

Energy Council lays out bold steps needed for future electricity grid

30-05-2024 – CurrENT welcomes the Energy Council conclusions on Advancing Sustainable Electricity Grid Infrastructure adopted today under the leadership of the Belgian Presidency. The call for long-term and holistic electricity grid infrastructure planning, which considers national and European decarbonization targets, is an important signal for the next Commission mandate.

CurrENT welcomes the acknowledgement of the Council on the need for long-term electricity grid infrastructure planning at European level looking 20 years into the future, while taking into account national and European decarbonization targets. The Council also stresses that a holistic and integrated planning should be ensured *“across all energy carriers in view of future energy needs, applying the energy efficiency first principle, ensuring coordination between transmission and distribution levels, and taking into account the importance for the energy sector to be predominantly free of fossil fuels well ahead of 2050 and the importance of aiming to achieve a fully or predominantly decarbonised global power system in the 2030s, and the ramp up of electricity infrastructure.”*

CurrENT also welcomes the recognition by the Council of the importance of an effective and efficient use of the electricity grid infrastructure, including through flexibility and other non-wire solutions. The Council views these factors as essential in achieving a fully interconnected, integrated and synchronised European power system and in mitigating the system costs borne by households and companies.

CurrENT furthermore welcomes the acknowledgement by the Council that *“in order to develop offshore energy production in a cost-effective manner that maximises overall benefits at European level, it becomes increasingly relevant in some sea-basins to work beyond radial connections towards a hybrid meshed grid connected to different Member States.”*

In consideration of the above, CurrENT supports the request for the Commission to create a stronger system that increases transparency, traceability, and independent oversight in the entire process of planning and developing the transmission grid. This should involve improving the current governance structure by establishing a European grid needs assessment and planning that aligns with EU climate and energy goals and

decarbonization objectives. Additionally, CurrENT supports the proposal that the above-mentioned independent oversight should lead to the creation of a forecasting tool for grid and investment needs to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050, making network development easier. The call on the European Investment Bank to “further strengthen financing and de-risking initiatives and tools to support additional electricity grid expansion and modernisation” is welcomed.

While expressing its appreciation for these conclusions, CurrENT believes that the implementation of these actions is required in order to effectively move some step forwards the realization of an interconnected and integrated European electricity network. It is important that these points do not remain mere statements but translate into concrete actions to ensure the realization of these ambitious goals.