

POLITICAL DECLARATION
OF THE PENTALATERAL ENERGY FORUM
ON INTEGRATED NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS

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The Ministers of Energy of the Pentalateral Energy Forum, consisting of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland¹, hereinafter referred to as the “signatories”, confirm, with this Political Declaration of the Pentalateral Energy Forum on Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP), their intention to maintain and strengthen their cooperation in the framework of the national energy and climate plans.

The signatories consider that:

- the Pentalateral Energy Forum (Penta) has been a frontrunner and a key player in the field of European regional cooperation, and aims to keep playing this role in the upcoming years,
- the scope of Penta is focused on regional cooperation with high cross-border relevance, particularly regarding various aspects of the electricity policy,
- the new Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union, and in particular article 12, raises an opportunity to broaden this scope, in order to become an instrument for enhancing the regional cooperation in the development and monitoring of the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans as well as in the implementation of its relevant policies and measures with a specific focus on electricity,
- a better mutual understanding of national concerns (energy mix, long term generation adequacy, flexibility, peak capacity, emergency plans, risk preparedness plans, etc.) and possible measures is necessary.

The signatories welcome and want to build on:

- the first “Regional Energy and Climate Dialogue 2030”, organised by Belgium – in its role as president of the Benelux – on the 27th of June 2018. This meeting at Director General level was a first practical implementation of the Benelux Declaration on Regional Cooperation for the development of NECPs, which was signed in the margins of the Energy Council on the 11th of June 2018.

¹ Switzerland’s signature to this Political Declaration is not to be interpreted in any way as prejudging the Electricity Agreement between Switzerland and the EU currently under negotiation. In particular, no obligation is to be derived from this Political Declaration as to whether the proposed Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union is to be covered in said Electricity Agreement and whether Switzerland is to develop its own NECP.

In the light of these considerations the signatories share the common understanding to:

- grant a political mandate to Penta to act as a forum for regional cooperation regarding the development and monitoring of the NECP with a specific focus on issues with high cross-border relevance and, following this,
- set up a new dedicated Penta-NECP Committee that will exist parallel to the existing Penta Coordinators' Committee, arrange its meetings back-to-back and in close coordination with the latter and be tasked with coordinating specific identified opportunities for regional cooperation within the framework of the NECPs,
- opt for common language and identify coordinated approaches when it comes to drafting the parts on regional cooperation in the various NECPs, taking the form of a chapter with a high-level description on the topics that were identified as cross-border relevant, suitable for a regional dialogue, a common 2030 vision of the Penta Member States and planned cooperation, including cooperation in the implementation of relevant policies and measures,
- explore the option for a joint chapter on regional cooperation including the perspective of possible concrete joint projects on the way to 2030.

The signatories express their willingness to:

- avoid unnecessary additional administrative burden, whilst the new regional cooperation should nevertheless go further than a mere sharing of best practices and should inter alia include a common vision and considerations on possible common projects,
- carry out regional cooperation in line with the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and the Energy Union dimensions in the framework of the NECPs, with a specific focus on topics that are considered to have substantial cross-border effects,
- give preference to address the identified topics for regional cooperation in the Penta Support Groups or where relevant and appropriate, in other existing cooperation platforms, such as the North Seas Energy Cooperation or the Gas Platform.

In this light, the signatories consider that:

- the Energy Union dimensions decarbonisation – with a focus on renewable energy -, internal energy market and energy security are particularly relevant to cross-border participation,
- policy instruments and measures with substantial cross-border effects related to those dimensions should be discussed in the new Penta-NECP Committee such as:
 1. infrastructure developments in the mid and long term;
 2. improved sharing and analyses on the use of various energy sources and an exchange on the energy scenarios for the NECP with a view to ensure consistency of data and assumptions;
 3. the integration of renewable energy in the electricity and gas grids, and its effects on internal market functioning and security of supply;
 4. the possible effects of national energy efficiency policies on the internal market;

5. effects of and regulatory incentives for sector coupling in order to enhance the integration of renewable energy in other sectors;
 6. flexibility options, including energy storage, demand side management, Power-to-X, integration of electric cars and the possible perspective of hydrogen;
 7. other sustainable carbon reducing incentives,
- the governance structure of Penta needs to remain pragmatic and flexible in case further topics arise,
 - the scope of regional cooperation discussed in Penta should remain focused on key areas in order to create a sound added value.

This Political Declaration does not create any rights or obligations under international law and does not intend to replace or modify any existing legal obligations between the signatories.

Signed at Brussels on the fourth day of March of the year two thousand and nineteen.

For the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

For the Federal Republic of Germany

For the Kingdom of Belgium

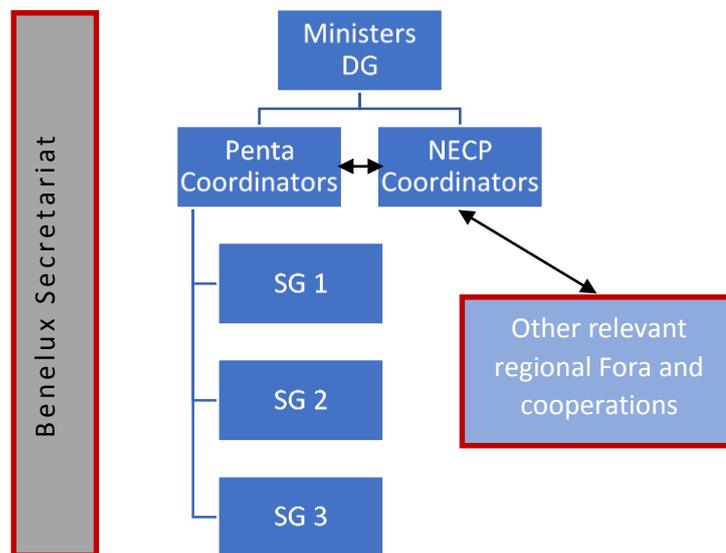
For the Republic of Austria

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands

For the French Republic

For the Swiss Confederation

Annex: Governance and support structure



Integration of existing cooperation

- As stated in the Political Declaration, the Penta-NECP Committee will exist parallel to the existing Penta Coordinators' Committee, arrange its meetings back-to-back with the latter and will be tasked with coordinating specific identified opportunities for regional cooperation within the framework of the NECPs and give preference to address the identified topics in the Penta Support Groups and will also refer to existing cooperation platforms, such as the North Seas Energy Cooperation or the Gas Platform when relevant and possible.

The Penta-NECP Committee

- will be the nexus of iterative regional cooperation/coordination in the Penta area,
- should be considered to represent the Ministers and Directors General at working level,
- will meet as frequently as appropriate,
- will be coordinated by the Benelux countries on an annually rotating basis,
- will give preference to address identified topics in the Penta Support Groups and will also refer where relevant and appropriate to existing cooperation platforms, such as the North Seas Energy Cooperation or the Gas Platform as appropriate,
- will work out work programme and timeline for the upcoming years, submitted to approval by the Ministers and Directors General,
- will be entitled to build up sub-committees by time/topic where necessary and appropriate.

The secretariat of the Benelux

- will support the chairs in the preparation and the follow-up of the meetings,
- will continue to serve as the basic platform for support to the Penta-NECP Committee, by planning and hosting the meetings of all groups at all levels at the Benelux House.