

Concept Note

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Workshop on “Prospects for Energy Networks, Hydrogen Market, and Offshore Renewable Development: Challenges and Solutions for the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion”

Date: 12th March 2025

Venue: National Gallery, 50 Vasileos Konstantinou str., 116 34, Athens

Introduction

The Adriatic-Ionian region stands at a pivotal moment in its energy transition, facing both substantial challenges and transformative opportunities. The region’s energy dynamics are influenced by the pressing need to bolster energy security, advance decarbonization efforts, and promote sustainable economic development. Against this backdrop, the Hellenic Presidency of EUSAIR is convening a specialized workshop to delve into critical energy themes: the expansion of electricity networks, the evolution of the hydrogen market, and the untapped potential of offshore renewable energy. These focus areas resonate with broader EU energy objectives, regional strategic frameworks, and the updated EUSAIR Action Plan, which underscores the importance of energy security, sustainability, and deeper integration across South East Europe.

The workshop will also integrate insights and recommendations from recent high-level analyses that outline a forward-looking vision for Europe’s energy future. These analyses stress the necessity of a unified approach to energy across Europe, the rapid scaling of renewable energy deployment, and the development of a robust electricity grid infrastructure alongside hydrogen networks to ensure both energy security and decarbonization. They highlight the critical role of cross-border energy infrastructure, including enhanced interconnections and grid modernization, the alignment of regulatory frameworks, and targeted investments in cutting-edge technologies to drive the energy transition.

Additionally, the workshop will align with the strategic priorities shaping the European energy agenda, which emphasize the European Green Deal, energy security, and digital transformation. These priorities focus on achieving climate neutrality by 2050, accelerating the adoption of renewable energy sources, and strengthening regional collaboration to enhance energy resilience. Together, these elements provide a solid foundation for fostering sustainable energy cooperation and integration across the Adriatic-Ionian region, ensuring it remains at the forefront of Europe’s energy transition.

Workshop Objectives

The primary objectives of the workshop are:

- **To assess the current status of electricity, gas, and hydrogen networks** in the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion, emphasizing the need for enhanced international interconnections and infrastructure development.
- **To explore the prospects for a hydrogen market and hydrogen network development** in the region, focusing on the potential of hydrogen corridors and interconnections between the Western Balkans and other European countries.
- **To examine the potential for offshore renewable energy (RES)** in the Adriatic-Ionian region, discussing frameworks for interregional cooperation to harness offshore wind and marine energy resources effectively.
- **To foster dialogue and collaboration** between stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices in energy system integration and development.

Thematic Focus Areas

- **Grid Development and Electricity Storage:**
This session will explore the prospects for grid development and integration of energy storage solutions across the region, identifying gaps in infrastructure and discussing the steps required to enhance energy security and reliability through better international interconnections.
- **Hydrogen Market and Networks:**
The development of hydrogen as an energy carrier will be central to the energy transition in South East Europe. This panel will focus on the outlook of the hydrogen market development, the potential for cross-border hydrogen networks, and opportunities for cooperation in building hydrogen value chains in the Adriatic-Ionian region.
- **Offshore Renewable Energy Potential:**
Offshore wind and marine energy offer considerable untapped resources. This session will examine the region's offshore RES potential, presenting recent studies on offshore wind and exploring possibilities for interregional and transnational cooperation to promote sustainable energy solutions and the blue economy.

Expected Outcomes

- A clearer understanding of the current state of energy infrastructure and the key priorities for cross-border cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion.
- Identification of challenges and solutions related to electricity network development, hydrogen market growth, and offshore renewable energy deployment.
- Strengthened relationships between key stakeholders, fostering collaborative approaches to energy transition and blue economy development.
- Concrete proposals for future regional actions and projects, including the promotion of international interconnections and the development of hydrogen corridors.
- Recommendations to enhance the security of energy supply in the region by strengthening and promoting cross-border interconnections.

Target Audience

- **Government representatives** and policy-makers from the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion countries, including Ministries of Energy, Environment, and Finance.
- **Regulatory authorities** overseeing energy markets and infrastructure.
- **Industry leaders and companies** engaged in the energy sector, including transmission system operators (TSOs), renewable energy developers, and energy storage experts.
- **Research institutions and academic experts** specializing in energy systems, hydrogen technologies, and offshore renewable energy.
- **International organizations** and EU institutions working on energy integration, regional cooperation, and sustainability.

Agenda Overview

09:30 – 10:00: Welcome and Opening Speeches

- Keynote speakers will set the stage by highlighting the importance of regional cooperation in addressing energy challenges and the role of the Adriatic-Ionian region in Europe's energy future.

10:00 – 11:30: Panel Discussion 1 – Prospects for Grid Development and Electricity Storage

- Experts will discuss the technical, regulatory, and policy challenges associated with grid development, electricity storage, and international interconnections.

12:00 -13:00: Panel Discussion 2 - Strategic Planning for Energy Infrastructure

- This session will discuss strategic planning for cross-border energy infrastructure in the region and identify key infrastructure needs in the course of overcoming bottlenecks and accelerating the energy transition.

13:00 – 14:00: Panel Discussion 3 – Prospects for Hydrogen Market Development

- The panel will address the potential for hydrogen as a key component of the region's energy transition, with insights into infrastructure needs, funding opportunities, and interconnection strategies.

15:00 – 16:15: Panel Discussion 4 – Harnessing Offshore Renewable Energy Potential

- Stakeholders will examine offshore wind and marine energy potential, identifying pathways for regional cooperation and sustainable development of the blue economy.

16:15 – 16:30: Funding opportunities for EUSAIR-relevant projects in the field of energy

- Experts will present relevant investment priorities on Energy under Connecting Europe Facility – Energy, the European Structural and Investment Funds, and Interreg and IPA III programmes.

16:30 – 17:30: Conclusions

- Closing remarks will summarize key takeaways and outline the next steps for continued collaboration and action in the region.

Conclusion

The workshop will provide an invaluable platform for dialogue, exchange, and cooperation among key players in the energy sector within the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion. It aims to foster a deeper understanding of the region's energy challenges and the potential for collective action in developing sustainable energy solutions. With the increasing urgency of the energy transition, this workshop will serve as an important step toward creating more integrated and resilient energy networks in South East Europe.