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**EU Gas Market Integration 2.0**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has posed an unprecedented challenge for the energy sector as a whole. The large-scale imposition of confinement measures has led to an abrupt shift of consumption trends from commercial and industrial activities towards the domestic demand front. In this bleak context, the EU has stuck to its Green Deal roadmap in order to accelerate its post-COVID recovery by means of a green, circular, digital and globally competitive economy. Proposed initiatives within the framework of the European Green Deal are set to strengthen policy, regulatory and infrastructure planning towards sustainable, future-proof and shock-resilient energy networks in the post-COVID era. In what concerns natural gas, the plan has to do with a deeper integration of the electricity and gas sectors, in terms of both their markets and infrastructure. Commonly referred to in the institutional *langage* as “sector coupling”, this plan is contingent on market design shifts and regulation that is conducive to the greater penetration of different types of green gases (including, but not limited to, biogas/biomethane, renewable electricity- and natural gas-sourced hydrogen) into the EU’s existing natural gas system. The promotion of renewable and low-carbon fuels, including hydrogen, for hard-to-abate sectors constitutes one of the pillars of the European Commission’s Energy System Integration Strategy, the latter concept being defined as “the coordinated planning and operation of the energy system as a whole, across multiple energy carriers, infrastructures and consumption sectors.” The application of the rationale and principles of the existing natural gas regulation to this new state of play, in the context of which clean molecules are envisioned as complementary to electrification, and the exploitation of existing natural gas inter-connectors and storage facilities to manage the intermittency of renewable energy and to accommodate progressively higher admixtures of green gases towards and after 2030, will bring the EU’s gas market integration to a whole new level, largely internalizing security of supply considerations and raising the need for hybrid governance models for the management of external gas relations.

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