

EU MEMBER STATES HAVE AGREED TO REDUCE GAS USE IN EUROPE BY 15% BY NEXT SPRING



“The EU is united and solidary. Today’s decision has clearly shown the member states will stand tall against any Russian attempt to divide the EU by using energy supplies as a weapon. Adopting the gas reduction proposal in record time has undoubtedly strengthened our common energy security. Saving gas now will improve preparedness. The winter will be much cheaper and easier for EU’s citizens and industry.” said Minister for Industry and Trade Josef Sikela.

In a meeting on 26 July, member states committed to reducing gas demand by 15% between August 2022 and 31 March 2023. This commitment was made on the basis of previous consultations between individual EU governments and their industries. Member States have agreed to achieve this target through measures of their choice.

Some of the measures that the Member States could use are, for example, the launch of an auctioning or tendering system to incentivize industries to reduce energy consumption. Member States may also offer support in line with the amendment to the Temporary Crisis Framework for State Aid adopted by the Commission.

The reduction plan consists of three main pillars: switching to other renewable forms of energy, incentives to reduce gas consumption, and reducing consumption in the form of heating and cooling.

This plan, as a priority, must not adversely affect households, hospitals, and other vulnerable consumers, which are crucial for the provision of essential products and services for the economy and for the EU’s supply chains and competitiveness.

CZECH REPUBLIC WELCOMED COREPER I

At the beginning of July, the Czech Republic welcomed COREPER I. During the three-day visit co-organized by the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the ambassadors visited the Moravian-Silesian Region on the occasion of the Czech Presidency.

The main objective of this visit was to show the ambassadors the natural wealth and, more importantly, the long industrial history, present and the potential of our industry. The fact that the Czech Republic is a very strongly industrialized country based on traditional

industries requires an extraordinary approach toward a green and digital future.

The region is aware of its responsibility towards sustainability and the environment and is actively coming up with innovations that companies are applying within their production and trying to maintain sustainability efficiency.

An exciting program was organized, starting at the Technical University of Ostrava. The delegation was

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News FLASH

> SECOND CALL FOR THE PROGRAM, WHICH HELPS CORNER SHOPS IN RURAL AREAS

The Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic has announced the second call for the program “Obchůdek 2021+” to support corner shops in rural areas. The region can use this program in case there is one shop in the village only and to cover some costs, for example, staff salaries, rent, heating, lighting, and internet, up to 130 000 CZK. Applications will be open from 1 September to 15 October 2022.

> CZECH REPUBLIC A LEASE OF A SHARE OF CAPACITY IN THE FLOATING LNG TERMINAL

The Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, in cooperation with Czech company CEZ Group, has secured for the Czech Republic a lease of a share of capacity in the floating LNG terminal under construction in Eemshaven, the Netherlands. The terminal will receive liquefied natural gas on specially adapted tankers, which will then be heated and converted into a gaseous state. This gas will then be fed from the terminal into transport pipelines and transported via these pipelines to its destination, in this case, the Czech Republic.

> PLATFORM TO HELP WITH UKRAINE’S POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

The Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic has created a platform to help with Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction. The platform will be freely accessible to all interested companies and should offer a catalogue of requests from the Ukrainian side and opportunities for immediate involvement in individual projects. The reconstruction of Ukraine should be undertaken in the spirit of the European slogan “Build Back Better,” meaning that it is not only about restoring what was destroyed to its original state but also about modernizing entire sectors.

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able to see the high level of progress from a traditional university of mining and metallurgy to a modern technical university, which boasts a world-class research centre with the help of EU funding. Representatives of COREPER I also had the opportunity to get acquainted with a specialized centre, in the field of smart technologies, by visiting an IT4Innovations supercomputer centre. It is a special building with its photovoltaic power plant, as well as a digitized teaching production line,

which simulates a Smart factory environment. Then the delegation moved to Karviná to the Gabriela mine, where the revitalization of post-mining landscape is underway. The program also included a tour of the World of Technology in the Dolní Vítkovice area. On Friday, the delegation spent the day with other companies such as Liberty Steel, where they became familiar with greening projects and one of the biggest investments in the Ostrava smelter in several decades, with the

Danielli company. The project involves reducing their carbon footprint by more than 80% by 2027. TATRA Kopřivnice, another major company and also a large regional employer, also welcomed the delegation and let them try out a special polygon where they test the world-famous truck vehicles. Friday afternoon was spent in Třinec and Třinec Ironworks, where plans to support the reduction of emissions were also outlined.

FIRST ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CZECH PRESIDENCY - DIGITAL COMPASS PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT

The Czech Republic can rejoice in the first success of our Presidency by reaching a preliminary agreement on the policy program Digital compass: the European way for the Digital Decade 2030. This program will bring the European Union a bit closer to a modern, competitive, digitized, prosperous and educated society and make life easier for citizens in particular. The Digital Decade is a program that addresses the overall digital transformation within the European Union. It aims to strengthen the leadership of the EU and its individual countries in this sphere, including by having countries work together to evaluate their multi-annual strategic plans and by supporting shared projects in areas such as AI and cybersecurity.

The program also targets the education of citizens, with the aim that by 2030 up to 80% of citizens will have at least basic digital skills and be able

to meet the increasing demands for competitiveness and digital competence. Another goal is 5G network coverage, whereby by the end of the decade, European households should be covered by a gigabit network and have 100% of their online availability of the essential public services to save time when interacting with authorities. Cloud services are also among the targets, with up to 750 businesses expected to be connected and actively using the service.

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is assessed and published by the Commission in an annual report to measure the level of digital performance across countries. The agreement is currently pending approval by the Council and the European Parliament, and the Czech Presidency intends to submit the agreement to COREPER for its approval as soon as possible.



EESC CORNER: EU AND US SHOULD USE MOMENTUM FOR CLOSER, STRATEGIC EU-US PARTNERSHIP



At its last plenary session before the summer break, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an own-initiative opinion entitled “The new EU-US Trade and Technology Council in action: priorities for the business, workers, and consumers and necessary safeguards.”

In this opinion, the EESC highlighted the growing need for a closer EU-US partnership. The EU and the US have the most integrated economic relationship in the world, and the US remains by far the EU’s largest trade and investment partner. Moreover, the highly complex geopolitical situation and the unexpected multitude of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, make it clear that the EU should now, more than ever, strengthen cooperation with like-minded countries that share the same values, such as the US.

The EESC therefore recognizes this is a critical moment for the EU and the US to use the momentum for a closer EU-US partnership and deepen their political and economic cooperation with other democratic states with open, rules-based market economies to protect our values and strengthen prosperity, democracy, rule of law, security and human rights.

As a member of the EESC Employers’ Group and the study group working on this own-initiative opinion, I actively participated in the plenary debate on the TTC that took place on 14 July. I emphasized that European business strongly supports the TTC and hopes more concrete results and deliverables can emerge from this very important project. I highlighted that the main focus should be on advancing the bilateral relation and boosting trade

and investment ties between the EU and the US, fostering growth and competitiveness. Among other things, I also pointed out the importance of digital trade and the urgent need for a new agreement on transatlantic data flows.

In this regard, the EESC rightly calls in its opinion for a rapid conclusion of the new framework for data transfers, as well as for coordination between the ten TTC working groups and active engagement of stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic, which is essential for the TTC to reach its targets. Therefore, the EESC will actively engage within the TTC structures and strives to be involved in the TTC ministerial meetings as a unique civil society stakeholder.

You can read the whole opinion here: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/new-eu-us-trade-and-technology-council-action-priorities-business-workers-and-consumers-and-necessary-safeguards>



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