

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

### of the 139<sup>th</sup> ACER Board of Regulators Meeting

22 April 2026

	Agenda point	Direct link
European Commission updates on measures stemming from the March European Council and the Citizens Energy Package	3.1	-
Grid Incident in Spain and Portugal on 28 April 2025 - Final Report	3.3	<a href="#">Link</a>
ACER Annual Activity Report 2025: independent section on regulatory activities	4.2	Link to follow by June 2026
ACER Decision on the European Resource Adequacy Assessment for 2025 (and accompanying letter to ENTSO-E)	4.3	<a href="#">Link</a> <a href="#">Link</a>
Cost-benefit sharing paper	4.4	<a href="#">Link</a>
LNG Monitoring Report and Wholesale Gas quarterly (Q1/2026)	4.4	<a href="#">Link</a> <a href="#">Link</a>
Article 70 on derogations with third countries	5.4	<a href="#">Link</a>
REMIT Implementing Regulation and reports on compliance with Article 15 obligations	5.6	<a href="#">Link</a> <a href="#">Link</a>

*Below are the documents that are not available for download from ACER's website:*



European Council

**Brussels, 19 March 2026  
(OR. en)**

**EUCO 1/26**

**CO EUR 1  
CONCL 1**

**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: European Council meeting (19 March 2026)  
– Conclusions

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Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

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*Following the devastating extreme weather events in Portugal, the European Council expresses its deepest condolences and stands in solidarity with the people of Portugal.*

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*The European Council held an exchange of views with UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the geopolitical situation and multilateralism.*

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## **I. UKRAINE**

1. The European Council held an exchange of views with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.
2. The European Council discussed the latest developments as regards Ukraine. The text set out in document EUCO 2/26 was firmly supported by 25 Heads of State or Government.
3. The European Council will revert to this issue at its next meeting.

## **II. MIDDLE EAST**

### ***Iran***

4. Developments in Iran and the wider region threaten regional and global security. The European Council calls for de-escalation and maximum restraint, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and full respect of international law by all parties, including the principles of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law. In this regard, it calls for a moratorium on strikes against energy and water facilities. The European Council deplores the loss of civilian life and is closely monitoring the far-reaching impact of the hostilities, including on economic stability.

5. The European Council strongly condemns Iran's indiscriminate military strikes against countries in the region and expresses its solidarity with countries affected. It calls on Iran and its proxies to immediately cease these attacks and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2817, which should be fully implemented. The European Council underlines the importance of concerted action to help partners strengthen counter-drone and air defence capabilities. In that context, it welcomes Ukraine's readiness to provide support and expertise in air defence and counter-drone systems to Gulf countries.
6. The European Union stands firmly and unequivocally in support of Member States close to the region. It welcomes the support provided by Member States in this regard, in particular through the deployment of military assets in the Eastern Mediterranean and in support of Cyprus. The European Council acknowledges the intention of Cyprus to initiate a discussion with the UK on the UK bases in Cyprus and stands ready to provide assistance as needed.
7. The European Council recalls the need to safeguard regional airspace and ensure maritime security and respect for the freedom of navigation, and condemns any acts that threaten navigation or prevent vessels from entering and exiting the Strait of Hormuz.
8. The European Council highlights the role of the EU maritime defensive operations EUNAVFOR ASPIDES and EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, and calls for their reinforcement with more assets, in line with their respective mandates.
9. The European Council also welcomes the increased efforts announced by Member States, including through strengthened coordination with partners in the region, to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, once the conditions are met.

10. The European Union will continue to protect its security and interests, working with regional and global partners to counter the impact of the ongoing hostilities.  
The European Union and its Member States are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of EU citizens in the region, including by providing conditions for their safe departure.
11. The European Council invites the Commission to continue to report to the Council on the potential impact of recent developments for the EU in terms of energy security and energy prices, supply chains and migration, and to propose measures as appropriate. It also calls for coordination at EU level, including on the possible impact on internal security.
12. While the conflict has not translated into immediate migratory flows towards the European Union, the European Council underlines the importance of maintaining a high level of vigilance and ensuring the necessary level of preparedness, based on the tools and policies that the EU developed over the past years. On the basis of the lessons learned from the 2015 migration crisis and to avoid a similar situation, the EU is ready to fully mobilise its diplomatic, legal, operational and financial tools to prevent uncontrolled migratory movements to the EU and preserve security in Europe. The security and the control of the European Union's external borders will continue to be strengthened. The European Council stresses the importance of working with partners in the region to ensure that they receive the necessary assistance and support.
13. The European Union will continue to engage with partners in the region to contribute to de-escalation and regional stability. It stands ready to contribute to all diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and to bring about a lasting solution to end the hostilities, prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and put an end to its destabilising activities, including its ballistic missile programme.

14. The European Council reiterates that Iran must never be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon and that it must comply with its legally binding nuclear safeguard obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The European Council urges Iran to resume full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.
15. The European Council calls on the Iranian regime to cease the violence and repression against its own people. It calls for the respect of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Iranian people, including the right to choose their own future.

***Gaza/West Bank***

16. The European Council discussed the deteriorating situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, which is of grave concern. It reaffirms the European Union's commitment to international law and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders.
17. The European Council reiterates its call for the full implementation by all parties of the ceasefire and all other provisions of UNSCR 2803, in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and international political and legal principles. In this context, it calls for the permanent disarmament of Hamas and other non-state armed groups, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the deployment of the temporary International Stabilisation Force (ISF), as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict.

18. The European Union stands ready to work on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict in accordance with UNSCR 2803. Regarding the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah), the European Council calls on all parties to reopen the Rafah crossing point, facilitate checks and increase the number of crossings. It also calls for accelerating preparations to scale up the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS).
19. The European Council deplores the continuing catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls on Israel to allow immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to supplement land routes, and to enable the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering. It calls on Israel to reverse its decision regarding the NGO registration law, to reopen Gaza border crossings and to fully comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The European Council recalls the need to ensure the protection of civilians at all times.
20. The European Union will engage with international and regional stakeholders to contribute to the reconstruction and redevelopment of Gaza, in line with international law. It will also continue to support the Palestinian Authority, including in its reform agenda, so that it can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza. The European Council calls on Israel to urgently release withheld clearance revenues and extend the correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks, both being necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Palestinian Authority and the delivery of essential services to the population.

21. The European Council strongly condemns Israel's unilateral actions aiming to expand its presence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 declared to be unlawful, and urges the Government of Israel to reverse these decisions, to abide by its obligations under international law and to protect the Palestinian population of the occupied territories. The European Council reiterates its call for the preservation of and respect for the Status Quo of Jerusalem's holy sites.
22. The European Council strongly condemns the continued and growing settler violence against Palestinian civilians, including violence against Christian communities, and reiterates its call on the Council to take work forward on further restrictive measures against extremist settlers and entities and organisations that support them.

### ***Lebanon***

23. The European Council is deeply concerned about the increase in hostilities in Lebanon and its severe impact on civilians, including large-scale displacement, suffering and loss of life. It calls for de-escalation, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. The European Union will continue to stand by Lebanon, its authorities and its people and will draw on its emergency reserves to assist the affected civilian population. It will continue to support the Lebanese State's sovereignty, territorial integrity and State-building efforts.
24. The European Council strongly condemns Hezbollah's decision to attack Israel in support of Iran and urges it to stop immediately. It welcomes the decision by the Lebanese authorities to ban Hezbollah's military activities. The European Union supports the authorities' efforts to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces in view of gaining control of the whole Lebanese territory.

25. The European Council reiterates its call on all parties to respect and implement the terms of the 27 November 2024 ceasefire agreement and for the full implementation of UNSCR 1701. The European Council calls on Israel to refrain from further escalation through air or land operations and to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It calls on all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and to refrain from actions resulting in further displacement.
26. The European Council reaffirms its unwavering support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which plays a fundamental stabilisation role. The European Council condemns the unacceptable attacks targeting UNIFIL personnel and calls for a thorough investigation. Such attacks against UN peacekeepers constitute a grave violation of international law, are totally unacceptable and must stop immediately.

### **III. COMPETITIVENESS AND SINGLE MARKET**

#### ***One Europe, One Market***

27. In the current global context, the pursuit of the European Union's objective of a 'highly competitive social market economy' requires a renewed determination to boost the Union's competitiveness, increase its resilience and enhance its strategic autonomy and economic security, sustaining Europe's prosperity and social model.
28. The European Council has therefore decided to launch a 'One Europe, One Market' agenda, to be implemented in 2026 where possible and by the end of 2027 at the latest.
29. The European Council calls on the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to urgently implement this agenda, including in the light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission, and will regularly review progress on all strands, providing additional strategic guidance when needed.

***Single Market***

30. The European Council underlines that further deepening and integrating the Single Market, in all its four freedoms, and making it simpler for people and businesses, is an urgent shared responsibility of all Member States and EU institutions. Companies of all sizes should be free to operate seamlessly across the Single Market, and to scale up to reach their full potential. A ‘One Market’ approach, with harmonised EU-wide rules that replace 27 sets of national rules, in itself brings simplification, as does the well-functioning application of the mutual recognition principle. This approach will strengthen the Single Market’s integrity while ensuring a level playing field, both internally and globally, and improve connectivity and living standards for citizens.
31. To this end, the European Council calls on the Member States and the EU institutions to prevent and remove barriers to the four freedoms, notably the barriers identified in the Commission’s Single Market Strategy of May 2025, with a view to achieving concrete and tangible progress by March 2027 at the latest.
32. In particular, the European Council calls for the following measures to be addressed as a high priority:
  - a) a 28th regime for company law, to help European companies, in particular innovative companies, SMEs and start-ups, to operate and scale up across the Single Market, on a simple and digital-by-default basis. This optional harmonised regime for companies should be agreed by the co-legislators by the end of 2026, on the basis of the Commission proposal of 18 March 2026;
  - b) a simple, unified and voluntary e-declaration system for the cross-border provision of services, to reduce administrative burdens when temporarily posting workers to other Member States and ensure the rights of these workers, which should be agreed by the co-legislators by June 2026;

- c) enhancing free movement of workers by improving mutual recognition of professional qualifications and strengthening the portability of qualifications and skills across national borders, including through digitalisation and interoperability, on the basis of a Commission proposal to be presented by autumn 2026;
  - d) implementing the ‘once-only’ principle, including through a European Business Wallet, leveraging existing solutions and aiming to digitalise business interactions and simplify administrative procedures across the EU, to be agreed by the co-legislators before the end of 2026;
  - e) enhancing consumer protection and enforcement of EU standards, by strengthening, on the basis of a Commission proposal to be presented by the end of 2026, safeguards for placing products on the market, especially for the surveillance of non-compliant products from third countries;
  - f) facilitating free movement of goods by addressing, on the basis of a Commission proposal to be presented by the end of 2026, fragmented product labelling and packaging requirements, including through digital solutions. This should also address the negative impact of territorial supply constraints which fragment the Single Market.
33. The European Council calls on the Member States and the Commission to improve the conditions throughout the Union for businesses to achieve the scale needed to invest, innovate and compete at global level. This includes the ongoing review of the merger guidelines, which should continue to ensure effective competition.
34. The European Council calls on the Commission to ensure timely and robust enforcement of Single Market rules, thus preserving the Single Market’s integrity.

***Simplification and reducing administrative burdens***

35. The European Council calls on the Commission, the co-legislators and the Member States to continue to ambitiously simplify rules and reduce administrative burdens at EU, national and regional level to ensure a regulatory framework that is both innovation- and SME-friendly, including by applying the ‘Think small first’ principle, and without undermining predictability, EU policy goals, high standards or the integrity of the Single Market.
36. In this context, the European Council:
- a) urgently calls on the co-legislators to keep up the momentum to simplify and reduce burdens arising from existing legislation, notably by agreeing, before the end of 2026, all pending omnibus packages, including an ambitious AI omnibus by July 2026;
  - b) calls on the Commission to put forward further omnibus and other simplification initiatives, including to further speed up and streamline planning and permitting procedures;
  - c) calls on the Commission to undertake an in-depth regulatory review of the EU acquis to eliminate outdated provisions, overlaps, inconsistencies and redundancies, which may include withdrawing legislative proposals;
  - d) calls on the Commission to:
    - i) ensure that new EU initiatives are in line with the ‘simplicity-by-design’ and better regulation principles, are accompanied by high-quality impact assessments, contribute to the Union’s competitiveness goals, including the better functioning of the Single Market, and reduce regulatory, administrative and compliance costs and avoid burdens;

- ii) favour regulations over directives;
  - iii) limit the use of delegated and implementing acts, which should focus on technical elements;
  - e) calls on the European Parliament and the Council to avoid introducing additional administrative burdens in EU legal acts throughout the legislative procedure;
  - f) calls on Member States to avoid gold-plating and disproportionate national requirements when transposing and implementing EU rules.
37. The European Council welcomes the commitment by the President of the European Commission to report annually to the European Council on progress achieved in the field of simplification.

***Affordable energy prices and Energy Union 2030***

38. The recent spikes in the prices of imported fossil fuels demonstrate that the energy transition remains the most effective strategy for achieving Europe’s strategic autonomy, strengthening resilience, structurally lowering energy prices, and delivering the clean, abundant and homegrown energy needed to power the economy of the future. Accelerating the deployment and integration of renewable and low-carbon energy sources and energy storage is essential to reduce dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets and enhance security of supply.
39. At the same time, targeted solutions are needed in the short term to ensure affordable energy, taking into account technological neutrality and the specific situations of Member States, the particular exposure of certain industrial sectors to the risk of relocation, and the need to improve the conditions for energy-intensive innovative sectors, without undermining predictability and the level playing field.

40. As the conflict in the Middle East has an immediate impact on energy prices for European citizens and businesses, the European Council underlines the need for a coordinated response.
41. To this end, the European Council:
  - a) calls on the Commission to present without delay a toolbox of targeted temporary measures to address the recent spikes in the prices of imported fossil fuels arising from the crisis in the Middle East;
  - b) calls on the Commission, in the light of the recent letter by its President, including regarding the intention to increase the market stability reserve, to urgently present targeted measures – across all components of electricity prices – for concrete actions to lower electricity prices and to address excessive volatility in the short term, including for energy-intensive sectors, taking into account the different situations across Member States. In this context, the Commission is also invited to work closely with Member States to design national temporary and targeted measures to mitigate significant impacts of fuels and related cost components on electricity generation costs, as well as the impact of all other cost components as outlined in the letter, while preserving long-term investment signals and supporting the acceleration of renewable and low-carbon energy production, and ensuring a level playing field in the internal market;
  - c) invites the Commission to present a review of the emissions trading system (ETS) by July 2026 at the latest, to reduce the volatility of the carbon price and mitigate its impact on electricity prices, including related supply chain costs, and on diversion of activities, while preserving the essential role of the ETS in the climate and energy transition through a market-based price signal for carbon emissions that drives investment and innovation;

- d) calls on the co-legislators to agree, in 2026, an ambitious grids package to quickly build the necessary infrastructure, ensure its protection and resilience, and enhance interconnections, at national and trans-European level, including by streamlining and accelerating permitting procedures, thus contributing to an integrated and more robust energy market, while defining a flexible approach to domestic congestion income arising from internal bidding zones that takes into account national circumstances;
- e) calls on the Member States and the Commission to accelerate the implementation of the Energy Union 2030 agenda, to rapidly allow increased and affordable electrification.

The European Council will return to the issues above in June 2026 to review progress.

***Fostering Europe’s industrial renewal and innovation, and reducing dependencies***

- 42. The European Council underlines that to drive growth in Europe it is critical to channel investment towards the technologies of tomorrow, accelerate innovation, advance on digital technology and the necessary infrastructure, and improve the conditions for a sustainable and productive industrial base. This should be undertaken in a technologically neutral manner and take into account the needs of SMEs. Reducing strategic dependencies and strengthening Europe’s geopolitical and commercial weight has become a precondition for resilience, growth and job creation.
- 43. To this end, the European Council:
  - a) calls on the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to map dependencies in strategic sectors by the end of 2026 at the latest;

- b) highlights the importance of establishing a targeted and proportionate ‘European preference’ in strategic sectors and technologies and, in this regard, calls on the co-legislators to agree by the end of 2026 an Industrial Accelerator Act, based on the Commission’s proposal of 4 March 2026, in line with the EU’s relevant international obligations. The European Council invites the Commission to submit further proposals in this regard;
- c) calls on the Commission to take action to protect key sectors from unfair competition, including through the timely use of the Union’s trade defence measures, and to proactively tackle economic coercion;
- d) calls on the Commission and the Council to continue diversifying trade and investment ties, including to secure access to essential resources, supply chains, markets and technologies;
- e) invites the Commission to come forward with a technological sovereignty package.

### ***Mobilising investment***

- 44. The European Council recalls that a fundamental precondition for sustainable growth is a true Savings and Investments Union with a fully integrated and efficient capital market that effectively channels savings into productive investments in the EU. This is key to providing European businesses, including in strategic sectors, with the equity capital they need to innovate and grow, and to create quality jobs in the EU.
- 45. To this end, the European Council calls:
  - a) on the co-legislators to conclude, by the end of 2026, negotiations on the legislative proposals on securitisation, supplementary pensions and the market integration and supervision package;

- b) on the co-legislators to conclude, by the end of 2026, negotiations on the legislative proposal on the digital euro;
- c) on the Commission to propose targeted amendments to the prudential framework in order to enhance the capacity of the banking sector to finance the European economy, while safeguarding financial stability, and with a view to fully preserving a global level playing field. In this regard, it welcomes the Commission's intention to present by summer 2026 a report on the competitiveness of the banking sector;
- d) on the Commission and the co-legislators to deepen the integration of the EU banking market by progressing towards completing the Banking Union.

### ***European Semester***

46. Moreover, the European Council addressed priorities for the 2026 European Semester and endorses the Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area. The European Council also considered the employment and social situation in the European Union.

## **IV. EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY**

47. Given the further deteriorating geopolitical environment, and with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine remaining an existential challenge for the European Union, the European Council reaffirms its determination to decisively ramp up Europe's defence readiness by 2030, reduce strategic dependencies and address critical capability gaps, with a 360° approach.

48. In this context, the European Council calls for an acceleration of efforts to swiftly achieve defence readiness. The European Council:
- a) stresses the importance of intensifying work on the priority capability areas identified at EU level, in full coherence with NATO. It welcomes the progress already achieved, with all capability coalitions in place and working, and notes that Member States are already working on joint development and procurement as regards drone and counter-drone systems. The European Council acknowledges the continued progress being made in the implementation of initiatives aiming to protect Europe's Eastern flank. It also stresses the importance of early-warning, air defence and deep precision strike capabilities, as well as space assets and services that serve security and defence purposes. The European Council calls on Member States to ensure that concrete projects can be launched in the next months, including by making full use of the SAFE and European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) instruments. It invites the Commission, the Council and the Member States to take the further steps needed in the implementation of both instruments as a matter of urgency;
  - b) calls for a step change in strengthening the European defence technological and industrial base so that it can supply equipment at the increased scale and accelerated pace needed, including the priority equipment in support of Ukraine, also in light of possible global supply shortages. The European Council invites Member States, in the framework of the capability coalitions, and with the support of the European Defence Agency and the Commission, to encourage the European defence industry to ramp up production to this effect;

- c) reiterates in particular the importance of the proper functioning and further integration of the European defence market across the Union, including intra-EU cross-border access to defence supply chains, especially for SMEs and mid-caps. This will also contribute to boosting European competitiveness. The European Council invites the co-legislators to finalise work on the Defence Readiness Omnibus as a matter of urgency;
  - d) calls on the European Defence Agency to finalise, by June 2026, the work to strengthen its support for Member States in the fields of innovation, capability development, including through harmonisation of requirements and aggregation of demand, and common procurement;
  - e) welcomes the continued efforts made by the European Investment Bank to strengthen the European defence industry, including by crowding in private investment;
  - f) recalls the importance of innovation in the field of defence and the need to draw lessons from Ukraine's experience;
  - g) recalling the importance of military mobility, invites the co-legislators to take work forward on the relevant proposal.
49. The European Council highlights the situation at the EU's eastern border, considering the threats posed by Russia and Belarus, as well as the risks faced by the Member States most directly affected by the situation in Iran and the Middle East. It reiterates that the defence of all EU land, air and maritime borders contributes to the security of Europe as a whole.

50. In light of persistent hybrid campaigns by hostile actors against the European Union and its Member States, notably by Russia and Belarus, the European Council expects continued efforts to strengthen resilience, enhance preparedness, protect critical infrastructure, and prevent, deter and respond to hybrid attacks, with particular attention to drone and counter-drone security.
51. The European Council invites the Council to update the common understanding of the threats and challenges that the EU is facing, agreed in the Strategic Compass in 2022, on the basis of a comprehensive 360° threat analysis at EU level to be prepared by the High Representative in close cooperation with and building on input from Member States.
52. The European Council recalls the importance of working together with like-minded partners, who share the EU's foreign and security policy goals.
53. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, in accordance with the Treaties.

## **V. MIGRATION**

54. The European Council took stock of progress in the implementation of its previous conclusions, including in the light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission. It calls for intensified work on all strands to continue as a matter of priority, including on the external dimension and comprehensive partnerships, in line with EU and international law.

## **VI. MULTILATERALISM**

55. With multilateralism and international law being challenged, the European Union is firmly committed to upholding the UN Charter and the rules and principles it enshrines, in particular those of sovereignty and territorial integrity, political independence and self-determination.

56. The European Council reaffirms the Union's steadfast commitment to effective multilateralism and to the rules-based international order with the United Nations at its core, as well as its support for the institutions upholding international law, including by effectively protecting international courts and their officials from any threats or sanctions. The European Union will remain a predictable, reliable and credible partner, and reiterates its commitment to working together with all its partners to maintain international peace and security, and promote multilateral solutions to common challenges. The European Council underlines the need to respect the freedom and security of navigation in accordance with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
57. The European Union will work together with all its partners, as well as with the United Nations and its agencies, in driving forward the internal reform process – the UN80 initiative – to ensure the United Nations remains effective, cost-efficient and responsive.

## **VII. OTHER ITEMS**

### ***Strengthening Europe's democratic resilience***

58. Recalling the importance of strengthening Europe's democratic resilience and the legal responsibility of online platforms in fighting the dissemination of disinformation and illegal content, the European Council stresses the responsibility of online platforms to mitigate the systemic risks associated with the use of these platforms and the need to safeguard the integrity and the accountability of the information space. It calls on the Commission to make full use of the instruments provided for in the Digital Services Act (DSA) to that end. The European Council invites Member States and the Commission, working with the support of the High Representative, to enhance their resilience to hybrid activities, notably foreign information manipulation and interference and attempts to undermine democracy, also taking into account the interference by foreign private actors in democratic electoral processes in Member States. It underlines the importance of deepening citizen engagement, strengthening democratic discourse and protecting free and pluralistic media and civil society.

***Protecting children online***

59. The European Council stresses the importance of protecting minors in the digital sphere, notably through:
- a) implementing the Digital Services Act and its guidelines on the protection of minors;
  - b) promoting a digital age of majority for accessing social media, while preserving the privacy of users and respecting national competences;
  - c) labelling AI-generated content and prohibiting AI systems that allow the creation of non-consensual intimate images and child sexual abuse material.

***EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine***

60. The European Council takes note of the Commission Communication on the EU's eastern regions bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine 'Strong regions for a safe Europe'.

***Dniester river***

61. The European Council strongly condemns Russia's attacks against Ukrainian civil infrastructure which have contaminated the Dniester river, the Republic of Moldova's primary source of fresh water. The European Union stands ready to provide assistance to the Republic of Moldova in mitigating the environmental effects, including through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. In this context, the European Council welcomes the immediate support provided by Member States.
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Strasbourg, 10.3.2026  
COM(2026) 115 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL**

**on the Citizens Energy Package**

{SWD(2026) 115 final}

## **The Citizens Energy Package – Affordable energy for all**

**All Europeans** should have access to affordable, clean energy in comfortable and resilient homes. **Affordable energy** is an essential condition for a safe, decent quality of life, free of poverty, and key to ensuring fairness and inclusion, in particular for groups in situations of vulnerability and of all generations. If energy prices are too high, the entire economy suffers – consumption drops and businesses slow down. This is what the Citizens Energy Package intends to address.

The safest way to obtain affordable energy is to rely on **clean energy that Europe can produce for itself**. This is why Europeans need to be empowered to switch from gas to cleaner alternatives based on electricity. **Electrification** will bring lower and more stable prices over time while increasing European independence, sustainability and competitiveness. Member States have a role to play here by setting the right targeted incentives – for instance, making the use of electricity more attractive through tax incentives and lower levies.

**Flexibility** allows homes with smart meters to use energy when electricity is abundant and cheaper. Smart and bidirectional charging of electric vehicles can further support this flexibility. For this to work, citizens need access to reliable information and advice adapted to different needs (including disabilities), affordable technologies, and services that reward users for shifting their electricity consumption from peak times to cheaper periods – with special attention paid to groups facing digital exclusion. A recent Eurobarometer survey<sup>1</sup> indicates the EU energy consumers want better **protection** of vulnerable consumers and those in energy poverty, and more **clarity and transparency of energy bills**.

Citizens – for instance, farmers, rural inhabitants, small-business owners or kindergartens – should be able to team up and produce and **share** their self-produced energy. This takes pressure off local energy grids and prevents unnecessary investments in energy infrastructure. The financial and technical requirements to set up **energy communities** should be clear and simple. Empowering consumers is also beneficial for European manufacturers of **clean technologies** and electricity suppliers as increased demand for innovative products (such as heat pumps) and services (such as social leasing, heat-as-a-service) will provide investment certainty and help bring growth to these job markets. These innovative technologies will also improve the energy-water nexus, especially during droughts and heatwaves, and thereby help lowering energy bills<sup>2</sup>.

The Citizens Energy Package aims as well to tackle **energy poverty** – a serious situation currently faced by too many citizens in the EU, and disproportionately affecting groups in situations of vulnerability, and in rural or remote areas, outermost regions and islands. In 2024, almost 10% of European citizens could not adequately heat their homes in winter, and many face rising cooling needs in summer. Improving the energy performance of buildings and switching to cheaper electrical heating and cooling or district systems based on renewable energy is essential in order to reduce energy poverty and housing expenditure.

A strong set of EU laws is already in place for all this, but its **implementation** remains uneven. Ensuring effective enforcement of EU laws is key to ensuring that citizens can fully benefit from their rights. **Local authorities** are key for supporting citizens in the energy transition through administrative, technical and financial advice, in particular when it comes to dealing with energy poverty and reaching groups with specific needs. With the aim of stepping up joint efforts across all levels of government and deliver for European citizens, this communication,

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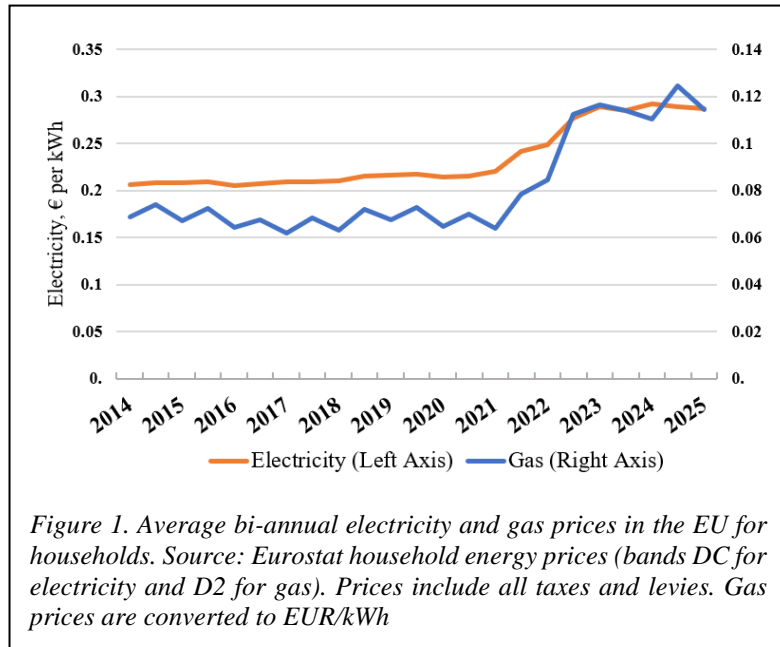
<sup>1</sup> [Flash Eurobarometer 566](#) ‘Consumer behaviour in the energy transition’, December 2025.

<sup>2</sup> European Water Resilience Strategy, COM/2025/280 final.

complementing other Commissions initiatives<sup>3</sup> on affordable energy, sets out concrete actions to: (i) lower energy bills for households; (ii) protect and empower consumers; (iii) tackle energy poverty; and (iv) implement the existing EU laws effectively.

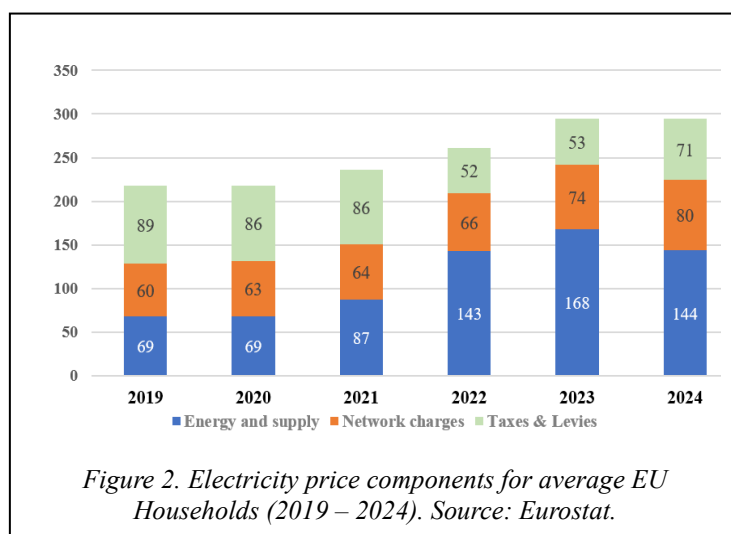
### **PILLAR I: LOWERING ENERGY BILLS FOR HOUSEHOLDS**

**High energy prices hurt Europe’s economy and its citizens.** Household electricity prices rose sharply during the crisis and remain elevated today, disproportionately harming groups in situations of vulnerability. Retail electricity prices faced by EU households are 36% above their 2014-2020 average with retail gas prices 68% higher compared to the average in the same period. As a reference, inflation over the same period was of 26%, meaning that prices have increased by 10% once corrected with inflation.



The energy bills citizens pay are influenced by **network charges, national taxes and levies**, the **wholesale energy price** and the level of individual **consumption**. National energy taxes, and the calculation of network charges are mainly under the responsibility of the Member States and their regulatory authorities, giving them tools to make energy bills more affordable. The Commission is therefore proposing four concrete actions in this respect.

#### **Action 1: Lowering taxes and levies on electricity for households to the EU minimum**



**Electricity taxes and levies account, on average, for 25 % of the price for households and 15% of the price for businesses.** Member States can lower national energy taxes and levies, including additional taxes or levies with no connection to energy (e.g. public broadcasting charges added to electricity bills<sup>4</sup>). Removing unrelated costs benefits everyone’s electricity bill, notably vulnerable households.

<sup>3</sup> Namely, the [Clean Industrial Deal](#), the [Affordable Energy Action Plan](#), the [Affordable Housing Plan](#), the [Grids Package](#), the [Agenda for Cities](#), as well as the forthcoming Electrification Strategy, the Heating and Cooling Strategy or the Strategic Roadmap for Digitalisation in the Energy Sector.

<sup>4</sup> Greece, Italy and Portugal add charges related to public broadcasting to electricity bills.

Some Member States<sup>5</sup> lowered, or are in the process of lowering, the tax rate for energy-intensive industries. Lowering taxation also proved effective in containing energy bills temporarily during the energy crisis, particularly where the electricity retail price was significantly higher than for gas. Under the existing Energy Taxation Directive and VAT Directive, Member States have the flexibility to lower minimum excise duty rates and VAT on electricity prices. This would have an immediate effect on electricity prices and contribute also to faster electrification of end-uses.

Goal	<b>Lowering consumer electricity bills and supporting electrification</b>
Result	Citizens' bills could be <b>lowered by 14%</b> or an <b>average of EUR 200 per year</b> .
How	Member States to contribute to lower electricity bills for households by carrying out <b>tax reviews</b> and making full use of the <b>flexibilities</b> in EU legislation, and considering <b>full or partial targeted reductions of excise duty rates</b> regarding electricity, e.g., for energy poor and vulnerable households

### **Action 2: Lowering network costs for local consumers**

Consumers pay **network tariffs** to cover the cost of transporting energy to their homes. This makes up **between a quarter and a third of electricity prices** and is key to energy affordability. EU legislation protects consumers by requiring that network operators only pass on costs which are cost-reflective, transparent, take into account the need for network security and flexibility and reflect actual costs incurred<sup>6</sup>. Tariffs, and the costs associated with them, are subject to approval by independent national regulatory authorities.

Energy communities producing energy for their own consumption or sharing energy with neighbours can help reduce the use of local grids and help avoid investments in additional infrastructure. Flexibility rewards in grid tariffs, which lower the energy bill for energy communities and citizens sharing their energy, would provide incentives for the local production and consumption of energy and provide benefits for all network users.

In 2025, the Commission published **guidance on network tariffs**<sup>7</sup> to help national regulatory authorities keep network charges, and therefore consumers bills, low. Swift implementation of this guidance will help to lower network charges for all consumers. The Commission encourages regulatory authorities to apply a rigorous approach when assessing the costs/revenues and take full account of the potential flexibility and demand response to replace expensive infrastructural investments. Following up on the guidance on network tariffs, the Commission will work with national regulatory authorities on accelerating the energy transition including by rewarding the positive effects of energy communities and energy sharing.

Goal	<b>Lowering network tariffs for consumers</b>
Result	Flexible consumption and flexible local electricity production and consumption supporting <b>lower grid investment</b> needs and <b>more efficient operation</b> .
How	National regulatory authorities are encouraged to consider <b>targeted incentives</b> in grid tariffs for flexible local consumption which would reduce overall grid costs, e.g. energy communities and citizens sharing their energy; and to assess

<sup>5</sup> Germany, France.

<sup>6</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU (recast).

<sup>7</sup> [Notice on Guidelines on future proof network charges for reduced system costs](#), C(2025) 4010 final.

	<b>flexibility potential</b> , in particular from energy communities and energy sharing when designing network charges. The Commission will cooperate closely with ACER and national regulatory authorities on the swift implementation of the Commission <b>guidance on network charge design</b> .
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**Action 3: Boosting the use of clean and energy-efficient technologies.**

In 2023 the main use of energy by EU households was for **heating homes** (62.5% of final energy consumption in the residential sector), followed by **water heating** (15.1%)<sup>8</sup>. **EU energy labels** already display saving potentials and give consumers useful advice, for example in purchase decisions on appliances for their homes<sup>9</sup>. **Home energy management systems** and **modern energy smart appliances** have the capacity to lower energy bills. The transition to electric mobility offers additional opportunities to reduce energy costs through smart and bidirectional charging of electric vehicles, enabling households to optimise electricity use. Yet, they are often perceived as too costly, mainly due to the high upfront payments. To tackle this, some Member States have set up **innovative financing models**, including social leasing<sup>10</sup>. Companies in some markets offer customers clean heating systems (including maintenance) by allowing consumers to pay the costs in flexible monthly instalments<sup>11</sup>. Beyond-grant schemes are being developed but have in most cases not yet been widely rolled out.

The Commission urges Member States and companies to go **beyond a grant-only** approach and to develop **innovative energy services and financing solutions** – for example, schemes combining social leasing with potential to cover upfront capital costs, offering heat as a service<sup>12</sup>, or flexible tariffs for heat pumps and maintenance costs. This will give EU citizens greater access to clean and energy- and water-efficient technologies, improving quality of life through, for example, reduced pollution, better indoor comfort and health, and lowering energy bills. Properly designed schemes **combining public and private funding** that prioritise people in energy poverty and other groups in situations of vulnerability will have a positive effect on lower- and middle-income households, whose energy costs can make up a disproportionate share of their overall household income. Similarly, investment should be supported to deploy clean or energy efficient solutions in off-grid situations. With the forthcoming Clean Energy Investment Strategy<sup>13</sup>, the Commission aims to unlock private investments in energy efficiency.

Goal	<b>Increasing access to clean, efficient technologies with innovative solutions</b>
Result	Improved energy performance of buildings, lower energy bills.
How	The Commission will work with Member States and stakeholders, within the <b>European Energy Efficiency Financing Coalition</b> , on devising practical and innovative energy service models and financing solutions and also beyond-grant approaches, including sharing best practices on reaching vulnerable households, increasing uptake of home and buildings energy management systems and energy

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat, [‘Energy consumption in households’](#), June 2025.

<sup>9</sup> [‘Europeans attitudes towards energy policies’ – September 2024 – Eurobarometer survey](#). More than three quarters of respondents had used the EU energy label during the past five years.

<sup>10</sup> For example, France has launched the second edition of the social leasing system for electric vehicles. In Latvia, a state-owned company provides companies and households with access to financial resources, through loans, guarantees and investments in venture capital funds.

<sup>11</sup> Good practices provided in the Annex of Commission Recommendation on unlocking private investment in energy efficiency. COM(2026)1526, Recommendation

<sup>12</sup> A business model that allows customers to pay for the heat they use rather for the infrastructure or fuel.

<sup>13</sup> COM(2026) 116, Clean Energy Investment Strategy.

	smart appliances and improving households’ access to electrified, flexible, and efficient energy services and technologies (Q4 2026).
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**Action 4: Empower consumers to have the cheapest offer and to switch supplier quickly**

EU legislation gives citizens **the right to switch** to alternative energy providers<sup>14</sup>; yet it is estimated that citizens lose on average **EUR 152 per year** by not doing so<sup>15</sup>. One reason is the lack of transparency; not all existing comparison tools may be sufficient in this regard, and while intermediary platforms can facilitate switching, their business models are not always clear, which can compromise transparency and accountability.

The Commission calls on Member States to ensure that energy suppliers provide their customers with ‘**best tariff advice**’ on the basis of their specific energy usage at least once a year, and put in place an ‘**early warning system**’ if there is a risk that a customer’s energy consumption will greatly exceed the level assumed when the contract was concluded and whenever a cheaper offer becomes available<sup>16</sup>. Such services, which reflect those provided in other sectors<sup>17</sup>, would allow consumers to react promptly and change contract (e.g. from flexible to fixed), with a positive impact on their bills.

Citizens should have access to **clear information** about their contracts; a concise summary should be provided in good time before a contract is concluded or extended. To ensure that vulnerable consumers, including those lacking digital tools or skills, can effectively exercise their rights, suppliers should provide this summary free of charge in accessible formats and through multiple channels. The Commission will provide guidance on key contractual terms and conditions and encourage suppliers to provide a **standardised summary**.

There are also unnecessary **technical hurdles** to switching suppliers. To address them, the Commission will lay down technical rules for suppliers to ensure that back-office switching operations across the EU can be completed within 24 hours. Furthermore, a **full roll-out of smart meters** by Member States is key – to exercise their rights, or to benefit from flexibility services (see action 6), citizens need to have a clear view of the energy they consume.

Goal	<b>Improving the transparency and comparability of energy supply offers; enabling technical switching of suppliers within 24 hours.</b>
Result	By switching, estimated savings of up to <b>EUR 152 per year</b> .
How	The Commission will adopt <b>technical rules on supplier switching</b> (Q1 2026); adopt a <b>recommendation on the summary of the key terms and conditions</b> of energy contracts (Q1 2026); and consider a <b>recommendation on standardised templates</b> for energy bills (2027).

**PILLAR II: PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CONSUMERS**

**Action 5: Boosting energy self-production and energy sharing among citizens**

Citizens can decide to join forces and set up an **energy community** to manage joint investments and produce and consume renewable energy, for example through solar panels, wind turbines,

<sup>14</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU (recast), Arts. 4,12.

<sup>15</sup> [ACER 2021 Annual Report on the Results of Monitoring the Internal Electricity and Natural Gas Markets](#)

<sup>16</sup> See also action 7.

<sup>17</sup> In telecoms, providers should give customers best tariff advice at least annually, which could encourage them to change their contract option.

and district heating systems. This is a right guaranteed by EU law.<sup>18</sup> While more than 8000 energy communities are currently active in Europe<sup>19</sup>, the **untapped potential** is huge, particularly in rural areas, for example by producing renewable energy, including biogas and biomethane, local waste management. Collective benefits can also be achieved by **sharing energy**. This allows a larger group of people such as tenants, low-income households, and those without suitable space to benefit directly from home-grown renewable energy. Self-production and energy sharing mean greater autonomy and stable access to affordable and more stable prices and make the energy system more efficient.

By 2030, over 16 million households and 630.000 SMEs could produce their own renewable energy.<sup>20</sup> There is potential to increase the installed renewable energy capacity of communities of households **by up to tenfold**.<sup>21</sup> Individual households producing and consuming their own solar energy can achieve savings of EUR 260-550 per year. For communities of households with a mix of wind and solar energy, it could be EUR 440-930 per year.<sup>22</sup>

To achieve this potential, energy communities need to be empowered to share electricity without being subject to excessive supplier fees, sell surplus energy and tap into their potential to balance high or low market demand. Administrative requirements must be reduced to a minimum. Targeted support should be provided to ensure accessibility for energy poor and vulnerable households. To support Member States in this endeavour, the Commission will issue an **energy communities action plan**.

Goal	<b>Tapping into the potential of energy communities to increase their installed renewable energy capacity by up to tenfold by 2030 in the EU, enabling the production of renewable power for 25–30 million households.</b>
Result	Potential savings of <b>EUR 260-550 per year</b> for individual households and potential financial benefit of <b>EUR 440-930 per year</b> for communities.
How	The Commission will provide <b>guidance to Member States on how to unleash the potential energy communities and energy self-consumption</b> , including sharing good practices. on the basis of an assessment of potential and existing barriers (Q1 2026); adopt an <b>implementing regulation on data interoperability</b> to ensure that energy sharing is easy to use and fully automated for consumers (2027); and issue a series of <b>practical, step-by-step guides</b> on how to set up and manage community energy projects for households and other stakeholders, including SMEs, farmers and public authorities (2026-2027).

### **Action 6: Promoting flexibility through retail contracts**

**Consumers with flexible retail contracts can make significant savings.** In some cases, electricity bills can be up to **40% lower**, when shifting heating demand to times with low electricity prices<sup>23</sup>. This is one of the reasons why demand flexibility should be actively promoted across the EU. The benefits include reduced electricity generation and lower network

<sup>18</sup> Article 16 of Directive (EU) 2019/944 and Article 22 of Directive (EU) 2018/2001.

<sup>19</sup> Estimate based on a broad interpretation of the concept, not limited to the EU definitions alone.

<sup>20</sup> EnTEC study on the potential of citizen energy (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> Community energy could contribute up to 90 GW, accounting for 8% of total renewable electricity generation in the EU by 2030. See EnTEC study on the potential of citizen energy (forthcoming).

<sup>22</sup> Cost savings are calculated based on wholesale and retail market prices in 2020 and 2022. Where electricity is self-consumed using the grid, all network tariffs and taxes apply.

<sup>23</sup> On the basis of data from the [ACER 2025 market monitoring report](#) and the Commission's own calculations.

costs, as well as lower need for capacity support measures, with potential annual savings estimated at **EUR 2.7 billion by 2030**<sup>24</sup>.

Realising these benefits means ensuring that **flexible retail contracts are widely available**; that consumers have **access to transparent pricing and reliable information**, and **targeted advice** on how to choose the supply contract best suited to their needs; and that the necessary **technical tools** are in place. **Smart metering systems** are key – they provide the data needed for flexibility to work. Efficient access to relevant data further facilitates greater automation, therefore improving consumer experience, while ensuring strong data protection.

Promoting flexibility also means removing barriers to flexibility services providers – companies that reward their customers for shifting their electricity usage from peak times to cheaper periods, reducing strain on local grids. The Commission will provide guidance to help remove these barriers, such as disincentives or unsuitable price signals.

Outside the EU, Australia’s *Solar Sharer Offer* provides households with zero-cost electricity during times of high solar generation. Inside the EU suppliers have also been developing offers with zero-cost electricity. Member States may wish to explore similar mechanisms adapted to the EU regulatory framework, which enable direct citizen benefits from the clean transition by lowering bills without requiring upfront investment in rooftop solar, that encourage demand-side flexibility, align consumption with periods of high renewable output, improve grid efficiency and strengthen public support for decarbonisation, by making the advantages of the energy transition visible and tangible.

Goal	<b>Enabling citizens to confidently benefit from flexible retail contracts and smart energy devices that optimise energy use.</b>
Result	Lower consumer bills and system costs, with potential savings of <b>up to 40%</b> <sup>25</sup> .
How	The Commission will provide <b>guidance to promote the remuneration of flexibility</b> in retail contracts (Q1 2026); improve access to the data required for flexibility with an <b>Implementing Regulation on interoperability requirements and procedures</b> (2027); and promote the potential of flexibility and efficiency in relevant projects under the new <b>Partnerships for Better Homes</b> (2026).

### **Action 7: Strengthening consumer trust**

Energy consumers face **aggressive telemarketing practices** or find it sometimes difficult to navigate the energy markets. This results in a **lack of trust** in the market and restricts opportunities to benefit from cheaper alternatives or more innovative services<sup>26</sup>.

To improve the quality of energy services for customers, the Commission will engage with consumers associations, energy suppliers and regulators to develop a **new code of service for energy suppliers**, as a first step towards countering **unfair marketing practices**. The code will give energy suppliers the opportunity to voluntarily commit to go beyond existing requirements to provide efficient complaint handling and prevent disconnections of vulnerable consumers – such as those living in rural areas – through longer notice periods, tailored payment plans, minimum supply, and to offer ‘best tariff advice’ and ‘early warning’ systems (see action 4). The code will serve as a **trust mark** by which energy suppliers signal to consumers that they can expect transparent and fair services. Some Member States are already

<sup>24</sup> Demand-side Flexibility: Quantification of benefits in the EU; DNV for smartEn, September 2022.

<sup>25</sup> On the basis of data from ACER 2025 market monitoring report (Rewarding Flexibility: How retail contract choice can help unlock consumer flexibility) and the Commission’s own calculations, electricity consumers could achieve savings of up to 40% if they switch to a dynamic price contract and actively manage their consumption.

<sup>26</sup> The [Eurobarometer](#) flags unfair commercial practices as an area for improvement. 82% of respondents would trust an energy provider more if they committed to an officially certified code of practice on consumer rights.

successfully applying and enforcing such a code<sup>27</sup>. It will remain at the discretion of the Member States to decide if and how such a code will be enforced at national level.

While **AI and digitalisation** will bring many benefits, including energy savings and energy bill reductions, it also presents new challenges. The Commission will therefore assess if the current rules are fit for purpose in this regard.

Trust in the market suffers if energy suppliers do not protect themselves against volatile prices. When energy suppliers fail, customers can lose any advance payments and may be forced into less favourable contracts. To prevent this, the Commission will provide guidance to national regulators on how they can ensure that energy suppliers devise **appropriate risk-management and hedging strategies**, to help keep the retail electricity market stable and reliable.

Goal	<b>Strengthen trust; tackle aggressive and misleading (tele)marketing; protect citizens from the consequences of market failures.</b>
Result	Increased consumer trust and higher quality of service. Greater market transparency leading to competitive pricing and improved service efficiency.
How	The Commission will unlock consumers benefits by proposing an easily understandable <b>code of service</b> on consumer rights to energy suppliers, who can commit voluntarily to high consumer protection standards based on transparency, fairness, mutual trust and accountability (Q4 2026); publish new guidance to support national regulatory authorities in preventing supplier failures by <b>improving risk management</b> (Q1 2026); and assess the need to adopt a new <b>post-2029 EU consumer energy rights legal proposal</b> to ensure consumer rights also in new innovative contracts and address aggressive or misleading (tele-)marketing practices (2028).

### **PILLAR III: TACKLING ENERGY POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY**

**Fairness and equality are at the heart of the energy transition.** The protection of vulnerable consumers and those in energy poverty is the **number one priority** for Europeans, according to the latest Eurobarometer survey.<sup>28</sup> Energy poverty, unaffordable housing and limited access to social housing can lead to growing risks of vulnerabilities. The EU is developing the first EU Anti-Poverty Strategy to help people access essential protection and services, address the root causes of poverty, and contribute to poverty eradication by 2050. Allowing everyone to have access to energy as an essential service will reduce vulnerability and poverty in the EU.

#### **Action 8: Joining forces to reduce energy poverty**

In 2024, around **42 million Europeans** (9.2% of the EU population) were unable to adequately heat their homes<sup>29</sup>. This is a serious and unacceptable situation for too many citizens in the EU, with disproportionate impacts on families and population groups at risk of poverty or of discrimination.

The EU legal framework requires Member States to address energy poverty and to protect vulnerable consumers through policy measures and concrete actions. However, the Commission’s assessment<sup>30</sup> of the updated national energy and climate plans shows that these

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Ireland, the Netherlands and France.

<sup>28</sup> [Flash Eurobarometer 566](#) ‘Consumer behaviour in the energy transition’, December 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Eurostat ‘[Population unable to keep home adequately warm by poverty status](#)’, February 2026.

<sup>30</sup> [SWD\(2025\) 140 final](#).

**rules are unevenly implemented across the EU.** This is, in part, due to the difficulty of identifying and reaching vulnerable households and people facing energy poverty, and of effectively **translating needs into efficient support measures** – since energy poverty and vulnerability are **multifaceted**. To help Member States make their **national plans** more ambitious and reduce energy poverty, the Commission will provide additional guidance and share good and replicable practices. These will focus on successful national and local approaches to address energy poverty and split incentives<sup>31</sup>, while ensuring that incentives for energy savings and efficiency are maintained even for households receiving social benefits to cover their energy bills. In line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EU) 2024/1275, the Commission will also help Member States draw up **their national building renovation plans** by the end of 2026 to identify the worst performing buildings, where the most vulnerable citizens reside, and design tailor-made policies that help them reduce their energy bills and live more comfortably in their homes, in winter and in summer. The plans also aim to mainstream **accessibility** for older persons and persons with disabilities in the context of renovations.

In addition to energy poverty projects under the Social Climate Fund<sup>32</sup>, Cohesion Policy Funds<sup>33</sup> or other support provided at local level through the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EPAH), the Commission will launch **a new call for proposals under the LIFE programme**<sup>34</sup> to fund projects that support national, regional and local authorities in tackling energy poverty, building on 10 projects already underway. This will empower additional actors to design and upscale targeted measures providing households in energy poverty with durable solutions for affordable energy and improved living conditions. Moreover, the Commission will provide guidance on ways to protect vulnerable households and people in energy poverty during the **decommissioning of natural gas networks**.

Goal	<b>Help national and local authorities take concrete actions to reduce the number of people in energy poverty and protect vulnerable consumers to ensure a fair and just energy transition.</b>
Result	More consistent and targeted policies for vulnerable households in or at risk of energy poverty; faster, fairer and more affordable access to structural solutions (e.g. renovations); progressive and measurable reduction of energy poverty and related health and social issues across the EU.
How	The Commission will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ update its <b>Recommendation on energy poverty</b><sup>35</sup> to provide additional analysis and share good and replicable practices. It will include practices which successfully address energy poverty and remove split incentives, utilise digital tools, simplify outreach to vulnerable citizens, implement cross-sectoral measures to protect citizens from heat waves, promote innovative financing tools for energy efficiency measures and showcase how energy sharing and energy communities can effectively alleviate energy poverty (Q4 2026);</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> Split incentives happen when landlords lack motivation to improve housing as tenants gain most of the benefits but cannot make the changes themselves.

<sup>32</sup> Between 2026 and 2032, the Social Climate Fund will provide up to EUR 86.7 billion to help vulnerable people and small businesses who are most affected by rising energy and transport costs.

<sup>33</sup> The Regulation on the modernisation of Cohesion Policy incentivizes Member States to increase funding to affordable and sustainable housing, with a focus on households affected by energy poverty.

<sup>34</sup> [LIFE Multiannual Work Programme 2025-2027](#)

<sup>35</sup> [EUR-LEX 32023H2407](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ continue providing <b>technical assistance</b> and additional guidance to national, regional and local authorities to effectively target vulnerable citizens through policies and measures (2026-2028); and</li> <li>○ help national, regional and local authorities reach out to citizens facing energy poverty with efficient measures by funding <b>new projects under the LIFE programme</b> which address energy poverty. It will take tailored communication and information actions to inform vulnerable and energy-poor citizens on cost effective energy saving opportunities (2026-2027).</li> </ul>
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### **Action 9: Protecting vulnerable citizens from disconnections**

For many EU citizens, including those already facing energy poverty, the **inability to pay energy bills** is an additional pressing concern. The risk of being disconnected from their electricity and gas supply, seriously impacting their quality of life and health, including mental health. In 2024, around **31 million Europeans were late on their utility bills**<sup>36</sup>.

The Commission will engage with Member States, national regulatory authorities, energy suppliers, consumer organisations and other relevant stakeholders to set up systems at national level to identify **early warning signs** when households have difficulty paying their energy bills. The aim is to help energy companies step in and offer support to such households before the problem gets worse. In addition, the Commission will promote good practices on the prevention and protection from disconnections, including **debt-management schemes**.

Goal	<b>Better protection for vulnerable and energy-poor citizens at risk of energy disconnections, through early-warning and debt management schemes.</b>
Result	Fewer disconnections; consistent protection for vulnerable consumers across the EU; reduced vulnerability; improved social justice, health and well-being.
How	The Commission will produce support <b>guidelines</b> and organise training courses for national and local authorities on designing and implementing <b>disconnection safeguards</b> , and promote best practices via targeted workshops, events and publications (Q2-Q3 2026); and will inform about available support with dedicated communication actions (throughout 2026).

### **PILLAR IV: IMPLEMENTING THE EXISTING EU LAWS**

European citizens benefit from strong consumer protection thanks to EU laws – however, **implementation remains uneven**. Without strong implementation on the ground, the gap between the EU ambition and people’s lived experience will persist. **Local authorities** have a key role in supporting and engaging with citizens, but they are often insufficiently involved in policy development and **lack the powers and means** to deliver measures to citizens.

The Commission will work with Member States and the relevant stakeholders to help implement and enforce EU laws – in particular, by adopting **guidance and technical analysis** on energy communities and self-consumption including an action plan on energy communities; protection of vulnerable customers and customers in energy poverty from energy disconnection and during gas phase-out; the summary of the key contractual conditions; supplier risk management; market-based retail prices; remuneration of flexibility in retail contracts; technical rules for supplier switching.

<sup>36</sup> Eurostat, ‘[Arrears on utility bills](#)’, February 2026.

Implementation cannot, of course, happen without taking into account **all the different stakeholders**. That is why, in order to achieve all the objectives set out in this communication, it is essential to have strong interaction and **engagement** between the Commission, Member States and citizens themselves, as well as with civil society, regulators, industry and academia. To this end, the Commission will **streamline** existing initiatives and increase the visibility of existing support tools – such as the Citizens Energy Advisory Hub, the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub, the Covenant of Mayors, the EU Islands Initiative, the Coal Regions in Transition Initiative and the Energy Behaviour Forum – upgrading the existing **Citizens Energy Forum** to a focal point for sharing best practices and tracking progress on implementation. The Commission will also issue guidance for Member States to empower cities, supporting them to unlock the full potential of local authorities in delivering the clean energy transition. **Through national consumer organisations, the Commission will give particular attention to citizen engagement, ensuring consumers are informed of their rights and the opportunities available within the EU energy market.**