

SESSION PROPOSAL FOR THE

4TH EU MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES WEEK 24-28 APRIL 2023

HOW TO ACCELERATE NATURAL GAS PHASE OUT IN EUROPE – FIRST HAND EXPERIENCES AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES FROM EUROPEAN MACRO-REGIONS

CHALLENGE ADDRESSED BY THE SESSION

Europe's sustainable energy policy has been dramatically impacted by the Russian-Ukrainian war and its consequences on the European energy systems, which seriously affected all 4 macro-regions. Although the various interventions in 2022 (REPowerEU, emergency Council regulations, set of sanctions) paved the way for an accelerated clean energy transition and enhanced market resilience, there is clearly no one-fits-all solution on a longer term, as European countries have great differences in their energy systems, national resources, infrastructures, economic development, etc. Depending on these conditions and the share of the Russian gas import, countries in all 4 macro-regions elaborated their strategies and approaches to increase their energy sovereignty. After surviving the first winter with serious reductions, it is time to share and discuss experiences on visions how to decarbonize any of the sectors without significant future shares of natural gas and how to prepare for the upcoming years.

CONCEPT AND FOCUS

The objective of the session is to share macro-regions' experiences so far handling the energy crisis and future potential pathways for reducing their dependence on the Russian gas import while still adhering to the European Green Deal. It also aims to present alternative approaches from the different macro-regions on demand reduction and supply side diversification measures, their impacts so far, as well as some good examples on how to diversify the energy supply of the region's countries, accelerate the use of the untapped renewable and other alternative energy sources.

Target groups addressed are policy makers, regulators, industry representatives, system operators at EU, national and regional levels, as well as the wider public, as vulnerable consumers are the suffering targets of this geopolitical crisis.

The session will combine the discussion of natural gas related high-level policy options, the economics of potential sectoral measures and on-the-ground implementation experiences from various sectors, covering 3 macro-regions: EUSDR, EUSALP and EUSAIR. Keynotes will set the scene by presenting state-of-art and future potential pathways. In the panel discussion invited key experts and representatives of the MRSs will cover policy challenges and best practices. The audience will complement the discussion with interactive polls.

ORGANIZER:

Priority Area 2 (Sustainable Energy) of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region (EUSDR-PA2) <https://energy.danube-region.eu/>

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is one of the EU's macro-regional strategies. The territory stretches from the Black Forest to the Black Sea and encompasses 9 EU Member States (AT, BG, HR, CZ, D, HU, RO, SK, SI), 3 Accession Countries (BiH, MNG, SRB) and 2 Neighbouring Countries (UA, MD). The Priority Area 2 (Sustainable Energy) coordinates regional energy policies in various topics (especially switching from fossils, renewables, energy efficiency, energy storage) and promotes new and innovative low-carbon technologies in order to exploit the full potential of an integrated energy market in the region. PA2 has extensive networks within the region and a strong cooperation with other macro-regional strategies that ensures a profound dissemination.

AGENDA

Welcome and topic introduction (5 min)

Supply side and regulatory measures/ The role of natural gas in the Danube Region – main challenges for decarbonisation (15 min)

Ms Borbála Tóth, Senior Research Associate, Regional Centre for Energy Policy Research (REKK) (confirmed)

A fact-based assessment of the current state of play on Russian gas dependency and an estimate of the short-, mid-, and long-term cost curve of substitution of Russian gas on a sectoral and country basis, complemented by a modelling based assessment of the welfare change of the region for selected scenarios.

Demand side reduction measures in the EU (15 min)

Representative of Bruegel – Ben McWilliams, Energy and climate consultant (Bruegel) (confirmed)

Policy options to reduce or completely phase out Russian gas are difficult and costly decisions. The keynote will address the European demand disruption experience of the last year, demand reduction efforts in an international context, their feasibility and political support on various levels.

Online poll with the audience (5 min)

Panel discussion – How can policies serve the goals of energy independence and decarbonisation (50 min)

Moderated Borbála Tóth (REKK)

The diverse panel includes case studies from the Danube, Alpine and the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions, covering the main sectors (power, heating, industry), as well as different alternative sources (e.g. hydrogen) and policy approaches which serve good examples for clean energy solutions creating permanent gas savings.

Case studies presented in the panel discussion:

- The role of hydrogen in gas phase out – good examples from the Alpine MRS – (Etienne Viénot, AURA-EE, EUSALP AG9 co-leader) (confirmed)
- The decarbonisation of the heating sector in the Danube Region – Annamária Nádor (EUSDR-PA2 Sustainable Energy) (confirmed)
- “The EUSAIR Master Plan on Energy Networks for the Adriatic-Ionian Region: Towards the Energy Transition” – (Davide Tabarelli, President, Nomisma Energia Srl, Italy, EUSAIR Pillar 2 – Sub-Group on Energy Networks) (confirmed)
- The decarbonisation of the power sector, diversification of gas sources - (Fabio Tambone, Director of External International Relations of ARERA, Italy) (confirmed)

- EU policy perspective (András Hujber, DG Energy) (confirmed)

Q&A with the audience & Closing remarks (10 min)