



Dear IENE Partners, Dear Members, Dear Colleagues

Greetings to all from Athens!

As usual it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to one more IENE online event. Today our subject of interest is natural gas which is considered as a main pillar in most countries energy system. As you all know natural gas has many attributes and until very recently it was considered and promoted by international organisations and governments as a benign and clean fuel.

Hence, over the last three decades natural gas, following consistent efforts and heavy investment by governments and industry alike, saw a tremendous growth in our part of the world and today n.gas covers a substantial part of the energy mix in most countries in SE Europe. Especially important is the role of n.gas in power generation where it's share in most countries electricity mix is above 30%, whereas in some cases it reaches 45%

However, as of late-we are talking of what has been happening over the last 2 years - some quarters appear determined to give gas a bad name on account of its emissions foot print and present it as the ultimate evil which if we continue to use we are in danger of speeding up the ecological catastrophe of planet earth through global warming and what have you. Hence, the ban imposed by EIB from January 1,2021 on

new investment on gas infrastructure and the EU taxonomy, which very much like the Catholic Index, the famous Index Librorum Phrohibitorum, has banned gas as an evil fuel!

We all know that this is not the case as far as natural gas's qualities are concerned. On the contrary the countries in the SEE region look upon natural gas as their best hope - in addition to renewables- for a quick decarbonisation and phasing out of the really polluting, in the context of climate change, solid fuels. And of course without the base load and quick response fuel that natural gas power generation is capable of it useless to talk about greater RES penetration in our electricity grids.

We have now reached a situation where it is most urgent for the EC, governments and industry to sit around the table and work out a new strategy to include natural gas as part of the solution towards achieving the new emission goals of 2030, and not exclude it. A strategy which will obviously include stringest emission standards and much stricter environmental and health safety conditions for n.gas power generation as well as provision for the introduction of hydrogen in gas grids in the near future.

To me and several of my colleagues at the Institute it is quite clear that without natural gas EU's highly ambitious 2030 goals cannot be really achieved in SE Europe. This is why today's online gathering is important as we have managed to get round the table some of the top executives and experts in the field in an effort to make an impassionate, yet informed assessment of the role and prospects of gas in our region.

A total of some 25 speakers and panelists from 12 countries will participate in today's event and I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all of them.

I also wish to thank the two important industry Associations, Eurogas and GEODE, for their wholeheaded support and participation.

As we now move to the first session of the Webinar in order start the actual proceedings, I just wish to say that we are indeed lucky to have assembled such a high level group of people from both sides of the Atlantic. So first of all I wish to welcome Ms. Maria Spyraiki, Member of European Parliament and also member of the ITRE Committee (Committee on Industry, Research and Energy). Ms. Spyraiki you have the floor.