

1. Why is the 4th PCI list better for the environment than the 3rd one? Why does it contribute more to achieving the goals of the green deal than the 3rd?

In its 4th PCI list, the Commission has put the focus on electricity projects that are needed for the integration of a growing share of renewables and to enable the transformation of our electricity system. Electricity projects make up 3/4 of the 4th PCI list. These projects are essential to connect markets and integrate a growing share of renewables in the EU power grid. Several new electricity projects (such as the North Sea Wind Power Hub and the NeuConnect) specifically tap into the offshore potential of the North Sea. Others such as the hydro-pump electricity storages in Germany, Spain and Ireland and the six electricity smart grids projects support the integration of renewables by ensuring a more flexible and reliable system operation building on the potential of digital solutions.

The Commission has worked proactively to reduce the number of gas projects in each subsequent list (53 down to 32). The 32 gas projects included on the 4th list relate to infrastructure necessary to ensure security of supply and to diversify gas supply sources. The Commission is currently working to further strengthen the sustainability assessment of gas projects and aims to strengthen the focus on projects enabling the decarbonisation of the gas sector in the future.

Moreover, the 4th list features more energy transition projects than the 3rd PCI list, in particular smart grid (from 4 to 6) and CO₂ infrastructure projects (from 4 to 5).

2. Which concrete renewable projects are on the 4th but not the 3rd list and would risk losing funding/admin support? Which of these are actually likely to apply for funding concerning their readiness level?

The new PCIs that are not on the 3rd list and cannot therefore access funding in the case of a rejection of the 4th list by the Parliament are the following:

- *the North Sea Wind Power Hub and the NeuConnect, interconnections tapping into the offshore wind potential of the in the North Seas;*
- *Several infrastructure investments under the Baltic synchronisation, needed for the synchronising the three Baltic States with the Continental European networks and ensuring the independence of the electricity networks for the current IPS/UPS system;*
- *three hydro-pump electricity storages in Germany, Spain and Ireland supporting the integration of renewables by ensuring flexibility and balancing services to the system;*
- *three new electricity smart grid projects and two new CO₂ network projects.*

Funding under the Connecting Europe Facility comes in the form of grants for studies and grants for works. Hence, any PCI, independently of its readiness level, can apply for CEF funding to help the project's implementation. Grant for studies support the project to carry out preparatory studies such (pre-) feasibility studies, Front end engineering and design (FEED studies, as well as studies to carry out environmental impact assessments.

For example, the North Sea Wind Power Hub (DK, DE, NL) foresees the construction of one or more hubs at a suitable location in the North Sea with interconnectors to bordering North Sea countries. The whole system may function as a hub for transport of wind energy, an interconnection hub to the connected countries, a working hub for offshore wind developers and a location for possible power-to-gas solutions. This project is a first building block in the hub-and-spoke concept (NSWPH) connecting up to 12 GW future offshore wind parks to the systems of Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany after 2035. Carrying out studies, notably marine and seabed survey studies is a crucial preparatory stage in the implementation of the PCI. Not only will it ensure that the project is built in

line with EU environmental legislation, but will also help in-depth analysis of all technological design alternatives that will inform the investment decision.

Studies help scale-up the commercialisation of new technologies such as CO2 networks, a key element in the CO2 capture and storage (CCS) chain of technologies by looking into the optimal design of CO2 transport network between production sites such as large-scale industrial sites and storage sites.

3. Are there gas projects that are on the 3rd but not 4th list that would potentially continue to get or now apply for funding if we fall back to the 3rd list?

The 3rd PCI list includes 40% more gas projects compared to the 4th list. In the case of a rejection of the 4th PCI list, several gas projects which have been taken off the list due to their negative assessment in the PCI regional groups would remain eligible for EU support from the Connecting Europe Facility both for studies and for construction works.

This includes projects such as the Eastring pipeline project running from Bulgaria to Slovakia, the Stork II interconnector between Czechia and Poland, the BACI interconnector between Austria and Czechia, the STEP project between Spain and France, the 3rd interconnector between Portugal and Spain as well as several projects in the UK (including Islandsmagee storage, SNIP reverse flow) and many more.

4. Can you lay out the concrete procedure (time-line) for the case on an objection to the 4th list? (when will the new list, the 5th, be proposed? Will the commission propose an alternative 4th?)

In line with the TEN-E Regulation, the Commission is required to establish a new Union list of PCIs every two years. In case the Parliament would reject the 4th PCI list, the 3rd PCI list adopted on 23 November 2017 would remain in force.

In parallel, the Commission would continue the process of preparing the 5th PCI list in view of its adoption in November 2021.

5. Are there any very criticized gas projects on the 3rd list that are not anymore on the 4th?

The inclusion of PCIs on the Union list is done on the basis of an assessment of candidate projects against robust methodologies that look at the needs for infrastructure and the merits of candidate projects.

The following gas PCIs are no longer on the 4th PCI list due to negative assessment in the PCI process:

- the Eastring pipeline project running from Bulgaria to Slovakia*
- the Stork II interconnector between Czechia and Poland*
- the BACI interconnector between Austria and Czechia*
- the STEP project between Spain and France*
- the 3rd interconnector between Portugal and Spain*
- several projects in the UK (including Islandsmagee storage, SNIP reverse flow)*
- and many more.*

6. What is the difference on the UK projects (overall) between the 3rd and the 4th PCI list?

Seven electricity projects on the 3rd list are no longer included in the 4th PCI list, as follows:

- *Interconnection between Zeebrugge (BE) and the vicinity of Richborough (UK)*
- *Internal line between the vicinity of Richborough and Canterbury (UK)*
- *France — United Kingdom interconnection between Tourbe (FR) and Chilling (UK) [currently known as "IFA2" project]*
- *Interconnection between Le Havre (FR) and Lovedean (UK) [currently known as "AQUIND"],*
- *Compressed air energy storage in Cheshire*
- *Hydro-pumped electricity storage at Coire Glas*
- *Interconnection between Iceland and United Kingdom [currently known as "Ice Link"].*

The 4th PCI list includes one new electricity project related to the UK, that is Interconnection between Germany and United Kingdom [currently known as NeuConnect"].

Concerning gas projects, all UK projects that are on the 3rd PCI list are no longer included on the 4th PCI list: physical reverse flow at Moffat interconnection point, development of the Islandmagee Underground Gas Storage, upgrade of the SNIP (Scotland to Northern Ireland) pipeline to accommodate physical reverse flow between Ballylumford and Twynholm.

7. As the consultation process for the selection of the 5th PCI list has already started, how can the European Parliament be involved, even before the release of the revision of the TEN-E regulation?

In her exchange of views with the Members of the ITRE Committee, Commissioner Simson confirmed her commitment to a continuous political dialogue with the Parliament alongside the preparation of the 5th list, notably during key phases of the process that relate to the identification of infrastructure needs in the EU regions and the assessment of candidate PCIs against these needs.

The PCI process started in 2020 with the preparation of the Ten Year Network Development Plans (TYNDPs) in electricity and gas (ENTSOs) led by the European Network of Transmission System Operators (ENTSOs) in line with the TEN-E Regulation. As soon as the TYNDPs are adopted by the ENTSOs, Regional Groups will convene at the beginning of 2021 to look at infrastructure gaps and bottlenecks in the EU regions. European Parliament representatives have been invited to such Regional group meetings in the past. This will be continued and the Commission will ensure that invitations, including information on possible webstreaming will be shared systematically with ITRE members.

8. Why is the Commission still including projects on Oil Supply Connections networks in the 4th list even though they contradict with the Climate targets and the pathway toward carbon neutrality?

The six oil PCIs address the need of the Central Eastern European region for diversified oil supplies. These existing projects enhance the energy security of the countries in the region by (a) interconnecting the Eastern and Western European crude oil pipeline systems; (b) increasing the capacity of sea imports of crude oil from the Baltic Sea, Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea; (c) linking the different arms of the Druzhba pipeline and, (d) creating South-North pipeline connections. These projects are not eligible for funding from the Connecting Europe Facility.

The Commission is currently reviewing the TEN-E regulation with a view to presenting a proposal by the end of 2020. The future of oil PCIs is part of the review work.