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European Grids Package: latest developments in Council and Parliament

Work on the Grids Package is progressing in the Council under the Cyprus Presidency. Revised compromise texts on the TEN-E Regulation and the directives dealing with permit-granting procedures were published on 6 March. Member States want the Commission to use implementing acts as legal basis which requires their participation in designing the top-down planning scenario. For permit-granting procedures, countries don't want to allow tacit approval powers by authorities "where the applicant is entitled to compensation if the competent authority does not comply with the applicable deadline." The revised texts will be discussed at the Energy Council on 16 March and another new version is planned before Easter, with the aim of reaching a general approach among Member States in June.

In the European Parliament, work on the two legislative files is also advancing in the ITRE Committee. Rapporteur Tsvetelina Penkova (S&D) aims to present her draft report on the TEN-E revision on 23 April, while Niels Fuglsang (S&D) plans to publish the draft report on the permitting framework on 15 April. Committee discussions are expected to start in early May, with amendments to follow in May-June; a committee vote is foreseen for 10 September, ahead of a possible plenary vote in October.

CEDEC is preparing recommendations for the legislative files of the Grids Package with input from Working Group Smart Grids. Recommendations will be shared with institutions and will serve as a basis for amendment proposals and advocacy efforts on the Package.

Spotlight on: Citizens Energy Package

The European Commission finally published the Citizens Energy Package on 10 March, setting out how it wants to make the energy transition more tangible for households through lower bills, stronger consumer protection, tackling energy poverty and better practical implementation of existing EU rules. Across these areas, it highlights electrification, flexibility, clearer billing and contracts, faster supplier switching, and more targeted support for vulnerable consumers.

The package links affordability to better retail offers, flexibility and smarter consumer participation, while also pointing to financing models that could improve access to clean and energy-efficient technologies. It places particular emphasis on energy poverty and protection against disconnections, and foresees further guidance and technical work on energy communities and self-consumption, retail contracts, supplier risk management, remuneration of flexibility and technical rules for supplier switching.

At the same time, the package leaves open several practical questions around affordability and fairness. While it points to electrification, lower taxes and reduced network costs as ways to bring bills down, these benefits may not materialise evenly across households. Strongly rising investments in grids and digital infrastructure will drive up network costs, and any reduced network tariffs linked to local energy sharing will shift costs to other consumers. Moreover, many households are still not in a position to switch easily to clean technologies, given the high upfront costs related with heat pumps and electric vehicles and the poor energy performance of much of Europe's housing stock.

Overall, the package's impact will depend less on new initiatives than on whether implementation at national and local level creates workable conditions for investment, consumer trust and effective participation, without shifting costs onto those least able to adapt.

Soaring energy prices: will Brussels reopen the merit order debate?

Sharply rising energy prices have returned as an even more prominent issue in the EU policy debate. At an informal summit in February, EU leaders already held a discussion on the issue, with several capitals calling for action to address high energy costs for European industries, through an adaptation of ETS. Since last week, strongly rising gas prices are affecting electricity prices, which sparks the debate amongst others on the current market price formation based on merit order and marginal pricing. Ursula von der Leyen will present the Commission's options to EU leaders at the European Council on 19 March.



EU leaders at the informal summit at Alden Biesen in February (Photo: © European Union, 2026)

Clean Energy Investment Strategy published

Published alongside the Citizens Energy Package on 10 March, the Clean Energy Investment Strategy sets out how the Commission wants to mobilise more private capital for the energy transition, notably through 12 actions grouped under four pillars: improving the visibility of investment needs and pipelines, supporting access to capital markets, de-risking projects through more strategic use of public funds, and strengthening engagement with investors.

Relevant elements in the Strategy are the proposed European Investment Bank (EIB)-backed financing tools for network operators under the capital-markets pillar, which addresses the investment constraints faced by both TSOs and DSOs and the decentralised structure of the distribution sector. These include a loan securitisation initiative, an operator securitisation facility to turn future regulated revenues into upfront cash, hybrid bonds for larger operators, and an intermediated financing facility intended to help smaller DSOs access finance through aggregation and joint ventures. The draft also links these measures to investment in grid expansion, smart grids, district heating and electricity generation, although key details, including the scale of EIB support, remain open at this stage.

Industrial Accelerator Act published

On 4 March, the European Commission published the Industrial Accelerator Act, a proposal aimed at strengthening Europe's industrial base while accelerating decarbonisation in key sectors. The initiative combines several policy tools, including faster permitting procedures, demand-side measures including through public procurement, and the designation of Industrial Acceleration Areas intended to support strategic industrial manufacturing across the EU. The proposal also introduces a target for manufacturing to represent at least 20% of EU GDP by 2035.

A key element of the proposal is the creation of lead markets for low-carbon industrial materials. Through public procurement and support schemes, the Commission aims to stimulate demand for low-carbon and Union-origin products in sectors such as steel, aluminium and cement, while also expanding the scope of net-zero technologies covered by origin requirements to include technologies such as heat pumps, wind technologies, solar thermal and hydrogen. While these measures aim to strengthen European supply chains and support industrial decarbonisation, they may also introduce new certification requirements across value chains.

The proposal also foresees the designation of Industrial Acceleration Areas in Member State, where industrial projects would benefit from streamlined permitting and improved infrastructure planning. These zones could concentrate significant new electricity demand, reinforcing the need for forward-looking grid and network planning. The proposal will now be negotiated by the European Parliament and the Council under the ordinary legislative procedure.

Upcoming meetings and events

- Working Group Implementation – 16/03, 10:30–13:00: Priority topics on grid connections, network decommissioning plans, heating and cooling assessment and planning.
- Working Group Digitalisation – 31/03, 11:00–13:00

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