

Green Hydrogen for a competitive, resilient and autonomous Europe

Joint Position of the National Hydrogen Associations and Clusters of Germany, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden for the EU legislative term 2024-2029

The signatories recognize the significant progress made by the von der Leyen Commission in cooperation with the European Parliament and the member states in the past legislative term towards the ramp-up of a green hydrogen market in Europe. Numerous hydrogen projects are being planned all over the continent and are thus helping to ensure that Europe has the sustainable, resilient and secure energy supply it will need in the future in order to stand strong and when facing challenging socio-economic conditions and the fragile global situation.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 continues to this day and has shaped the face of the European continent like no other event since the end of the second World War. The consequences for the security architecture and the economic model are severe. An economy that was largely dependent on Russian commodities had to make adjustments within a very short space of time. Energy price shocks, inflation and fear of shortages were the consequences. Energy prices remain higher today than before the crisis.

The European Commission reacted rightly with its **RePowerEU programme** and emphasized the role of green hydrogen in the transition to a sustainable and resilient energy supply. The EU has a target of **10 million tons of domestic renewable hydrogen production and 10 million tons of renewable hydrogen imports by 2030**.

To achieve these targets in the next EU election period, member states, the EU Parliament and the European Commission must therefore act over the next five years in order to achieve this goal, in coherence with the geostrategic importance of the green hydrogen market.

The hydrogen economy in Europe, in conjunction with renewable power from wind and solar, will make it possible to guarantee a crisis-proof, sustainable and affordable energy system in Europe. The establishment of a green European hydrogen union offers the opportunity

- to **strengthen geopolitical independence** through a resilient, secure, economic and sustainable intra-European renewable energy supply;
- to **economically underpin the European idea** by sharing Europe's renewable energy potential through the exchange of green hydrogen via pipeline infrastructures within a resilient, secure, economic and sustainable internal European renewable energy and hydrogen market;
- to develop Europe into a **leading global supplier of green hydrogen technology** through the consistent and ambitious political design of regulatory guidelines and measures;
- **strengthen European innovation and competitiveness**, create up to 5 million new jobs and preserve the economic fabric, prosperity and social justice in the EU.
- to **tackle climate change** by delivering clean energy and combatting carbon emissions by creating incentives that boost hydrogen demand.

The following keypoints should therefore be included in the development of the Strategic Agenda for the EU over the next five years:

Hydrogen is in the EU's geostrategic interest

- The European ramp-up of hydrogen technology strengthens European competitiveness, the joint achievement of climate targets, strategic resilience and autonomy and is therefore in the overriding public interest and public security.
- An ambitious hydrogen production capacity within the EU strengthens local value chains, the strategic autonomy of the EU, makes renewable energy storable and thus improves resilience and risk management in an increasingly unpredictable political context.
- An import strategy for hydrogen should take these considerations into account. Value chains should be kept in Europe as much as possible. Partnering countries for the trade of hydrogen should also be selected along the criteria of geopolitical stability. Pipeline-based import routes for hydrogen within the European continent are to be preferred as they can best guarantee the achievement of these goals. Overall, resilience and diversification of imports is crucial. European interconnections are key for strategic resilience, market integration and cost reductions for final users.

Hydrogen is important for the competitiveness of the EU

- With its supply of renewable energies and its widely meshed pipeline infrastructure, Europe is predestined for the development of a European green hydrogen economy. Hydrogen is the key to a successful economic energy transition, as it is the best suited way to enable large-scale seasonal storage and European distribution of renewable energy at the same time.
- The development of a European hydrogen economy and industry also offers the opportunity to create millions of highly skilled industrial jobs across the EU.
- A European hydrogen market economy across all sectors gives the EU resilience in the face of increasing global competition. Promoting the green hydrogen economy will open the market to new and diverse participants, routes and supplies, in effect shifting the balance of power to those countries who have green hydrogen. As the energy map changes, historically energy-poor regions such as Europe could become key leaders in the global hydrogen economy in which hydrogen becomes a key commodity on the worldwide energy markets.
- Europe could move on from the current position of being a net importer of energy, take the lead in clean hydrogen trade and as a result position the euro to be the global currency benchmark. It is therefore vital that current EU hydrogen policies are amplified, that demand in member states is stimulated and that all transactions are carried out in euros.
- The implementation of the Net Zero Industry Act offers the opportunity to enable European manufacturers of innovative hydrogen technologies to grow steadily and to disseminate their technologies within the EU and beyond. The coming years must be used to protect European manufacturers against any unfair competition-distorting practices.

Hydrogen strengthens the EU's resilience

- The transition of the European energy system away from imported fossil energy supplies towards a renewable, diversified and resilient energy supply using hydrogen strengthens Europe's resilience in the world. This also contributes to consolidating the EU's position as an international player as well as its attractiveness for international investment.
- It is essential to leverage the potential to strengthen the European domestic supply of critical raw materials. The next five years must therefore also be dedicated to the implementation of the Critical Raw Materials Act. Progress made by member states in terms of a circular economy (recycling and reuse of raw materials) have to be rewarded, as well as the support of domestic extraction and the diversification of supply chains.
- Linking the hydrogen economy with the European electricity system offers the potential to make the electricity supply more resilient and stable. Converting hydrogen back into electricity reduces the use of fossil resources, while the intermediate storage of renewable energies using hydrogen in underground caverns offers the opportunity to maintain a certain level of supply security at all times, even in the face of hybrid attacks aimed at the energy infrastructure. The security of critical energy infrastructure must be reinforced both physically and in cyberspace.
- Developing hydrogen technology in the EU not only has the potential to increase energy resilience, but also to efficiently tackle the challenges of circular economy and protecting water resources when producing hydrogen in the EU. By setting high standards, the EU can become a role model in this regard.

The hydrogen ramp-up will require financial support in the coming years

- For the reasons outlined above, the production of green hydrogen must be financially stimulated in the coming years. The European Hydrogen Bank and the incoming bids have shown the existing potential all over Europe. Promotion of domestic hydrogen supply should therefore be reinforced, but also sustained by the member states as part of the possibilities given by the "Auctions-as-a-service" principle.
- The development of a green European hydrogen union must be promoted through incentives for the participating member states to exchange renewable gases and liquids of non-biological origin produced in the EU. In particular, member states must be enabled to achieve their own renewable energy targets by cooperating with renewable energy projects in other EU member States and importing the energy produced as electrons or molecules on balance.
- The establishment of the STEP platform to pool existing funding opportunities was a first step towards a coherent funding strategy to strengthen the production of critical technologies in the EU. The development of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework from 2027 on should take up these structures and further strengthen them. The greatest possible coherence in the alignment of funding to strengthen Europe's resilience is needed in the coming years.

The undersigned advocate for the inclusion of securing a weather-independent and reliable renewable energy supply by establishing a green European hydrogen union in the European Union's strategic agenda for the years 2024 to 2029.

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