



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR ENERGY

The Director-General

Brussels,  
ENER/DJJ/ep

Mr. Ciarán Cuffe MEP  
Ms. Clare Daly MEP  
Ms. Grace O Sullivan MEP  
Mr. Luke Ming Flanagan MEP  
Ms. Martina Anderson MEP  
Mr. Matt Carthy MEP  
Mr. Mick Wallace MEP

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2019 concerning the 4<sup>th</sup> European Union list of projects of common interest (PCIs), asking for all the candidate gas projects on the island of Ireland on the draft regional list to be rejected by the High-Level Decision-Making Body which will take place on 4 October 2019.

In response to your concerns, I would first like to explain the selection process underlying the 4<sup>th</sup> PCI list during which we have paid particular attention to an open and transparent selection process. Since November 2018, the Regional Groups, including the one for the North-South gas interconnections in Western Europe ('NSI West Gas'), met regularly to identify the infrastructure needs and to prepare the draft regional lists in line with the provisions of the Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure (the TEN-E Regulation). Stakeholders have been involved in this process and their views and concerns have been considered in the discussions. Assistants to Members of the European Parliament from all political groups in the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), Environment, Public Health and Safety (ENVI) and Transport (TRAN) Committees have also been invited to attend the Regional Group meetings. All candidate projects were assessed against a methodology and a set of criteria that were agreed in the Regional Groups. On that basis, three candidate gas projects on the island of Ireland have not been proposed on the draft regional lists. Only one candidate gas project on the island of Ireland has been proposed on the draft regional list.

I agree with you that sustainability criteria need to be fully integrated in the assessment of candidate gas projects. As acknowledged in the opinion by the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) on the draft regional lists of proposed gas projects of common interest for the 4<sup>th</sup> European Union list of PCIs, to which you refer in your letter, the available data were not sufficient to consider sustainability criteria in a meaningful manner in the selection process. Therefore, in line with the ACER opinion, it

is very important that we improve the analytical tools and procedures to carry out a sustainability assessment of candidate gas projects as part of the cost-benefit analysis for future European Union lists of PCIs. My services have already started work on that respect and I will make sure that the results will be fully reflected in the next European Union list of PCIs.

Concerning compliance with environmental legislation, I would like to assure you the inclusion of a given energy infrastructure project on the European Union list of PCIs does not prejudice the fulfilment of EU environmental law. All PCI projects, just like non-PCI projects, must fully comply with national and EU law, including environmental legislation. The Commission can withdraw a project from the PCI list if it is found not to comply with EU law, including environmental legislation.

I fully share your commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix in view of the transition to full decarbonisation. In this context, I would like to mention that the EU Member States agreed this week on a Commission proposal to invest €30 million under the Connecting Europe Facility to build the Celtic Interconnector between France and Ireland. The implementation of this PCI will enhance the development and integration of more renewable energy in Ireland.

Concerning the next steps of the PCI selection process, the High-Level Decision-Making Body will adopt the regional lists of proposed PCIs on 4 October 2019. It is for national governments to present their substantiated reasons in case a project on their territory should not be included in the final European Union list of PCIs. The Commission cannot *ex officio* remove a candidate project from the draft regional lists. I therefore advise you to reach out to the Irish government to explain your position.

After the High-Level Decision-Making Body, the Commission will adopt the final regional lists in the form of a delegated act. This adoption is currently foreseen for the end of October. After the adoption by the Commission, the delegated act establishing the European Union list of PCIs will be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council who will have 2 months – which can be extended by another 2 months – to decide whether they intend to object to the list. After this period, the PCI list enters into force.

I hope my letter addresses your concerns. I remain available for any further queries you may have and stand ready to working together on how to improve the selection procedure for future European Union lists of PCIs.

Yours sincerely,

Ditte Juul Jørgensen