, but to maximise the benefits of affordable and clean energy, infrastructure development is crucial. With an expected 60% increase in electricity consumption by 2030 and the need to dramatically increase renewable energy capacity, electricity grids need to be rapidly expanded and modernised. Although the EU has already created the framework conditions, further measures are needed to ensure that the grids can meet the increasing demands and achieve the climate and energy targets**. In addition to the EU Action Plan for Grids, what follow-up initiatives are you planning to advance grid expansion in Europe?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Are you planning further initiatives to financially support grid expansion? |

**Background**

Grid expansion in Europe is of central importance for the successful implementation of the green transition and the integration of renewable energies. The electricity grids are the backbone of the European energy system and play a crucial role in efficiently transporting energy from renewable sources such as wind and solar power to end consumers.

Without a robust and flexible grid infrastructure, the green transition cannot be successfully achieved. The growing integration of renewable energies poses major challenges for the existing grid. Many of the current grid structures are not designed for the decentralised and variable nature of renewable energies. Wind and solar power plants are often located in regions that are far away from centres of consumption, which increases the need for efficient transmission grids. Without sufficient capacity in the medium and low-voltage grid, these renewable energies cannot be optimally utilised, leading to bottlenecks and inefficiencies.

In addition, the increasing electrification of transport and heating is leading to a higher demand for electricity and thus increasing the stress on the grids. Electric vehicles, heat pumps and other electrical devices require reliable and efficient electricity grids to meet the growing demand for energy.

Furthermore, a flexible grid infrastructure is necessary in order to be able to react quickly to fluctuations in energy generation and demand. This is particularly important as renewable energies are weather-dependent and their production can vary greatly. Flexible grids make it possible to store surplus energy and feed it back into the grid when needed, which increases security of supply and further reduces dependence on fossil fuels.

**Financing the grid expansion**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The increasing demand for renewable energy sources such as wind and solar energy and the transition to electromobility are leading to a growing need for electricity distribution grids. However, the existing grids are often outdated and not sufficiently dimensioned to cope with these new requirements. Without an expansion of the electricity distribution grids, there is a risk of bottlenecks and insufficient security of supply. Additional financing initiatives are therefore required to support the modernisation and expansion of the grids and ensure a sustainable energy supply. **How will you ensure that investments in European grids are sustainable, forward-looking, efficient and appropriate for customers?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What additional financing measures do you see here considering a stronger European resilience and is the Commission considering European financing models for this? |

**Background**

The modernisation and expansion of electricity distribution grids are crucial for the successful integration of renewable energies and the support of electromobility in Europe. Without sufficient investment, there is a risk of bottlenecks and the green transition cannot be successfully implemented.

The growing integration of renewable energies poses major challenges for existing grids. Many of the current grid structures are not designed for the decentralised and variable nature of renewable energies. It is therefore necessary to expand and modernise grid capacities in order to ensure a stable and reliable energy supply. Advanced planning could help to avoid future bottlenecks and ensure a long-term security of supply.

Efficient grid investments also result in cost savings for consumers. By reducing transmission losses and optimising the grid infrastructure, the overall costs of energy supply can be lowered. This benefits customers directly, as they benefit from lower energy costs and greater security of supply.

In addition, a sustainable and fit-for-purpose grid infrastructure promotes economic development and creates jobs. Investing in modern grids helps to create a robust and resilient energy system that meets the demands of an increasingly electrified and decarbonised economy. Overall, targeted and sustainable investments in Europe's grids are essential to ensure a secure and efficient energy future.

**More efficient authorisation procedures for network infrastructure**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In order to meet the increasing demand for renewable energies and promote the modernisation of the electricity grid, more efficient approval procedures for the electricity distribution grid infrastructure are required. Current processes are often lengthy and complex, which leads to project delays. Streamlined approval processes could shorten investment times, reduce costs and accelerate the expansion of clean energy. This is crucial to achieving climate targets and driving forward the energy transition. **How do you intend to optimise the approval procedures for grid infrastructures, structure them better and make them more efficient overall?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

In order to meet the challenges of expanding renewable energies, modernising the electricity grid and combating climate change, there is a certain degree of time pressure. As authorisation procedures are one of the most lengthy steps in the expansion of grid infrastructure, speeding up these procedures must be a top priority. Bureaucratic hurdles often cause delays, which is costly in terms of time and money. More efficient authorisation procedures help to shorten investment times, which in turn reduces costs and accelerates the expansion of renewable energies. This could make a decisive contribution to achieving climate targets and ensuring a sustainable energy supply.

# Acceleration of authorisation procedures for renewable power generation

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In order to achieve the decarbonisation targets on time, an accelerated expansion of electricity production from renewable resources is required. The Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) therefore provides for numerous measures to accelerate the expansion. **How do you ensure that the measures to accelerate the authorisation procedures of RED III are effectively implemented in the member states?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * In addition to the permanent measures of RED III, additional temporary measures were imposed in 2022 due to the war in Ukraine. These are currently valid until June 2025. Should their validity be extended? |

**Background**

The European Union (EU) has set ambitious decarbonisation targets that require a rapid and comprehensive transformation of the energy sector. In order to achieve these goals, the accelerated expansion of electricity production from renewable resources is of crucial importance. The Renewable Energy Directive (RED III)[[1]](#footnote-1) contains numerous measures to promote this expansion. These include simplified and shortened authorisation procedures, approaches for coordinating the approval authorities and fixed deadlines for approvals. It is crucial that these measures are implemented more effectively in the member states in order to achieve the planned expansion targets. Efficient monitoring and reporting must be guaranteed in order to monitor progress in implementation and make adjustments where necessary. The implementation of important targets is all the more achievable if technical and financial support is provided by the EU.

The additional temporary measures of RED III due to the war in Ukraine are currently valid until June 2025. An extension of the validity of these measures beyond June 2025 could make sense if geopolitical tensions persist or if the targets for accelerating the expansion of renewable energies have not yet been fully achieved. A precise evaluation of the effectiveness and necessity of these temporary measures should be carried out before the deadline expires in order to decide on a possible extension.

# More efficient authorisation procedures for renewable energy production facilities

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In order to meet the increasing demand for renewable energy, more efficient authorisation procedures are needed for the construction of renewable energy plants. Current processes are often lengthy and complex, which leads to project delays. Leaner authorisation processes could shorten investment times, reduce costs and accelerate the expansion of clean energy. This is crucial to achieving climate targets and driving forward the energy transition. **How do you intend to optimise the approval procedures for renewable energy plants, structure them better and make them more efficient overall?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How do you intend to optimise the approval procedures for the grid infrastructure for renewable gases, structure them better and make them more efficient overall? |

**Background**

Optimising, structuring and increasing the efficiency of approval procedures for renewable energy plants is crucial for the rapid and successful transition to a sustainable energy supply. The expansion of renewable energies is a central pillar of climate policy and is necessary in order to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve climate targets. However, lengthy and complex authorisation procedures are often a major obstacle.

More efficient authorisation procedures can significantly shorten investment times and thus reduce the costs of expanding renewable energies. This is particularly important as time and economic efficiency have a direct impact on the attractiveness and feasibility of projects. Investors and project developers require planning certainty and quick decisions in order to successfully realise projects. In addition, improving the authorisation process helps to increase social acceptance. Clear, transparent and rapid procedures can strengthen public trust and reduce resistance to projects.

The specific requirements for the authorisation procedures for renewable gases, such as biomethane and green hydrogen, are another important topic. These technologies play a decisive role in the decarbonisation of industry and transport. It is therefore necessary to optimise the approval procedures in this area too. Standardised and efficient processes can shorten development times and accelerate the introduction of these important technologies.

# Data sovereignty regarding the implementation of smart grids

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Currently, distribution grid operators are prevented from using the data collected in smart grids and by smart meters to control distribution grids due to strict cyber security regulations. This is contrary to the goal of ensuring a high level of system resilience. To achieve this, it is important to allow grid operators to utilise the data collected, particularly with regard to flexibility services and the efficient control of distribution grids. **How do you intend to ensure that the control of this data lies with the distribution system operators in order to implement an effective smart grid?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What measures are being taken to create control mechanisms? |

**Background**

Based on communication technologies, smart grids make it possible to create an energy- and cost-efficient balance between a large number of electricity consumers, electricity producers and electricity storage systems. A continuous exchange between producers and consumers is necessary in order to guarantee a sustainable and economical electricity supply with an increasingly volatile production. Integrating smart grids and smart meters into electricity distribution grids has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency and resilience of the energy system. They enable dynamic and flexible control of the electricity grid by providing real-time data on energy consumption and grid load.

This data is crucial for predicting peak times in energy demand, effectively integrating renewable energy and responding quickly to grid disruptions. However, distribution system operators are challenged because strict cybersecurity regulations limit their ability to use valuable data to control the grids. These regulations are designed to protect the infrastructure from cyber-attacks, but result in limiting the use of collected data for grid control and optimisation. A careful balance between maintaining high security standards and creating opportunities for data utilisation would be necessary. Above all, this would enable network operators to process the available data securely and efficiently.

# Financing of smart grids through DSOs

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Smart grids are crucial for the modernisation of energy infrastructures as they enable a more efficient use of energy and integrate renewable energy sources. The financing of these smart grids is important and distribution system operators play a key role in their implementation and maintenance at local level. Therefore, financing measures must also take into account the financial burden on distribution system operators to support the transition to a more sustainable energy system. Successful financing by DSOs could accelerate market penetration and drive decarbonisation. **Do you intend to take measures to support the financing of smart grids by distribution system operators, focussing on the financing needs of distribution system operators and not only those of transmission system operators?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Smart grids are crucial for the modernisation of the energy infrastructure, as they enable more efficient use of energy and support the integration of renewable energy sources. They allow real-time monitoring and control of the energy flow, which leads to a more stable and efficient power supply. However, the introduction of smart grids is associated with considerable investment costs, especially for distribution system operators (DSOs), who are responsible for implementation and maintenance. Discussions and policies around smart grids will also often be driven by transmission system operators (TSOs). It is important to ensure that DSOs, which play an essential role in the transformation of the energy system, are given sufficient attention by means of direct inclusion.

The financing of these smart grids is of major importance. To support the transition to a more sustainable energy system, financing measures must also take into account the specific financial needs of DSOs. Successful financing would accelerate market uptake and accelerate decarbonisation. Targeted financial support and incentives can enable DSOs to invest in the necessary infrastructure in a cost-efficient manner.

# Investments in digitalisation for data usage and control by DSOs

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Digitalisation, particularly through the implementation of smart grids, offers additional opportunities alongside the expansion and strengthening of electricity grids. This potential could help to ensure the security of energy supply in a future decentralised energy system. **What measures are you considering to ensure the necessary investments in digitalisation and the use of data for control by the distribution system operator in the distribution grid to guarantee a high level of security of supply in Europe in the future?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Smart grids make it possible to create an energy- and cost-efficient balance between a large number of electricity consumers, electricity producers and electricity storage systems on the basis of communication technologies. A constant exchange between producers and consumers is necessary in order to guarantee a sustainable and economical electricity supply with increasingly volatile generation. Integrating smart grids and smart meters into electricity distribution grids has the potential to significantly improve the efficiency and resilience of the energy system. They enable dynamic and flexible control of the electricity grid by providing real-time data on energy consumption and grid load.

This data helps to forecast and control electricity demand and supply and enables customers to adapt their consumption to grid conditions. The availability, collection and utilisation of this data by the distribution system operator (DSO) is fundamental in every respect for grid operation and planning, as well as with regard to digital customer processes and flexibility services, in order to create opportunities for both consumers and energy suppliers and promote efficient and sustainable energy use.

However, distribution system operators are challenged as strict cybersecurity regulations limit their ability to use valuable data to control the grids. These regulations are designed to protect the infrastructure from cyber-attacks, but result in limiting the use of collected data for grid control and optimisation. With these objectives in mind, it is of the utmost importance that all new energy and digital policy initiatives at EU level take into account that data sovereignty and controllability must lie with the DSO in order to ensure cyber security in the grid.

# Transparency vs. the protection of critical infrastructure - a general focus

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In the last few years, the EU Commission has strongly promoted an open data policy and the pursuit of comprehensive transparency in municipal administration and services of public interest through various initiatives. At the same time, requirements for critical infrastructures to protect against cyberattacks or physical attacks on (parts of) facilities are constantly being expanded and tightened. Critical infrastructures are often public companies that provide services of public interest, such as energy supply or distribution, water supply or waste disposal, and in this sense are also subject to the requirements for open data and transparency. **To what extent do you see a conflict between the requirements for open data and transparency and the protection of critical infrastructure from external (cyber) attacks?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Has the implementation of the EU Commission's open data policy led to the initial objectives? |

**Background**

The EU Commission's open data policy measures improve the accessibility and utilisation of data in order to increase the efficiency and innovative capacity of public services. At the same time, the requirements for the protection of critical infrastructures such as energy supply, water supply and waste disposal are being continuously tightened in order to protect them from cyberattacks and physical attacks. These requirements present public companies with the challenge of ensuring both transparency and the security of their infrastructures. All critical infrastructures that provide essential services must carefully consider which data can be published.

The Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive[[2]](#footnote-2) calls on public organisations to provide more data. Modern encryption technologies help to manage sensitive data securely. The EU Commission's open data policy has improved the accessibility and utilisation of public data and has initiated numerous innovation projects and efficiency-enhancing measures in public administration and services. These have contributed to the development of new business models and the promotion of transparency. However, the challenge remains to ensure that this progress does not jeopardise the security of critical infrastructures.

# Measures to improve transnational cyber security

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The EU and its member states are facing increasing cyber-attacks that take place across borders. A coordinated EU-wide response is needed to ensure security, as cybersecurity must take into account diverse legal and governance structures. Given the diversity of legal and technical infrastructures in EU countries, coordinating cybersecurity measures is a complex challenge. As critical infrastructures transcend borders, addressing cybersecurity threats requires a coordinated response that also takes into account the protection of personal data and privacy. **What measures do you plan to take to improve transnational cybersecurity?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How can interoperability and cooperation in the EU - both for the physical security of networks and cyber security - be strengthened? |

**Background**

To improve transnational cyber security, it is important to develop common cyber security standards and protocols, harmonise cyber security legislation and establish specialised EU agencies, such as the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, to coordinate and support national decisions. If all member states work together to respond quickly and effectively to cyber threats while maintaining standards for personal data protection and privacy, security can be guaranteed in the long term. Strengthening regional cooperation requires strategies that take into account both the physical security of networks and cyber security.

Establishing common technical standards and protocols to ensure that all member states run compatible and secure infrastructures are good measures. It would be ideal to find a good balance between the digital protection of networks and the physical security of infrastructures. Together, these measures can help to increase the EU's physical and cybersecurity resilience and ensure the protection of critical infrastructures.

# The commitment to decarbonisation in the Just Transition Mechanism

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| As part of the EU Just Transition Mechanism, there is an intensive debate on how the transition to a low-carbon economy can be made fairer. The focus is also on potential measures for mandatory decarbonisation. **What are your current plans regarding this?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Does this require the mandatory consent of employees or their representatives? |

**Background**

The EU Just Transition Mechanism aims to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition to a climate-neutral economy and to ensure a just transition. This includes financial support for regions that are heavily dependent on the carbon economy, as well as investments in sustainable economic sectors and jobs. Key aspects are mandatory decarbonisation measures to ensure that all sectors of the economy contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Companies and regions should develop and implement specific decarbonisation strategies. These measures are intended not only to promote ecological change, but also to ensure social acceptance and support for the necessary transformation. Financial support for sustainable energy technologies is particularly helpful in the energy sector in order to accelerate the transition.

The mandatory consent of employees or their representation within the framework of the EU Just Transition Mechanism is crucial to ensure social justice and acceptance. By involving employees, their perspectives and needs are taken into account, which makes the measures more practical and effective. This promotes trust and increases the likelihood of success of the transition to a climate-neutral economy. It also strengthens social justice by ensuring that employees are actively involved in decision-making processes and that their interests are safeguarded. This strengthens social cohesion and makes the transition fair for everyone involved.

# Employment criteria for Just-Transition fundings

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| With the emergence of the Just Transition Fund, the EU faces the challenge of ensuring the fair and sustainable transformation of its economy. In doing so, it is essential to introduce employment criteria which ensure that the funding is targeted to where it is most urgently needed. These criteria should cover both the creation of new jobs and the reskilling and support of workers, particularly in regions and sectors affected by structural change. **To what extent do you plan to combine payments from the Just Transition Fund with job retention in the companies?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The Just Transition Fund aims to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition to a low-carbon economy and ensure that regions and sectors that are largely dependent on fossil fuels are adequately supported. A key concern is the introduction of employment criteria to ensure that funding is directed to where it is most needed.

This includes the creation of new jobs as well as training and support for workers, particularly in sectors affected by structural change such as energy, coal and the automotive industry. The fund's resources have the potential to provide long-term financial support, create sustainable employment opportunities and strengthen the resilience of the affected regions.

In order to ensure that Just Transition Funds contribute effectively to securing jobs, it is intended to link payments to employment criteria. Companies that receive funding from the fund must prove that they are taking measures to preserve jobs and create new employment opportunities, as suggested, for example, by the guideline on qualification and counselling funding of the state of Carinthia[[3]](#footnote-3). Further measures should not only support the preservation of jobs, but also increase social acceptance for the necessary ecological change and enable a smooth transition to a sustainable economy.

**Reskilling in line with the Just-Transition-Mechanism**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The Just Transition Mechanism aims to ensure a just and inclusive transition to a low-carbon economy by supporting both jobs and communities dependent on traditional, carbon-intensive industries, while promoting the transition to sustainable, green jobs. As part of this approach, reskilling projects and programs are being developed to prepare affected workers for new occupations and employment opportunities, through various forms such as vocational training, apprenticeship programs and financial support. However, one challenge is to ensure that these reskilling projects are adequately funded and effectively implemented to meet the needs of the affected workers. **What retraining projects are you planning and where do you see a need to support the member states?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What are your planned measures to ensure that the transition through reskilling does not cause a negative impact on jobs? |

**Background**

The Just Transition Fund aims to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition to a low-carbon economy and ensure that regions and sectors that are largely dependent on fossil fuels are adequately supported. A key concern is to introduce employment criteria to ensure that funding is targeted to where it is most needed. A particular focus is on supporting reskilling projects and programs that prepare affected workers for new occupations and employment opportunities. These retraining initiatives include vocational training, education programs and financial support. The challenge, however, is to ensure that these projects are adequately funded and effectively implemented to meet the specific needs of the affected workers.

From the perspective of public associations, there is a need to work closely with local and regional authorities, educational institutions and the private sector in these areas to ensure that retraining measures are targeted and practical. Sufficient financial resources being available would help to support the implementation of these programs and facilitate the transition.

# Further support for socially disadvantaged people

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Managing structural change, especially in the context of the transition to a climate-neutral economy, requires not only environmental but also social justice. In the face of this challenge, it is essential to take measures to ensure that socially disadvantaged groups are not left behind. **In addition to the Climate Social Fund, how do you intend to provide additional financial measures for socially disadvantaged groups in order to cope fairly with the effects of structural change?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The transition to a climate-neutral economy is one of the greatest challenges of our time and requires comprehensive adjustments in various sectors of the economy. This structural change not only affects technological and ecological aspects, but also has far-reaching social implications. Socially disadvantaged groups are particularly affected, as they often have fewer resources and opportunities to adapt to new circumstances. The EU's Social Climate Fund is already trying to support energy efficiency measures, the use of renewable energies and the fight against energy poverty. In addition to the Social Climate Fund, additional financial measures would be needed to protect socially disadvantaged groups, especially from the negative effects of structural change. This results in a fair adjustment that gives everyone the opportunity to prepare adequately and which also guarantees access to affordable energy.

# Ensuring educational standards, possibilities and opportunities in the energy sector

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Angesichts der Notwendigkeit von Attraktivität und Zugänglichkeit, beispielsweise durch vernünftige Zahlungsmodelle und Durchlässigkeit, wird die Standardisierung von Ausbildungen allein als unzureichend betrachtet. In Anbetracht dieser Herausforderungen: **Wie planen Sie sicherzustellen, dass angemessene Bildungsniveaus, Möglichkeiten und Chancen für die Energiewende bzw. eine gerechte Transition im Energiesektor gewährleistet sind?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Ensuring adequate levels of education, opportunities and chances is central to a successful energy transition and a just transition in the energy sector. Adequate education and skills are critical to prepare the workforce for the new needs created by the transition to renewable energy and energy efficient technologies.

Firstly, a highly educated and skilled workforce will enable them to better adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the energy market. The energy transition implies new technologies and working methods that require specialized knowledge and skills. Targeted training and further education programs enable employees to acquire the skills they need to be successful in the new areas of work. This not only strengthens their employability, but also promotes the innovative strength of the entire industry.

Secondly, the promotion of education and training opportunities contributes to social justice. The transition to a sustainable energy supply must not lead to social inequalities. Access to education and qualifications gives all employees, regardless of their previous professional background, the opportunity to participate in the new jobs in the energy sector. This prevents certain groups from being disadvantaged and promotes inclusive and fair development.

Thirdly, ensuring adequate levels of education supports regional development and structural change in affected areas. Many regions that traditionally depend on fossil fuels are facing major challenges. Through targeted education initiatives, these regions can actively shape the transition to a sustainable economy and create new economic opportunities. This not only promotes the local economy, but also strengthens social cohesion.

# Ensuring an affordable energy supply

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In an increasingly energy-dependent world, securing an affordable energy supply is an ever more pressing challenge. The European Union is faced with the task of finding a balanced approach that takes into account both, the need for energy access for all citizens and the requirements of sustainable and environmentally friendly energy production. In light of rising energy prices and the urgency of curbing climate change, the following question arises: **How do you plan to ensure an affordable energy supply in the long term?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Securing an affordable energy supply in the long term is of central importance for economic stability, social justice and environmental sustainability. Affordable energy is essential for households, businesses and public institutions, as it forms the basis for everyday activities and economic productivity. Rising energy prices can significantly increase the cost of living and place a heavy burden on low-income households in particular, which can lead to energy poverty. Energy poverty is a serious social problem that impacts the health and well-being of the people affected.

An affordable energy supply is also very important for companies, as it directly influences production costs. High energy prices can reduce the competitiveness of companies, slow down investments and jeopardize jobs. Energy-intensive industries in particular depend on stable and affordable energy prices to keep their operating costs low and ensure their global competitiveness.

In an increasingly energy-dependent world, securing an affordable energy supply is of crucial importance. On the one hand, rising energy prices caused by a combination of geopolitical tensions, limited fossil resources and an increasing demand for energy must be managed. On the other hand, the need for a rapid transition to renewable energy is pressing to combat climate change. This transition requires significant investment in new technologies and infrastructure, which in return can lead to higher costs. These conflicting requirements should be reconciled so that all stakeholders in Europe have access to affordable energy.

# Stable and affordable electricity in the rail sector

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In recent years, the rail sector has increasingly focused on the integration of electrification technologies to achieve both environmental and economic benefits. Strategies towards a full electrification are in line with efforts to reduce CO2 emissions and improve air quality. However, the energy price crisis has shown that pricing in the electricity market, together with the need to implement long-term procurement strategies for rail companies, poses a number of challenges in terms of ensuring a stable and affordable electricity supply. **What specific plans and strategies are you therefore considering to ensure affordable and stable electricity prices for the rail sector in the long term?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How do you plan on ensuring that transportation of people and goods remains affordable AND environmentally and socially sustainable for end users? |

**Background**

The significant rise in electricity prices in recent years has massively weakened the competitiveness of rail compared to road, as diesel prices have not risen to the same extent. This has led to a shift in traffic towards the road, particularly in the transport of goods, contrary to the intention of the mobility strategy. Challenges concern in particular the securing of a stable and affordable electricity supply, which is crucial for the competitiveness and sustainability of the rail sector. It would be important to compensate for price fluctuations on the electricity market and give rail companies more planning security.

In order to ensure that passenger and freight transport remains both affordable and environmentally and socially sustainable, targeted measures are required at several levels. Further investment in the rail sector's infrastructure, accompanied by a considered pricing policy, would help to increase the attractiveness of rail transport and minimize the financial burden. Making the rail sector both affordable and environmentally friendly at the same time would provide the best advantages for climate-friendly development, reduce the financial burden on the rail sector and also increase the use of rail travel.

# Model ideas for regulated basic energy supply for disadvantaged communities

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Ensuring a regulated basic energy supply for disadvantaged groups is crucial to ensure social justice and equal opportunities. Facing rising energy prices and growing income inequality, governments will be challenged to find solutions to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are also supplied with energy. **What model ideas do you have in mind to ensure a regulated basic supply for disadvantaged population groups?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Ensuring a regulated basic supply for disadvantaged population groups is crucial for social justice and social cohesion. Energy is a basic need which is essential for daily life, health and well-being. Without affordable access to energy, disadvantaged population groups can find themselves in precarious situations, leading to energy poverty.

Energy poverty can have severe consequences. Households that cannot afford adequate heating or cooling are exposed to health risks, especially the elderly, children and people with chronic illnesses. Cold homes can lead to respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular problems and other health impairments. A regulated basic supply ensures that these population groups also have access to the necessary energy and can meet their basic needs.

In addition, a regulated basic supply helps to reduce social inequality. If access to energy is unequally distributed, disadvantaged groups can be further marginalized, leading to a cycle of poverty. A fair and equitable energy supply enables these groups to actively participate in society, take advantage of educational and employment opportunities and improve their quality of life. In many countries, the latest energy price crises increased the economic burden on households, especially for those with low incomes. Model projects to ensure a regulated basic energy supply for disadvantaged population groups are therefore needed to ensure that they are not significantly more disadvantaged in terms of energy consumption than higher-income groups.

# A standardised European definition of energy poverty

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe faces the challenge of tackling energy poverty at a continental level, a complex issue that requires a harmonised definition. Given the diversity of national contexts and the different socio-economic conditions within the EU, a coherent approach is essential. **Are you planning a standardised European definition of energy poverty and, if so, by when should these plans be developed?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Energy poverty is described as a situation in which households cannot afford basic energy services such as heating, cooling, lighting, mobility and electricity due to low income, high energy costs or low energy standards of buildings. The fight against energy poverty is therefore a cross-cutting task and affects different political fields.

Energy poverty is becoming an urgent issue as rising energy prices and the energy transition increase the financial burden on low-income households across Europe. At the same time, increasing income inequality means that poorer households are more affected by these burdens. Given the importance of social justice and social cohesion, the EU should promote measures to ensure a fair, sustainable and affordable energy supply for all.

A standardised European definition of energy poverty would therefore make sense in order to ensure that more uniform decisions are taken in the Member States and that they work together with the same reference values. As European definitions already exist in various areas, for example the definition of small and medium-sized enterprises which is widely used, an agreement on energy poverty would also help to combat the challenges better and in a coordinated manner.

# Implementation of fundamental and human rights in energy supply strategies

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In light of the current geopolitical dynamics and the increasing dependence of many countries on third countries for their energy supply, there is a need to develop strategies to diversify and reduce this dependence. However, it must not be forgotten that such measures must be in line with fundamental human and labour rights as well as democratic values. **How do you intend to integrate fundamental, human and labour rights along with basic democratic values into any plans aimed at reducing dependence on third countries for energy supplies?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Many countries are dependent on third countries for their energy supply, which calls for a diversification of energy sources and a reduction in dependency. One focus must be on ensuring the stability and sustainability of energy supplies without compromising fundamental human rights, labour rights and democratic values.

The European Union (EU) aims to diversify its energy sources by focussing on both renewable energy and more secure and reliable partners that share the same values of democracy and human rights. This also means that future energy agreements and partnerships should be expanded and scrutinised to ensure that they are in line with the EU's ethical standards and values.

At the same time, it is important to protect and promote labour rights and social standards within supply chains. The EU will ensure that all agreements to reduce energy dependency guarantee decent working conditions and comply with international labour standards. International cooperation is therefore important in order to diversify energy sources and reduce dependency structures.

# Supply obligations of small energy suppliers

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In recent years, consumer protection has become increasingly important in the EU, particularly in the area of energy supply. Against this background, the EU Commission is faced with the challenge of strengthening the rights and interests of consumers while at the same time promoting competition on the energy market. However, given the dominance of large energy suppliers, it is also important to hold smaller players to account in order to ensure a fairer and more diverse supply. **What measures do you plan to take to strengthen consumer protection and hold smaller energy suppliers accountable for their supply?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The EU Commission has recognised the need to protect consumers from unfair practices and to strengthen their rights, especially in light of rising energy prices and competition between small and large energy suppliers. A key challenge is to find a balanced approach that protects consumers' interests while promoting competition in the energy market. It is crucial that smaller energy suppliers also commit to ensuring a fair and diverse supply.

During the 2022 energy crisis, many smaller suppliers were unable to maintain the prices they had previously quoted. As a result, many of these suppliers went bankrupt and were no longer able to reliably supply their customers. This led to considerable uncertainty and burdens for consumers. The basic problem for smaller suppliers is often their limited capital, which serves as a reserve for times of crisis. If these financial buffers are lacking, the economic problems of smaller suppliers can become a direct burden for the final consumers.

Involving smaller energy suppliers in the obligation to supply can significantly improve the security of supply for consumers. The obligation to supply ensures that a stable and continuous energy supply is guaranteed, even in the event of market volatility. This strengthens consumer confidence and protects them from the effects of bankruptcy and unreliable supplies. Overall, this leads to a more resilient and secure energy infrastructure.

# Measures to prevent speculation against the European energy trade

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Speculations against energy trading lead to price fluctuations on the energy market, which impairs stability and potentially leads to bottlenecks. The willingness to invest and the possibility of long-term planning suffer from volatile prices. In addition, they could channel investments into less sustainable energy sources and trigger political reactions such as price regulations, which could impair the efficiency of the market in the long term. In light of recent developments on the energy markets and the increasing volatility of prices, this is a key concern. **What measures do you plan to take to prevent speculation against European energy trading and ensure security of supply?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

It is of great importance to prevent speculation against European energy trading in order to guarantee the stability and reliability of the energy supply. Speculation can lead to extreme price fluctuations that place a heavy burden on both consumers and companies. During the energy crisis in 2022 and 2023, it became clear how sensitively the energy market can react to speculative activities. This crisis led to drastically rising energy prices, causing financial difficulties for many households and companies.

The energy crisis also showed that excessive speculation can undermine trust in the energy market. When energy prices are artificially inflated by speculative activities, the actual market conditions can be distorted, leading to poor investment and planning decisions. This makes it more difficult to secure a stable energy supply in the long term and can hinder the implementation of the energy transition.

By preventing speculation, the market becomes more transparent and predictable, which protects both investors and consumers. Regulatory measures aimed at limiting speculative activities can help to increase market stability and reduce the risk of extreme price fluctuations. This is particularly important in order to minimise the economic impact on low-income households, maintain the competitiveness of the European economy and ensure security of supply.

# Measures against speculative behaviour on demand-response markets

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In a world where the demand for energy is more and more influenced by technology and data, we are faced with the challenge of ensuring that these changes do not lead to false consumption profiles. Such profiles could potentially affect efficiency and fairness in demand response markets. Given that, it is crucial to take measures that curb speculative behaviour in these markets and promote a fair and efficient use of energy resources. **What measures do you plan to take to counter speculative behaviour in demand response markets?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What measures should be taken to ensure that the handling of flexibility services also serves the system? |

**Background**

It is very important to counteract speculative behaviour on demand response markets in order to ensure the stability and efficiency of the energy system. Demand response markets adapt energy consumption to the availability of renewable energy and contribute to grid stability. However, speculative behaviour can lead to distortions, artificial shortages and price spikes, affecting the reliability of the energy system and increasing costs for consumers and businesses.This was particularly noticeable during the energy crisis in 2022 and 2023.

Regulatory measures are therefore needed to limit speculative behaviour and ensure that demand response markets fulfil their proper function. Transparency requirements and the monitoring of trading activities are crucial to prevent abusive market behaviour. It is also important that the processing of flexibility services is system-friendly. This means that load shifting and flexibility offers must be designed in such a way that they contribute to grid stability and not just generate short-term financial gains. System-friendly processing ensures that the flexibility services actually contribute to the better integration of renewable energies and the avoidance of grid congestion.

Another critical aspect is preventing the use of artificial consumption profiles. These artificially created consumption patterns can be used to manipulate energy consumption in order to achieve financial benefits without representing a real demand. Such practices can distort market prices and undermine the effectiveness of demand response measures. By implementing strict controls and monitoring mechanisms, such artificial consumption profiles can be identified and prevented.

# Establishment of a European protective shield to safeguard energy trading

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe is facing a challenging time in light of increasing energy dependency and geopolitical uncertainties. Recent events have emphasised the urgency of establishing robust mechanisms to protect energy trade. Regarding these threats, the introduction of a European, state-owned energy trade defence shield could be a possible solution. **Are you considering establishing such a European, state-run protective shield to safeguard the energy trade?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Should the member states be obliged to join this protective shield? |

**Background**

European political tensions often and regularly have an impact on energy trade. These threats affect not only the security of energy supplies, but also the stability and predictability of energy prices. One possible solution to address these challenges could be the introduction of a European defence shield to safeguard energy trade. Such an umbrella would serve to minimise risks and fluctuations on the energy market by providing state guarantees and financial support to mitigate bottlenecks and price spikes.

The introduction of a European, state-run protective shield to safeguard energy trading would strengthen European cooperation and make energy trading more secure. This could ensure that all member states benefit equally from the protective measures and that a stable energy market is created in the EU. The defence shield could serve as part of a broader European energy security framework, including measures to diversify energy sources, promote renewable energy and improve energy efficiency. The advantage for consumers and market players would be that it would actively avoid having an overly volatile energy market. This in return protects energy traders, enabling them to utilise resources efficiently for a sustainable development.

**Reform of OTC trading**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In view of the constant development of the financial markets, the question of reforming over-the-counter (OTC) trading is of crucial importance. OTC trading, which enables transactions directly between two parties, has received both praise and criticism in recent years. While it offers flexibility and speed, concerns have also been raised about transparency and risk management. **Are you thinking of reforming OTC trading?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Could it be realistic for trading related to the electricity price market to be suspended during periods of strong price volatility? |

**Background**

The advantages of over-the-counter (OTC) trading include flexible hours, lower prices and a trading mechanism that enables customised agreements and often promote more efficient transactions. Critics, however, have concerns about the lack of transparency and risk management, as the lack of regulatory oversight can potentially lead to market abuses and systemic risk. The increasing importance of OTC trading in the energy market reinforces the need at a European level to ensure that it remains secure and transparent in order to ensure confidence in the financial markets and the stability of the energy market

A possible reform of OTC trading should be envisaged to address these concerns. Increased transparency requirements, stricter reporting obligations and improved risk management practices could be helpful. It would be highly beneficial to preserve the benefits of OTC trading while minimising potential risks.

However, it would be important to suspend OTC trading on the electricity price exchange during strong price fluctuations in order to ensure market stability and transparency. OTC trading, which is often less regulated and less transparent than exchange trading, can lead to additional volatility and uncertainty in times of extreme price fluctuations. This can increase the risk of speculative activity, push up prices further and put a strain on market participants. Suspending OTC trading at such times will increase market transparency, boost confidence and promote a more stable and fair pricing process, ultimately benefiting both consumers and businesses.

# Relief on the capacity market

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The funding of renewable energies has played an important role in the transition to a sustainable energy supply in recent years. However, in addition to the flexibility of renewable sources, their reliable generation is of increasing concern. Strategies need to be developed that not only balance out fluctuations in supply, but also guarantee security of supply. **In addition to the 4th internal electricity market package, how do you intend to promote measures to strengthen sustainable security of supply by facilitating the capacity market?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Sustainable security of supply in the energy sector is a key concern for the European Union, particularly in the context of the 4th internal electricity market package. In addition to the measures contained therein, it is essential to pursue additional strategies to ensure a stable and sustainable energy supply. One such strategy is the promotion of capacity market facilitation.

A capacity market makes it possible to remunerate electricity producers for the provision of capacity, regardless of whether it is actually utilised. This is particularly relevant in order to strengthen the security of supply, as it creates incentives to maintain a sufficient reserve capacity. This is crucial in times of high demand or outages of renewable energies that are weather-dependent.

The provision of securely available capacities in the electricity market must be appropriately taken into account and compensated in order to ensure optimal utilisation of flexibility options and security of supply. A revision of the application of capacity mechanisms is provided for in the recently published Electricity Market Regulation. The Commission should submit proposals to simplify and accelerate the authorisation of capacity mechanisms. It is important that a proposal is drawn up and implemented quickly, as capacity mechanisms are an essential component of security of supply.

**Need for a new pricing model for electricity transit**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| **Will you advocate for a new pricing model for electricity transit to ensure that Member States that are heavily affected by the 70% transit target are fully reimbursed through transit revenues?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

A new pricing model for electricity transit is essential to ensure that Member States which are heavily affected by the 70% transit target receive full reimbursement through transit revenues. This measure aims to avoid competition-distorting effects that could particularly burden Austrian end-customers.

Austria is in a unique position due to its central geographical location in Europe. It acts as an important transit hub for the flow of electricity between different countries. Compliance with the 70% transit target, which aims to ensure that at least 70% of cross-border transmission capacity is available for trade, means significant investments in infrastructure and ongoing costs for Austria in order to maintain and operate the electricity network.

Without an adjusted pricing model, there is a risk that Austrian end-customers will have to bear disproportionately high transmission costs. These costs do not arise from national electricity consumption, but from the transit function that Austria fulfils for the whole of Europe. A new pricing model would ensure that costs are fairly distributed and fully compensated by electricity transit revenues.

A fair distribution of transit costs will strengthen the competitiveness of Austrian end-customers and prevent them from having to pay disproportionately higher electricity prices. This will also promote acceptance and support for an integrated European energy transition, as all member states will benefit equally from the advantages and costs.

**Regulatory integration of security of supply, affordability and ecology**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| During the course of developing the future 5th internal electricity market package, it is crucial to recognize that price is not the only indicator of a balanced market design. Rather, a holistic approach is required that takes security of supply, affordability and ecological aspects into account equally. Such a market design must ensure that the energy supply is stable in the long term, remains affordable for consumers and at the same time meets ecological requirements. **How do you plan to integrate the triangle of security of supply, affordability and ecology into the future market design in regulatory terms?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Developing a balanced market design for the internal electricity market requires a comprehensive strategy that goes far beyond pricing alone. First, a security of supply is essential to ensure a continuous and reliable energy supply. Without stable and secure energy sources, households and businesses can face significant economic and social burdens. Anchoring security of supply in regulations ensures that necessary infrastructure investments and backup solutions are prioritized.

Second, energy affordability is a key aspect of social justice. Energy must remain affordable for all population groups, especially low-income households. High energy prices can lead to energy poverty and significantly affect the quality of life. Regulatory measures can ensure that price increases are cushioned and subsidies or price caps are introduced to keep energy affordable for all.

Third, ecology plays a crucial role in the fight against climate change. Reducing CO2 emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources is essential to achieve global climate goals. Regulatory integration of ecological objectives into market design promotes the development and use of environmentally friendly technologies and energy sources.

The regulatory integration of these three aspects – security of supply, affordability and ecology – creates a balanced energy system that is not only economically and ecologically sustainable, but also ensures social justice.

# Review of the EU electricity market design regarding affordability

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The design of the electricity market is at the heart of energy policy discussions, particularly with regards to the challenges of the energy transition and climate change. In recent years, the EU Commission has taken various measures to reform the European electricity market and prepare it for the increasing integration of renewable energies. Aspects such as efficiency, sustainability and security of supply have been brought into focus. **Do you intend to review the electricity market design again in the next legislative period with regards to the key aspects of affordability and, if necessary, put forward new proposals?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

In the next legislative period, it is essential to re-examine the electricity market design with regards to the key issue of affordability. Rising energy costs are placing increasing pressure on households and businesses, which can increase social and economic tensions. A review must ensure that energy prices remain affordable for all consumers without jeopardising investments in renewable energies and grid stability.

The electricity market design must ensure that the lower generation costs of renewable energies are better passed on to end consumers. Currently, falling energy prices on the electricity wholesale market are not being passed on to the retail market. However, this is crucial to ensure acceptance of the energy transition. Only if consumers feel the cost benefits directly will they be able to muster the necessary support for the switch to renewable energy. Passing on price reductions more effectively is therefore essential for the success of the energy transition and broad social support for sustainable energy sources.

**Replacing the Merit-Order**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In the ever-evolving energy industry, the efficiency of power generation is becoming a key concern. However, the traditional merit-order, which determines the order of power generation by cost, is facing challenges. The integration of renewable energy and the dynamics of the market may require a redesign of the approach. Do you plan to replace the merit order and if so, what exactly would it look like? |
| **Further questions** |
| * In this context, is there a plan to introduce an electricity pricing model that takes greater account of production costs? |

**Background**

A replacement for the current pricing system makes sense, as it has several weaknesses that affect the energy transition and market stability. The existing system often leads to significant price spikes when the most expensive generation units have to be deployed to meet demand. This puts a burden on consumers and businesses and creates uncertainty in the market.

An alternative electricity pricing model that takes greater account of the levelized costs could mitigate these problems. By taking into account the actual generation costs of all energy sources, such a model would promote fair and stable prices that reflect the true costs of energy production. This would not only reduce price volatility but also support the expansion of renewable energy by making clean energy sources more competitive.

In addition, such a pricing model could stimulate investment in sustainable technologies as it strengthens financial incentives for efficient and environmentally friendly generation capacities. Overall, this would lead to a more stable, fairer and environmentally more sustainable energy supply that meets both the needs of consumers and the goals of the energy transition.

# Expansion of sectors in ETS

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The introduction of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) was an important step in the fight against climate change. Since its implementation, various sectors have been included in the system, including energy production, industry and aviation. ETS II, planned for 2027, will also include buildings and road transport in the future. Do you plan to expand the ETS to include other sectors? |
| **Further questions** |
| * Are you considering sharpening the price stability mechanism in ETS II in the interests of climate protection? |

**Background**

The introduction and further development of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) was a significant step in the fight against climate change. Since its launch, the ETS, as a market-based instrument, has helped reduce CO2 emissions in the EU by putting a price on carbon and thus creating financial incentives for lower-emission technologies. Various sectors, including energy production, industry and aviation, have already been included in the system and have thereby significantly reduced their emissions.

ETS II, planned for 2027, aims to also include buildings and road transport, which will significantly expand the scope and impact of the system. This expansion is crucial as buildings and the transport sector are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions. A more comprehensive application of the ETS will accelerate the decarbonisation of these sectors and contribute to achieving climate targets. By continuously adapting and expanding the ETS, the EU could ensure that it consistently offers strong incentives for emission reductions and guarantees long-term planning certainty for investments in climate-friendly technologies.

# Integrating CCUS into the ETS

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Carbon Capture Utilization (CCU) and Carbon Capture Storage (CCS) could play a crucial role in reducing CO2 emissions by enabling industries to capture, reduce and store their carbon emissions. Given the need to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, carbon capture and storage technology are seen as a potential key to achieving climate goals. **To what extent do you plan to integrate CCUS into the ETS system to incentivize companies to invest in this technology and further reduce CO2 emissions and if so, how?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What role does bioenergy with CO2-capture and storage (BECCS) or utilization (BECCU) play in particular? |

**Background**

The integration of Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) into the Emissions Trading System (ETS) would be an important step to advance decarbonization and significantly reduce CO2 emissions. CCUS technologies offer the possibility of capturing, utilizing, or permanently storing CO2 emissions directly at the source, which can make a significant contribution to climate protection. By integrating CCUS into the ETS system, companies would receive financial incentives to invest in these advanced technologies. This could be done by issuing additional emission certificates or through special funding programs that mitigate the costs of implementing and operating CCUS plants. Such incentives would increase the economic attractiveness of CCUS and accelerate the acceptance and spread of these technologies.

A special aspect of CCUS is bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) or utilization (BECCU). BECCS combines the combustion of biomass to generate energy with the capture and storage of the resulting CO2. This can achieve negative CO2 emissions, which means that more CO2 is removed from the atmosphere than is released. BECCU, on the other hand, focuses on the use of the captured CO2, for example in industrial processes or as a raw material for the manufacture of products.

The integration of BECCS and BECCU into the ETS system would further increase the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions while promoting the development of sustainable technologies. This contributes significantly to achieving climate goals and supports the transition to a low-carbon economy.

# Relevance of CCUS in the context of hard-to-abate processes

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Given the urgency of mitigating climate change, the discussion on carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) has gained importance worldwide. CCUS does offer a way to reduce CO2 emissions by enabling carbon from industrial processes and power generation to be captured and stored. However, it also entails various risks, particularly with regard to possible leaks and the associated pollutant inputs into groundwater and soil, as well as increased CO2 levels. **Following this, to what extent can CCUS really be considered a future-proof and sustainable process?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * CCUS could play a crucial role, particularly in processes that are difficult to decarbonize, such as steel and cement production. **To what extent do you plan to use CCUS and how useful do you consider this method to be in conjunction with hard-to-abate processes?** |

**Background**

Given the urgency of mitigating climate change, the discussion on carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) has gained worldwide importance. CCUS offers a way to reduce CO2 emissions by capturing and storing carbon from industrial processes and electricity generation.

CCUS could play a crucial role especially in hard-to-decarbonize processes such as steel and cement production. These processes are difficult to decarbonize because they require high temperatures and chemical reactions that release CO2. Through CCUS linked to produced CO2, a large part of these emissions can be avoided. In addition, using the captured CO2 in industrial applications, such as the production of synthetic fuels and building materials, enables a further reduction of the carbon footprint and promotes a sustainable circular economy.

However, CCUS also comes with various risks. There is a risk of potential leakages that could introduce pollutants into groundwater and soils and lead to increased CO2 levels. The safety and long-term stability of storage remain major challenges. In addition, there are also concerns that reliance on CCUS could reduce efforts to diminish carbon emissions at source by seeing it as a solution to the continued use of fossil fuels.

# Measures to limit fluctuations in the CO2 price

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Volatility in carbon markets can have a significant impact on various sectors and affect the effectiveness of climate policy measures. It is therefore crucial to take measures to limit these fluctuations and create a level of predictability and certainty for companies and investors. **What measures do you plan to take to limit fluctuations in the carbon price and thus ensure stability?** |
| **Further question** |
| - |

**Background**

Limiting carbon price fluctuations is crucial to ensure stability and predictability in the market. A stable carbon price provides companies and investors with the security they need for long-term planning and investments in low-emission technologies such as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) and renewable energies.

Fluctuating carbon prices lead to uncertainty and can reduce the willingness to invest. Stability, on the other hand, promotes innovation and the development of sustainable technologies. Stable carbon prices are also important for industrial competitiveness, as they enable energy-intensive industries to better calculate production costs and remain competitive.

From a political perspective, limiting carbon price fluctuations facilitates the implementation of climate protection measures and strengthens public trust in climate policy. A reliable carbon price signals serious and consistent efforts to achieve climate goals. Overall, limiting carbon price fluctuations contributes to market stability and predictability, promotes green investments, and strengthens industrial competitiveness.

# Domestic electricity price zones

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In view of the current energy debate and the ever-growing challenges in the electricity sector, the question of the effectiveness of domestic electricity price zones is in focus. These zones were introduced to improve the efficiency of the electricity market and ensure grid stability. However, there are controversial opinions on whether these measures are still relevant or whether alternative approaches are needed to meet the needs of the changing energy system. **Do you intend to stick to the plans for domestic electricity price zones?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Do you also plan to promote similar measures in the Member States? |

**Background**

Domestic electricity price zones were introduced to better manage regional differences in the generation and demand of energy and to enable a more efficient use of electricity infrastructures. Many countries experience geographical imbalances in electricity production, for example due to the concentration of renewable energy sources such as wind power in certain regions. The introduction of electricity price zones can balance these regional disparities and reduce grid bottlenecks.

These measures remain relevant as they help to ensure grid stability and minimise the costs of expanding transmission networks. Different prices in different zones reflect the local supply and demand situation, which encourages investment in regions with lower prices and higher renewable energy potential. This supports decentralised energy generation and use and contributes to the integration of renewable energy.

However, the changing needs of the energy system may also require alternative approaches. The increasing decentralization of energy production, the growing importance of storage systems and the progressive digitalization of the energy sector pose new challenges for traditional electricity price zones.

Despite these developments, it is important to maintain a uniform, national electricity price zone in the member states. This ensures a fair and equal access to energy for all consumers and prevents certain regions from having to pay disproportionately high electricity prices. A uniform national price zone supports social justice and strengthens consumer confidence in the energy system.

# Design of the Energy Taxation Directive

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Given the increasing importance of environmentally friendly energy sources and the need to curb climate change, energy taxation is at the centre of many political discussions. Effective and balanced taxation of energy products plays a crucial role in guiding behaviour and promoting environmentally friendly alternatives. Given the complexity of the issue and the diverse interests of the actors involved, it is crucial to pursue a well-thought-out and transparent planning process. **When and in what concrete way do you plan to design the Energy Taxation Directive?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Is there an intention to maintain the final consumption tax permanently? |

**Background**

An energy taxation directive is crucial to promote the energy transition and achieve the EU's climate goals. This directive sets the minimum tax rates for energy products and electricity, which helps to create a level playing field in the member states and avoid distortions of competition. It supports the transition to a low-carbon economy by making the use of fossil fuels more expensive, thereby increasing the incentive to invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The need for such a directive arises from the urgency of reducing CO2 emissions and promoting sustainable energy sources. Taxing energy according to its CO2 percentage makes more environmentally friendly alternatives more economically attractive, increasing the demand for clean technologies. In addition, the revenues from energy taxation can be used to promote investments in green infrastructure and research.

However, it is crucial to ensure that consumers are not overly burdened by tax. A fair distribution of the tax burden is necessary to avoid social inequalities and ensure the acceptance of the measures.

# Funding to accelerate the expansion of storage capacities

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In view of the constantly growing importance of renewable energies and the increasing integration of decentralised energy sources, the issue of storage capacity is at the heart of the energy policy debate. Ensuring a stable energy supply requires not only an increase in generation capacity, but also an effective way of storing surplus energy. In this context, the development and expansion of storage technologies is of crucial importance for the future of the energy infrastructure. **What resources are you planning to use to promote the expansion of storage capacities?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The expansion of storage capacities is of central importance for the sustainable and reliable energy supply of the future. With the increasing proportion of renewable energies in the energy mix, particularly fluctuating sources such as wind and solar energy, the need for efficient energy storage systems is becoming ever more urgent. These storage solutions make it possible to store surplus energy at times of high production and retrieve it when generation is low or demand increases. This makes a significant contribution to stabilising the electricity grid and ensuring a continuous energy supply.

In addition, energy storage systems promote the flexibility of the energy system, which enables better integration of renewable energies and reduces dependence on fossil fuels. This flexibility is not only environmentally beneficial, but also has a significant economic dimension. By better adapting to supply and demand, grid bottlenecks can be avoided and grid expansion costs reduced. This leads to more efficient utilisation of the existing infrastructure and reduces the overall costs of energy supply.

However, the existing storage capacities are currently still far too small to meet the requirements of a modern energy system based on renewable energies. It is therefore necessary to think bigger and develop and implement ambitious plans for the expansion of storage capacities. Only with the parallel expansion of production, transmission and storage can the transformation to a sustainable and secure energy future be successfully realised.

# Security of raw materials and resources

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In light of increasing globalisation and geopolitical tensions, securing the supply of raw materials and resources is becoming increasingly important. Geopolitical changes can quickly lead to challenges, particularly in the energy sector, especially when it comes to gas supplies. Companies and governments must therefore develop strategies to arm themselves against potential risks and ensure the continuity of their supply. With this in mind, it is important to develop concrete commodity and resource security plans that are flexible enough to respond to potential geopolitical changes in gas supply. **What are your specific strategies for securing raw materials and resources, especially against the backdrop of possible geopolitical changes in the gas supply?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Securing raw materials and resources is of crucial importance, especially in view of possible geopolitical changes in the gas supply. Raw materials such as natural gas play a central role in the energy supply of many countries and are essential for industry, heating and power generation. A stable and reliable supply of these resources is therefore essential for economic and social stability.

Geopolitical changes can have a significant impact on the availability of raw materials. Conflicts, trade disputes and political tensions can lead to disruptions in the supply chain, resulting in supply bottlenecks and price fluctuations. This makes it necessary to develop strategies to ensure the security of supply. Diversification of suppliers, the expansion of renewable energies and the creation of strategic reserves are some of the measures that can be taken to minimise the risk.

In view of current geopolitical developments, it is more important than ever to reduce dependence on individual suppliers and to be as flexible as possible in the choice of partner countries. A robust and versatile energy infrastructure helps to cushion the impact of geopolitical changes and ensure long-term security of supply. By working with different countries and regions, we can better spread the risks and ensure that there is no one-sided dependency. This flexibility enables us to react quickly and efficiently to unforeseen geopolitical developments, which further strengthens the stability of the energy supply and economic independence.

# Import duties for gas from Russia

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In recent years, the European Union has repeatedly discussed its energy dependence on Russia. The political tensions between the EU and Russia and the security of energy supply have led to an intense debate on the diversification of energy sources. Given the geopolitical situation and dependence on Russian gas, the following question arises: **Do you plan to introduce import tariffs on gas imports from Russia in order to strengthen the EU's energy policy and ensure its strategic autonomy?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

In recent years, the European Union has repeatedly and intensively discussed its energy dependence on Russia. The political tensions between Ukraine and Russia and the associated security concerns regarding energy supply have sparked a debate on the diversification of energy sources. Given the geopolitical situation and the strong dependence on Russian gas, the question arises as to whether the introduction of import tariffs on gas imports from Russia could be a suitable measure to strengthen the EU's energy policy and ensure its strategic autonomy.

The introduction of import tariffs could fulfil a dual purpose. Firstly, it would increase the cost of Russian gas and thus incentivise the development of alternative energy sources within and outside Europe. Secondly, it could generate revenue that could be invested in the expansion of renewable energies and the improvement of energy infrastructure. These measures would reduce dependence on individual suppliers and make the overall energy supply more stable and secure.

However, the implementation of such tariffs is not without risks. Higher costs for gas imports could increase energy prices in the EU in the short term and affect the competitiveness of European industry. Careful consideration must therefore be given to how future energy policy is shaped in order to both ensure security of supply and minimise economic disadvantages.

# Resource security for a future optimisation of the energy system

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Ensuring a smooth supply of the resources required for energy infrastructure is a key aspect of future development. Given the complexity of global supply chains and the increasing demand for energy-related materials, it is essential to develop mechanisms that ensure sustainable and efficient procurement. **How will you ensure that the future upgrading of the entire energy system is supported by sufficient resources?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How will you ensure that necessary alternatives remain available and accessible in the future despite existing restrictions? |

**Background**

Ensuring a smooth supply of the resources required for energy infrastructure is a key aspect of future development. Given the complexity of global supply chains and the increasing demand for energy-related materials, it is essential to develop mechanisms that ensure sustainable and efficient procurement. It must be ensured that the future upgrading of the entire energy system is supported by sufficient resources.

The increasing demand for raw materials such as rare earths, lithium and cobalt, which are needed for batteries and other energy storage technologies, requires careful planning and international co-operation. Dependence on a small number of suppliers and geopolitical risks can jeopardise the security of supply. It is therefore crucial to find alternatives to existing sources of supply and to increase recycling in order to diversify the raw material base.

The availability of raw materials that will soon be banned remains a key challenge. Raw materials such as certain metals and rare earths are currently essential for the production of technologies that are necessary for the energy transition. At the same time, we are faced with the task of replacing these raw materials with sustainable alternatives. A company must continue to build products that are necessary for the energy transition, even if these raw materials will soon no longer be accessible.

The question of how necessary alternatives can remain available and accessible in the future despite existing restrictions requires a holistic strategy. This should include political, economic and technological measures to ensure the resilience and sustainability of the energy system. Only in this way can the EU organise its energy supply in a stable and future-proof manner.

# Refinancing the development of European hydrogen networks

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe faces the challenge of driving forward its energy transition while reducing its dependence on fossil fuels. One promising solution that is becoming increasingly important is the integration of hydrogen as a clean energy carrier. The establishment of a European hydrogen network has enormous potential to steer the continent towards a more sustainable energy infrastructure. **How do you intend to organise the financing for the development of European hydrogen networks?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How do you plan to ensure that the costs of building the hydrogen networks are not transferred on to private customers? |

**Background**

The development of a comprehensive European hydrogen network is a central point for the energy transition and the decarbonisation of the economy. Hydrogen is considered a versatile energy carrier that can replace fossil fuels in various sectors, such as industry, transport and power generation. In order to fully utilise the potential of hydrogen, it is necessary to build a robust infrastructure that enables the production, storage, transport and distribution of hydrogen. Supportive financing is of crucial importance here.

The implementation of an efficient hydrogen economy must be comprehensively supported by the state. State subsidies, cheap loans and targeted investment incentives are necessary to cope with the high initial investments and accelerate the construction of hydrogen networks. State support reduces the risk for investors and makes projects economically viable. This not only promotes the development of hydrogen technology, but also creates jobs and strengthens European competitiveness in the global energy market.

It is also important that the costs of building hydrogen networks are not passed on to private customers. The energy transition should be socially fair, and burdening end consumers with high additional costs would lead to resistance and social injustice. Instead, the costs should be distributed fairly and borne by state support and industry participation. This ensures broad acceptance and support among the population for the transition to renewable energies. Only through a fair distribution of costs can the energy transition be implemented successfully and sustainably, without neglecting the social and economic needs of private customers.

**Future uses for hydrogen**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In recent years, hydrogen has proven to be a promising energy carrier that has the potential to play a key role in the decarbonization of various sectors. Hydrogen is gaining worldwide importance as a clean and versatile energy storage medium. **What specific areas of use do you see for hydrogen-use in the coming years?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What impact will hydrogen have on industries that are difficult to decarbonise and how much will their focus be on it? |

**Background**

Hydrogen plays an important role in the renewable energy transition. This is mainly because hydrogen only releases water and no harmful emissions when used in fuel cells, making it an attractive alternative to fossil fuels. In addition, hydrogen can be produced from renewable energy sources such as wind and solar energy, which contributes to a further reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and increases energy security. Thus, hydrogen appears to have great benefits in several areas. In the transport and industrial sectors in particular there are potentially diverse uses of hydrogen in the field of fuel and energy storage.

The steel, cement and chemical industries in particular have traditionally been heavily dependent on fossil fuels and have high CO2 emissions, which makes reducing their climate impact particularly challenging and costly. Hydrogen could serve as a replacement for carbon-intensive energy sources. If the use of hydrogen in these industries were to increase significantly in the coming years, an energy transition could be achieved quicker and more sustainable practices could be ensured.

In addition, technological advances and falling costs of renewable hydrogen are encouraging the implementation of hydrogen-based solutions. Companies could play an important role in the field if they are encouraged to invest more in hydrogen research and development. This could improve the efficiency and economics of hydrogen applications, which should accelerate the transformation of these sectors.

# Measures to convert the existing gas infrastructure into a hydrogen infrastructure

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Given the urgent need to accelerate the transition to more sustainable energy sources, the conversion of existing gas infrastructure to hydrogen infrastructure is the focus of numerous political and economic discussions. This transformation has the potential to make significant progress towards a low-carbon future by promoting the use of green hydrogen. **What measures do you plan to promote the legal and planning-safe conversion of existing gas infrastructure to hydrogen infrastructure?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The legal and secure conversion of the existing gas infrastructure into a hydrogen infrastructure is crucial for the successful implementation of the energy transition and the decarbonization of the European economy. Using existing gas networks to transport hydrogen offers numerous advantages, including cost savings, time savings and the minimization of environmental impacts compared to building a completely new infrastructure.

The European Gas Package, initiated by the EU Commission, aims to modernize the gas market and promote the integration of renewable gases such as hydrogen. A central component of this package is legal and regulatory support for the conversion of existing gas infrastructure. Clear legal requirements and planning instruments are intended to ensure that network operators can make the necessary adjustments quickly and efficiently.

The promotion of legal and planning-secure conversions is essential to create investment security for companies. Those must be able to trust that their investments in the conversion of the infrastructure are legally secured and profitable in the long term. Without this certainty, important projects could be delayed or not even started, which would significantly hinder the energy transition.

In addition, the repurposing of existing infrastructures helps to achieve climate goals by enabling the rapid and cost-efficient use of hydrogen as a renewable energy source. This is particularly important to achieve the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal, which aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

**Certification of renewable hydrogen**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The growing importance of green hydrogen as a key component in the global transition to clean energy has created an increased demand for clear certification standards. These standards are crucial to ensure the quality and sustainability of green hydrogen and to increase consumer and industry confidence. Given the diversity of production methods and the global nature of the hydrogen market, standardised certification is of great importance. **What are your concrete plans for green hydrogen certification?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How do you plan to ensure that the production of green hydrogen does not jeopardise the security of supply in third countries? |

**Background**

The transition to renewable energy has the potential to make significant steps towards a low-carbon future by promoting the use of green hydrogen. Green hydrogen, produced by electrolysis using renewable energy, plays a central role in the decarbonisation strategy of many countries and industries worldwide.

The resulting demand for hydrogen has created the need for clear certification standards. These standards are crucial to ensure the quality and sustainability of green hydrogen production and to strengthen the confidence of consumers and the industry. Harmonised certification standards would be beneficial to ensure transparency and comparability of the different production methods and their environmental footprint.

It would be important to consider transparency and traceability systems that can document the entire life cycle of hydrogen. Such systems strengthen confidence in the origin of green hydrogen and consolidate its role in the global energy market.

A key concern here is that the production of green hydrogen does not jeopardise security of supply in third countries. This can be ensured through international co-operation for the development of renewable energy capacities in these countries. Investments in renewable energy in third countries are crucial to ensure that sufficient energy is available both for local supply and to produce green hydrogen.

# Framework conditions for the development of a renewable hydrogen economy

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The transition to a hydrogen economy not only promises a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, but also a diversification of energy sources. Nevertheless, we face challenges that make it difficult to scale up this business model. **In your opinion, how can the framework conditions be designed to facilitate the launch of the renewable hydrogen economy and at the same time ensure a profitable business model?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Green hydrogen can replace fossil fuels in many sectors such as industry, transport and power generation. This helps to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and improve energy security. However, there are challenges such as high production costs and a lack of infrastructure. Extensive measures are needed to facilitate the launch of the renewable hydrogen economy while ensuring a profitable business model.

In order to achieve the aim of moving from small-scale production to a large-scale level, coordination and strategic measures are beneficial. A profitable business model incentivises investors to invest in innovative technologies and infrastructure projects, which is necessary to reduce production costs and increase efficiency. This promotes competition and innovation in the market and can lower prices for end consumers. In addition, an economically viable model provides planning certainty for companies wishing to use hydrogen, which is particularly important for energy-intensive industries that depend on reliable and cost-effective energy sources.

# Funding for the hydrogen boost

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Given the ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating a sustainable energy infrastructure, it is essential to provide targeted support and incentives for the hydrogen ramp-up. The upcoming support measures should not only drive the development and scaling of hydrogen technologies, but also enable the development of a robust hydrogen economy. **What new subsidies are you planning for the hydrogen scale-up?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Are there plans to introduce eligibility criteria to regulate the qualification for hydrogen production? |

**Background**

Green hydrogen plays a crucial role in the decarbonisation strategy as it can be used as a clean energy carrier in various sectors. In order to promote the development and scaling of hydrogen technologies, support measures would be needed that propose both financial support and policy and regulatory ideas. These should help to reduce production costs, expand infrastructure and increase market demand in order to build a robust hydrogen economy. The upcoming support measures should not only support technological development, but also strengthen the entire value chain of the hydrogen economy. Investments in research and development as well as financial support can contribute to this, as these can help companies to develop economically stable business models. In addition, regulatory measures could establish uniform standards and certifications for green hydrogen that facilitate international trade and cross-border cooperation.

Suitability criteria could successfully regulate qualification for hydrogen production. These criteria could ensure that only projects that meet sustainability, efficiency and innovation standards are subsidised. This would have a positive effect in ensuring that projects are also effective in the long term. Criteria should be developed in close co-operation with experts and stakeholders and regularly reviewed to ensure that they reflect the latest scientific findings and technical developments. In this way, transparency and trust can be created to ensure that funds are used effectively and in a targeted manner. In addition, the criteria would facilitate knowledge exchange to support the development of an efficient and sustainable hydrogen economy.

# Incorporation of quality criteria for the promotion of hydrogen

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The EU Commission already presented an ambitious hydrogen strategy aimed at scaling up hydrogen production and diversifying its areas of application. Discussions up to now have often focussed on technical aspects such as efficiency and environmental compatibility. However, the social dimension of the hydrogen sector is also increasingly gaining centre stage. **Are you planning to include quality criteria in the promotion of hydrogen that also take social sustainability into account?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The promotion of hydrogen as an energy source is an essential step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change. However, it is crucial to consider not only environmental but also social sustainability criteria when developing and implementing hydrogen technologies. Social sustainability aims to ensure that social and economic benefits are distributed equally and that social injustices are avoided.

In the hydrogen industry, this means ensuring that working conditions throughout the supply chain are humane and that there is no exploitation. In addition, access to the benefits of hydrogen technology should be guaranteed for all population groups, especially for disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Fair wages, labour protection and social security for workers are also key aspects.

In addition, the inclusion of social sustainability criteria can help to gain social acceptance and support for hydrogen projects. Acceptance among the population is crucial for the success of such projects, as resistance and conflicts often arise from social inequalities and injustices. In the long term, projects that take social sustainability into account contribute to a more stable and fairer society and thus support the overarching goals of sustainable development.

**Implementing the Energy Efficiency Directive**

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The implementation of the Energy Efficiency Directive is crucial to fulfil the EU's commitments in the fight against climate change. It is equally important that these measures are implemented without any additional bureaucratic hurdles. A key challenge is to modernise the existing infrastructure in order to sustainably reduce energy consumption and increase efficiency. **In your view, how can the EU support the refurbishment of existing infrastructure by providing funding?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The European Union's (EU) Energy Efficiency Directive[[4]](#footnote-4) is a key part of the EU's strategy to reduce energy consumption and promote sustainable energy practices. It aims to increase energy efficiency in various sectors, including industry, transport and, in particular, buildings, which are responsible for a significant proportion of energy consumption. The directive obliges member states to develop and implement national energy efficiency measures in order to achieve common goals.

Renovating the EU's existing infrastructure is crucial for the economic, environmental and social future of the region. Many existing infrastructures, such as roads, bridges, buildings and supply networks, are outdated and no longer meet today's requirements in terms of safety, efficiency and environmental compatibility. Comprehensive modernisation can help to extend the lifespan of this infrastructure, increase its efficiency and reduce its environmental impact.

In addition, infrastructure modernisation plays a key role in promoting innovation and competitiveness. By integrating modern technologies and sustainable materials, significant energy savings can be achieved and resilience to climate change can be improved. EU funding makes it possible to overcome financial barriers and even out regional differences so that all Member States can benefit from the advantages of modern infrastructure.

# Utilisation of agricultural and forestry residues and organic waste for the production of biomethane

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Austria has the potential to play a leading role in sustainable energy production, particularly through biomass such as biomethane or pyrolysis oil. These resources not only offer the possibility of producing renewable energy, but in the case of solid biomass also contribute to the promotion of forest ecosystems, which in return improves climate resilience. By fulfilling all the criteria for sustainable biomass, Austria has the potential to promote a green energy source that is not only environmentally friendly but also economically viable. Given the fact that pellet production is heavily dependent on market dynamics and quality standards, sustainable utilisation of the heat source would be crucial for the development of this sector. **To what extent do you plan to promote the use of forestry residues for the production of biomethane?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * To what extent do you plan to promote the utilisation of the potential of agricultural residues and organic waste from households, trade and the food industry for the production of biomethane? |

**Background**

Utilising forestry residues to produce biomethane offers a sustainable way of accessing renewable energy sources and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Forestry residues, such as wood waste, sawdust and bark, are abundant and often unutilised, making their potential for energy production significant. By fermenting these materials, biomethane can be produced, a renewable gas that can serve as an environmentally friendly substitute for natural gas. This contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and supports the EU's Green Deal targets.

In addition to forestry residues, agricultural residues and organic waste from households, trade and the food industry are also valuable resources for biomethane production. Utilising this potential is particularly important for two main reasons: reducing waste and promoting the circular economy. The fermentation of organic waste and agricultural residues reduces the amount of waste ending up in landfills and thus reduces the associated environmental impact, such as methane emissions from landfills. In addition, the conversion of waste into energy promotes the principle of the circular economy by reusing waste products and converting them into valuable resources. This contributes to the creation of a more sustainable and resource-efficient energy system and at the same time supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the conservation of fossil resources.

# Binding objectives for renewable gases

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| The issue of binding targets for renewable gases is of crucial importance in the efforts to drive forward the transition to a sustainable energy supply. The EU Commission in particular faces the challenge of setting clear and realisable targets for various forms of renewable gases. Various sources such as biomethane, hydrogen and synthetic gas are being considered, each of which can be produced from renewable energy resources. **To what extent are you considering binding targets in connection with renewable gases?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * What incentives should be put in place to secure the potential already available in the long term? |

**Background**

The European Union's REPowerEU plan[[5]](#footnote-5)aims to increase biomethane production to 35 billion cubic metres by 2030. Binding targets for renewable gases are crucial to create a clear framework for investment and development. They promote the trust of investors, create market stability and ensure that the necessary political and financial resources are mobilised to further develop the infrastructure and technologies for the production of biomethane. These binding targets are essential in order to fully utilise the potential already available and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

In addition to binding targets, targeted incentives are required to ensure that the potential is secured in the long term. Support programmes, tax benefits and subsidies can reduce the initial costs and economic risks for producers and investors. Long-term contracts and guaranteed purchase prices also play an important role in accelerating the expansion of biomethane production. Such measures are crucial to increase the scalability and competitiveness of renewable gases, make a significant contribution to energy supply and achieve the EU's climate targets. By pursuing these strategies, the EU can secure a more sustainable and resilient energy future.

# Ensuring a structured, socially responsible and safe shutdown of the gas distribution network

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In light of the urgent need to switch to sustainable energy sources, the challenge of restructuring the gas distribution network and converting private residential areas to climate-neutral heating systems is imminent. This requires careful planning and consideration of social and safety aspects. The transition can have a significant impact on many people's daily lives and therefore requires a well thought out strategy that takes into account their needs and safety requirements. It is crucial to develop an approach that enables a smooth transition while taking social and safety concerns seriously. **How do you intend to ensure such a structured, socially and safety-responsible shutdown of the gas distribution network and the switch to climate-neutral heating systems in the private residential sector?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * How can it be guaranteed that tenants are adequately protected during this implementation? |

**Background**

The European Union's gas package presented in December 2021 includes comprehensive measures to decarbonise the gas sector and promote renewable gases. The central elements include the promotion of biomethane and hydrogen, the improvement of the infrastructure and the introduction of new market rules. As part of this package, it was also decided to close down the gas distribution network if a clear gas phase-out path is defined in the new network development plans to be drawn up by distribution network operators at local level.

A structured, socially responsible and safe shutdown of the gas distribution network and the switch to climate-neutral heating systems in the private residential sector are of great importance. These measures are crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving the EU's climate targets. Switching to renewable heating systems contributes to the long-term reduction of energy consumption and supports the development of a sustainable and resilient energy supply.

At the same time, it must be ensured that tenants are adequately protected in this process. A fair distribution of costs is essential to avoid social injustice and ensure that the burdens of the transition are not passed on to tenants unilaterally. Targeted political measures and support are needed to create affordable solutions while maintaining the quality of housing.

# Measures to support energy communities

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| In recent years, the EU has stepped up its efforts to promote renewable energies and reduce CO2 emissions. Energy communities have come into the spotlight as a promising way to decentralise and democratise the energy market. Despite their potential, energy communities face various challenges, including regulatory and financial barriers. **How do you plan to take concrete measures to support energy communities and ensure that they can be practically implemented?** |
| **Further questions** |
| * Do you intend to allow participation in renewable energy communities also for large companies of non-profit housing associations and public companies in order to fully utilise the potential of decentralised and decarbonised energy supply? |

**Background**

Energy communities play a key role in promoting decentralised energy production and strengthening local energy networks. They enable citizens, local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders to come together to realise renewable energy projects. These communities contribute to the democratisation of energy supplies by putting the participation and control of energy production in the hands of local communities. In order to realise the full potential of energy communities, it is important to take targeted measures to support their establishment and operation and to ensure that the legal and regulatory framework encourages their practical implementation.

The authorisation of renewable energy communities also for large , non-profit housing and public companies is particularly important. These actors have the necessary resources and organisational capacity to implement large-scale projects that can contribute significantly to the energy transition. Another important aspect is that the integration of non-profit housing companies into renewable energy communities would not have a market-distorting effect. Rather, through their participation, these companies could help to ensure that the benefits of favourable renewable energy projects also benefit disadvantaged population groups.

# Integrating the Balkan region to improve European security of supply

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe is facing the challenge of ensuring its energy security, especially in the face of geopolitical tensions and growing demand. One promising way to strengthen this security is to integrate the Balkans into the European energy network. The region has considerable resources and potential that needs to be utilised in order to reduce dependence on external energy sources and increase security of supply. **Would you be interested in improving European security of supply by integrating the Balkans into the European energy network?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

The integration of the Balkans into the European energy network is crucial to strengthen European security of supply. The Balkans are strategically important, both as a transit route for energy and as a potential producer of renewable energy such as wind, solar and hydropower. Several advantages can be realised by integrating the Balkan countries.

Firstly, the integration reduces Europe's energy dependence on external suppliers. The Balkans have significant renewable energy sources which can contribute to regional and European energy supply. This increases resilience to geopolitical risks and market disruptions.

Secondly, integration enables a more efficient use of existing infrastructure and the development of new projects that improve regional energy efficiency and stability. The expansion of cross-border interconnectors and the harmonisation of energy markets optimise electricity flows and avoid shortages, which in turn reduces the risk of supply disruptions.

Thirdly, integration promotes economic growth and political stability in the Balkan countries. The access to a stable and diversified energy market attracts investments, creates jobs and supports the economic development of the region, which contributes to political stability.

# Preserving Europe's Transformer Manufacturing Capacity by implementing current Eco-Design Regulations

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| Europe’s grid technology industry, crucial for achieving EU climate goals, faces significant threats from proposed changes to the Eco-Design Regulation. The proposal on the Eco-Design Regulation foresees stricter Tier 3 requirements for losses, which would increase material needs and costs, and the introduction of amorphous core transformers, which would disrupt manufacturing and increase dependency on non-EU suppliers. **Do you plan to focus on implementing current regulations and avoid new ones that would harm manufacturing capacity and strategic sovereignty?** |
| **Further questions** |
| - |

**Background**

Europe’s grid technology industry provides crucial net-zero technologies essential for achieving EU climate goals, as acknowledged in the Net-Zero Industry Act and the Grid Action Plan.

Two main concerns are raised. First, the proposal to introduce stricter Tier 3 requirements for losses would demand significantly more materials like copper and steel, which are already in short supply. A 10% reduction in losses (less than 0.1% improved efficiency) would increase material needs by 15% to 44% and costs by 25% to 51%, negatively impacting the supply chain and reducing Europe’s manufacturing output.

Second, the requirement for amorphous core transformers, which can lower losses but are more complex to produce, would disrupt European manufacturing and transformer availability. There are no amorphous core transformer manufacturers in the EU, increasing external dependency and weakening strategic sovereignty. This would affect Europe’s transformer manufacturers, including small and medium-sized producers, and the steel supply chain, with limited global suppliers further impacting delivery times.

Support is needed to ensure Europe creates the right framework for its net-zero industry without new regulations that reduce transformer manufacturing capacity. Given current challenges addressed in the Action Plan for Grids, the Commission should focus on implementing the current Ecodesign regulation and ensuring proper market surveillance to prevent the import of non-compliant transformers. This support will help bolster Europe’s transformer manufacturing industry, facilitate the energy transition, and strengthen strategic sovereignty.

1. EU-Parliament and Council: Official Journal of the EU 31.10.2023 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302413> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. EU-Parliament and Council: Official Journal of the EU 26.6.2019 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1024> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Guideline for qualification and counselling funding from the Province of Carinthia as part of the Just Transition Fund (JTF) 13.12.2023 <file:///C:/Users/KAG/Downloads/JTF-%20Richtlinie%20Version%2020240207.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/1791 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL 13 September 2023 on energy efficiency and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L1791> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. REGULATION (EU) 2023/435 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 February 2023 amending Regulation (EU) 2021/241 as regards REPowerEU chapters in the recovery and resilience plans and amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) 2021/1060 and (EU) 2021/1755 and Directive 2003/87/EG; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L:2023:063:FULL&from=EN> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)