

ANNEX II – A PACT FOR ENGAGEMENT

Ensuring early, regular and meaningful stakeholder engagement in grid development

The cornerstone of our energy transition and economic recovery will be an electricity system to which renewable energy will contribute to around half of the generation in 2030 and which will be fully decarbonised well before 2050. We will be deploying renewable energy capacity at a pace that is many times faster than today which will require an integrated and interconnected European infrastructure. Accelerating the development of electricity grids in parallel with the massive scale-up of renewable energies is thus key to Europe's spearheading its energy security and climate ambitions.

None of this can be achieved in isolation or at the expense of the environmental protection of our most vulnerable habitats. The revised TEN-E Regulation will continue to serve as a guiding framework for identifying and building Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) if and where needed to connect demand and supply across Europe. Decision-making processes, whether at the selection stage for the PCI label or later on, during the ground routing and construction, have been strengthened to be more inclusive, more transparent and accountable towards the views and needs of those communities affected by the construction. Whilst best practices are promoted and shared amongst project promoters, delays in grid development at both transmission and distribution level still occur due to lack of acceptance by communities affected by energy infrastructure projects. Quantifying and monetising the benefits of successful stakeholder engagement and avoidance of delays can be challenging in a complex regulatory framework for building infrastructure that crosses several jurisdictions and competences. There is a need to reinforce the engagement framework towards the public into a regular and meaningful collective effort that harnesses trust and participation in grid development, softens the impact on communities and nature, redistributes benefits and enhances nature protection.

In its Communication 'Grids, the missing link: An EU Action Plan for Grids', the Commission announces the launch of a *Pact for Engagement to ensure early, regular and meaningful stakeholder engagement in grid development*, together with Member States, ACER and national regulatory authorities, ENTSO-E and transmission system operators, EU DSO Entity and distribution system operators, project promoters and civil society, calling for:

1. Designing and carrying out national and European communication efforts on the key role of transmission and distribution grids as enablers of the energy transition;
2. A joint cooperation effort between national and local authorities in ensuring effective implementation of permitting provisions for grid and renewable energy projects and best practices adopted and/or recommended at local, national and EU level;
3. A commitment from Member States to strengthen their involvement in the regional cooperation fora such as the established High-Level Groups in order to accelerate the implementation of PCIs, prioritising the most mature and concrete ones. This work will involve transmission system operators and project promoters, as well as national regulators and stakeholders;
4. An open dialogue between ministries, regulatory authorities and transmission and distribution system operators on adequate regulatory support for early, regular and

meaningful stakeholder engagement activities on the basis of dedicated chapters on stakeholder engagement accompanying grid investment plans;

5. Providing for the necessary organisational conditions among all parties involved in permitting or stakeholder engagement processes aligned with the significant needs for grid deployment.

The Commission will work closely with all parties adhering to the Pact for Engagement within appropriate grid-related cooperation fora, such as the PCI Energy Days, the Energy Infrastructure Forum (Copenhagen Forum) and the National Competent Authorities' Platform (NCA Platform) in order to support the implementation of the four pillars of the Pact. Within these fora, the Commission will also monitor the progress achieved by these initiatives, as well as promote the exchange of practices inspiring further efforts from all parties in developing and sustaining engagement processes that rise up to the EU's grid challenge.

The Commission invites Member States, national regulatory authorities, transmission and distribution system operators, project promoters and civil society to join the *Pact for Engagement* and contribute through their collective actions to an enabling framework for *early, regular and meaningful stakeholder engagement in grid development*.