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EU energy infrastructure

Backward-looking Commission proposals skewed in favour of gas pipes over renewable energy needs

The European Commission today presented legislative proposals on energy infrastructure, including financing rules in the context of the next EU budgetary period (1). While the Greens welcome that the Commission has put the question of energy infrastructure on the agenda, the group expressed concern that the proposals are skewed in favour of infrastructure for fossil fuels over renewable energies in terms of financial support and selection criteria, as well as over the transparency of the procedure. Commenting on the proposals, Green energy spokesperson **Claude Turmes** said:

"These proposals are seriously skewed in favour of gas pipe projects, like Nabucco, rather than future-oriented renewable energy infrastructure needs. The choices and investments we make in trans-European energy infrastructure will be crucial for determining the shape of our future energy market. It is therefore seriously regrettable that the Commission is looking backwards for our energy future by prioritising infrastructure for fossil fuels, rather than infrastructure that will help shift towards a renewables-based economy.

"The distortion in favour of gas is particularly evident in the proposed priority corridors, with 4 priority corridors related to gas and only one entirely devoted to renewable energy transmission. There are also real concerns with the proposed proportion of co-financing from EU funds for big gas pipeline projects: up to 80% for projects like Nabucco. In spite of the fact that the Commission itself has stated that over 70% of the financing needs lie in the field of the electricity grid, these proposals seriously favour the development of gas pipes and other fossil fuel infrastructure.

"Thankfully, the final Commission proposals underline the need to respect EU environment legislation with infrastructure projects. Earlier drafts had included exemptions for energy infrastructure projects from EU environmental rules but this approach was finally not included. It must be made crystal clear that energy infrastructure projects do not undermine environmental protection and EU legislation in this regard. We also welcome the proposals on speeding up decision-making for infrastructure authorisations, while giving citizens more right for participation and access to information."

(1) The European Commission adopted proposals for a regulation on energy infrastructure and a regulation establishing the Connecting Europe Facility in the context of the new multiannual financial framework (2014 - 2020).

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Claude Turmes

Member

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