INSTITUTE OF ENERGY
FOR SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

IENE Briefing Note No.24

European Grids Package

December 2025

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IENE BRIEFING Note No.24

DECEMBER 2025

Prepared by the IENE Research Team

IENE Briefing Notes

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Institute of Energy for South East Europe (IENE)
3, Alexandrou Soutsou, 106 71 Athens, Greece
tel: +0030 210 36 28 457, 3640 278, fax: +0030 210 3646 144
website: www.iene.eu, e-mail: secretariat@iene.gr

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Introduction

The European Union's energy grids—the backbone of its entire energy system—are set for major modernisation and expansion so they can operate at their full potential. The European Grids Package and the Energy Highways Initiative, presented on 10 December 2025 **(1)**, aim to enable electricity to move smoothly across all Member States, integrate cheaper clean energy, and accelerate the shift toward electrification. These measures will help bring down energy costs and support a more affordable standard of living for Europeans. They will also strengthen security of supply as the EU reduces its dependence on Russian energy and moves toward full energy independence.

The Grids Package represents a new vision for energy infrastructure, adopting a genuinely European approach to grid planning. It streamlines permitting processes, distributes the costs of cross-border projects more fairly, and makes better use of existing assets while advancing the construction of new infrastructure across the Union. To make the grid resilient and fit for the future, the Commission proposes additional financing tools. Among them are improved cost-sharing mechanisms and project bundling—crucial steps, since highly interconnected cross-border infrastructure benefits regions far beyond where it is physically located. Ensuring transparent and equitable allocation of costs will prevent unfair burdens on local consumers. Bundling projects, including through special purpose vehicles, will also simplify financing and attract further investment.

As announced by President Ursula von der Leyen in her 2025 State of the Union address **(2)**, the eight Energy Highways target the most urgent infrastructure needs that require rapid support and political commitment. These projects were selected for their strategic importance in completing the Energy Union and their need for strong EU-level backing to ensure successful delivery. The Commission intends to accelerate their implementation immediately through intensified political coordination, support from Regional High-Level Groups, the involvement of European coordinators, and close collaboration with the Energy Union Task Force, extending cooperation beyond EU borders where relevant. Each Energy Highway will be treated as a priority at EU level, with the Commission assisting Member States in granting them the same status nationally.

1. Background

Despite progress under the current EU legal framework, Member States still lack the level of interconnection needed to realise a true Energy Union. Several countries remain off track to meet the 2030 target of 15% interconnection capacity **(3)**. According to the European Commission, the cost of inaction is substantial: in 2022, fossil fuels accounted for 70% of the EU's gross available energy, and 98% of the oil and gas consumed in Member States was imported. This high import dependence leaves the EU vulnerable to price shocks and geopolitical tensions. **(4)**

Electricity price data further illustrate the challenge. In 2024, industrial electricity prices in the EU averaged €0.199 per kWh—more than double the levels in China (€0.082) and the United States (€0.075). In the first half of 2025, household electricity prices in the EU ranged

from €0.3835 per kWh in Germany to €0.1040 per kWh in Hungary, while prices for non-household consumers varied from €0.2726 per kWh in Ireland to €0.0804 per kWh in Finland (5). A major driver behind these disparities is the insufficient investment in, and integration of, Europe's energy infrastructure.

To address this, a significant increase in financial support is essential, according to EC's rationale. Within the proposed 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (6), the Commission has called for a five-fold rise in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Energy budget—from €5.84 billion to €29.91 billion. Public funds will be further bolstered by measures designed to mobilise private capital as part of the forthcoming Clean Energy Investment Strategy.

2. Eight Priorities for Europe's Energy Backbone: The Energy Highways Initiative

In her "State of the Union" address on September 10, 2025, President von der Leyen unveiled eight new "Energy Highways". These projects build upon existing PCIs and PMIs under the TEN-E framework, as well as flagship initiatives highlighted in the Affordable Energy Action Plan (7). The Energy Highways are designed to tackle the EU's most urgent energy infrastructure needs, providing targeted short-term support and strong political commitment to overcome bottlenecks that have slowed progress.

The Energy Highways will strengthen energy security, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, expand the integration of renewable energy into the grid, and promote electrification. They are also expected to help lower energy prices, accelerate the implementation of REPowerEU (8), and assist Member States in adjusting to the phase-out of Russian fossil fuel imports. Many of these projects hold PCI or PMI status in the second Union list of PCIs and PMIs, published on December 1, 2025, which includes 235 cross-border infrastructure projects both within the EU and with third-country partners, such as the Celtic Interconnector, the Black Sea Interconnection Cable, and Estlink 3. Under the TEN-E framework, all PCIs and PMIs on the Union list benefit from priority status, streamlined permitting procedures, and eligibility for financial support through the Connecting Europe Facility.

The eight Energy Highways can be summarized as follows:

1. **Pyrenean Crossing 1 and Pyrenean Crossing 2** – to better integrate the Iberian Peninsula with power interconnectors across the Pyrenees to France

2. **Great Sea Interconnector** – to connect Cyprus with continental Europe and end its electricity isolation

3. **Harmony Link** – to strengthen power links with the Baltic states

4. **TransBalkan Pipeline (TBP) reverse flow** – to improve energy supplies in the Balkan region and neighbouring eastern states

5. **Bornholm Energy Island** – to turn the Baltic Sea into an offshore interconnector hub

6. **Improve price stability and energy security in SE Europe**

7. **South2 Corridor** – the South Hydrogen Corridor

8. **Southwest Hydrogen Corridor** – from Portugal to Germany

The Commission is committed to fast-tracking the implementation of the Energy Highways through enhanced political coordination. This will involve close collaboration with the Regional High-Level Groups, mobilising support from European coordinators where relevant, and working alongside the Energy Union Task Force, with outreach extended beyond EU Member States when necessary. Each project will be prioritised at the EU level, and the Commission will assist Member States in ensuring these projects receive equivalent priority nationally.

Map 1: The Eight Energy Highways

Source: European Commission

To facilitate effective cross-border permitting, the Commission will focus on priority interconnector projects, providing support to Member States in establishing joint procedures for efficient and coordinated permitting, with guidance from European Coordinators as appropriate. Drawing on experience from these coordinated approaches,

the Commission may explore additional measures to further streamline the process. To strengthen administrative capacity and promote the digitalisation of renewable energy permitting, the Commission will support Member States through targeted actions that complement the existing regulatory framework. This includes leveraging tools such as the Technical Support Instrument and exploring the creation of a pilot permitting facility using existing advisory resources to enhance capacity building and improve access to financing for permitting-related investments and reforms. The Commission will also promote knowledge-sharing on funding opportunities and the development of new digital platforms for permitting via the Permitting Expert Group.

Several Energy Highways are already recognised as Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs), which provides additional benefits in terms of funding and coordination. In addition, the Pyrenean Crossing 1 and 2, the Southwest Hydrogen Corridor, and the South-Eastern Europe Highway will be designated as pilot projects under the Competitiveness Coordination Tool (CCT). This designation allows them to benefit from a whole-of-government approach and the tool's capacity to address cross-cutting issues. Priority actions under the CCT will be implemented in coordination with the relevant High-Level Groups or fora and tailored to the specific needs of each highway, such as enhancing energy system flexibility, addressing supply chain challenges, or overcoming financing obstacles.

Additionally, the Baltic, Central, and South-East European Highways have recently been assigned European Coordinators under the TEN-E framework to support the timely implementation of projects. Their role includes promoting cross-border dialogue, assisting with permitting and financing, securing Member State support, and reporting on progress and challenges. The Commission will also reinforce existing structures and allocate dedicated resources to maintain a sustained focus on the delivery of all eight Energy Highways, working closely with European Coordinators where appropriate.

The Commission will actively engage with all relevant Member States, fully utilising the available toolkit to ensure the successful rollout of the Energy Highways. Regular updates on progress will be provided to the European Council to maintain political commitment, while ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the implementation process.

3. Special Reference to Energy Highways in SE Europe

As discussed above, the European Commission recently unveiled its new Energy Highways initiative, a core part of a wider strategy to modernise and strengthen Europe's energy infrastructure. A significant focus is placed on SE Europe, where there is an urgent need to modernise aging electricity grids and strengthen cross-border interconnections, with the aim of reducing regional price disparities, support the integration of renewable energy sources, and enhance the resilience and efficiency of the energy system.

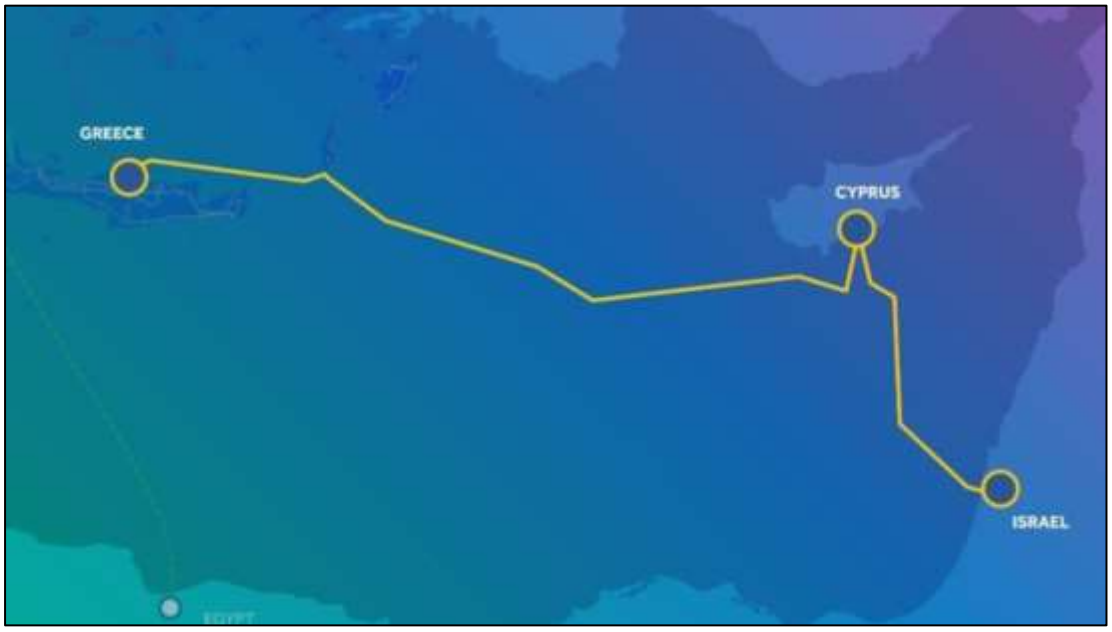
More specifically, the announcement highlights the Great Sea Interconnector, which will link Cyprus to the continental European electricity network and put an end to the island's energy isolation, as well as the reverse flow of the TransBalkan Pipeline, a project designed to strengthen the resilience and security of energy supplies across the Balkan region.

The Great Sea Interconnector (GSI)

Cyprus remains the only EU Member State without a connection to the European electricity grid, a situation that limits its participation in the internal energy market and restricts the large-scale integration of renewable energy. The planned Great Sea Interconnector between Greece and Cyprus is intended to close this gap by ending Cyprus's electricity isolation, supporting its decarbonisation efforts, and reinforcing the resilience of the European energy system.

The project will also enable deeper integration of renewable energy across the wider Mediterranean region. Reconfirmed in the current PCI/PMI list, it is set to become the world's longest submarine electricity cable, stretching nearly 900 km. The project has received support through the Connecting Europe Facility, including €2.3 million for feasibility studies and €658 million for construction works on the Greece-Cyprus section.

Map 2: The Great Sea Interconnector



Source: Great-Sea-Interconnector.com

In May 2025, a construction milestone was reached with the completion by IPTO of the undersea cable connecting mainland Greece to Crete, marking an important step toward full interconnection. However, progress has been hampered in the GSI project by a complex geopolitical environment, which may have implications for both timelines and costs. More specifically, Türkiye's insistence that the GSI route is firstly approved by Ankara, and its naval operation in July 2024 off the Greek island of Kassos to prevent a research vessel hired by the contractor (Nexans) from carrying out seabed reconnaissance, has considerably delayed progress and now threatens to derail completely this strategically important energy project which is crucial for European electricity grid expansion. The project's high strategic value underlines the need for vital political support by the EU, and for closer coordination among Member States.

According to latest settlements, the Commission will continue to provide strong political and technical backing for this project of the highest strategic importance, working closely with the upcoming Cyprus Council Presidency in 2026. This support will include dedicated events, high-level discussions, and enhanced engagement on geopolitical aspects to help advance the project.

The TransBalkan Pipeline (TBP)

The reverse flow of the TBP is not a capacity-expansion project but a coordinated regional initiative in Central and SE Europe aimed at maximizing the use of existing natural gas infrastructure in the reverse, south-to-north direction. This capability is essential for diversifying gas supplies in SE Europe and for phasing out Russian imports. Given its substantial transport capacity, the TBP can play a pivotal role in regional supply diversification and in delivering the objectives of REPowerEU. Its strategic importance is expected to increase further from 2027, when gas production from Romania's Neptun Deep field is anticipated to begin.

Full south-to-north operation of the TBP, combined with diversified supply sources, would enhance cross-border trade, competition, and market liquidity across the region, without requiring costly new infrastructure investments. However, despite this strong potential, regulatory and market barriers in several Member States along the pipeline currently hinder its effective use and commercial viability. Although no mention at all is being made by the EC to the **Vertical Corridor**, the TBP project is very much part of it. Reverse flow through TBP will enhance the operation of the Vertical Corridor which at present operates by channeling south to north gas flows through the existing pipeline network of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania thanks to a small number of Interconnectors between these three countries.

Map 3: The TransBalkan Pipeline

Sources: Gas Infrastructure Europe, BBC

The recent appointment of a European Coordinator for the CESEC region will reinforce EU support in addressing these challenges. In the short term, the Commission will step up coordination within the CESEC High-Level Group, involving all relevant countries, including Moldova and Ukraine, to improve the pipeline's commercial attractiveness as quickly as possible while ensuring long-term compliance with the EU energy acquis. In this framework, the Commission will also continue to support efforts on gas quality harmonisation and the removal of remaining obstacles to the full utilization of the TBP.

4. Other Electricity Interconnections of High Importance Apart from EU's Energy Highways

Beyond the projects highlighted under the Energy Highways Initiative, there are several other electricity interconnections that are equally vital for SE Europe but are not included in this framework. These interconnections play a crucial role in strengthening regional grid stability, improving cross-border electricity trade, and enabling the integration of higher shares of renewable energy, particularly in a region with diverse energy mixes and growing demand.

By reducing congestion, enhancing system flexibility, and improving security of supply, they contribute significantly to the functioning of the internal electricity market in SE Europe. Their continued development and timely implementation remain essential to ensuring a resilient, well-connected, and future-proof regional energy system.

The EuroAfrica Interconnector

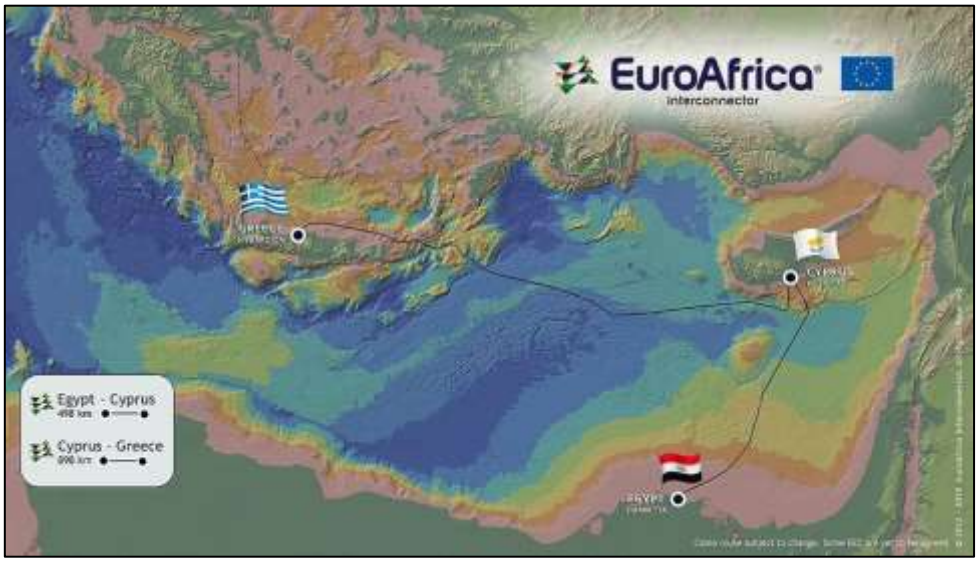
The EuroAfrica Interconnector stands as a pioneering venture, interlinking the electricity grids of Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece in Europe. This integration is made possible through an extensive subsea DC cable and onshore converter stations, boasting a substantial total capacity of 2,000 MW and spanning an impressive distance of 1,396 km. Serving as a robust energy conduit, this project serves as a dependable alternative for the transfer of electric energy to and from Europe. **(9)**

Endorsed by the European Union, the EuroAfrica Interconnector embodies a multitude of strategic goals. Firstly, it marks a significant milestone in eradicating Cyprus's energy isolation, eliminating its status as the last EU member state devoid of any electricity or gas interconnections. Moreover, the project ensures the secure supply of electricity to the European Union. By creating a dedicated electricity route from Egypt to Cyprus and then to Greece via the GSI, this initiative guarantees a stable supply sourced from the gas reserves of Cyprus and Egypt, alongside renewable energy sources, thus advancing the completion of the European Internal Market.

Additionally, the EuroAfrica Interconnector strengthens energy security for Cyprus, Crete, and the entire EU system. Through the seamless integration of Cyprus and Crete's isolated energy systems with Egyptian and European networks, it facilitates an uninterrupted, multidirectional flow of energy, fortifying energy supply chains. According to the EuroAfrica Interconnector's website, the implementation dates for the commencement of stage 1 of

the electricity interconnection between Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece are by December 2028 for the section of Cyprus-Egypt and by early 2029 for the section of Cyprus-Greece (Crete).

Map 4: EuroAfrica Electricity Interconnector



Source: EuroAfrica Interconnector Ltd.

In alignment with the EU's overarching goal, the EuroAfrica Interconnector contributes significantly to achieving the target of 10% electricity interconnection between member states. Moreover, its socio-economic impact extends to the local level, generating employment opportunities and supporting communities, thereby enriching the social fabric of the regions involved. The EuroAfrica Interconnector, thus, stands not only as an energy infrastructure project, but also as a transformative force, shaping the energy landscape and fostering collaboration, growth, and sustainability. **(10)**

The Greece-Saudi Arabia interconnector

One of the significant breakthroughs in the realm of regional energy cooperation is the recent agreement between Greece and Saudi Arabia to establish a vital interconnector. This monumental step has been marked by the mutual consent of the two governments. On September 27, 2023, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Greece have inked a historic deal, culminating in the creation of a jointly-owned company. This venture is set to bridge the power grids of the two nations, paving the way for an interconnected energy network. **(13)**

The primary objective behind this pioneering initiative is to facilitate the supply of clean energy from the Middle East to Europe. By forging this collaboration, both countries are poised to play a pivotal role in bolstering the global clean energy transition. The establishment of this interconnector not only signifies a remarkable leap in diplomatic relations but also underscores the shared commitment of Greece and Saudi Arabia towards sustainable energy solutions. The proposal for a Greece-Saudi Arabia Interconnector follows an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Egypt for the construction of an electricity interconnector between the two countries (see Map 5). By late 2025, the project has

advanced to around 95% of completion, with final testing and commissioning works underway ahead of expected operation soon. **(14)**

The Saudi Arabia-Egypt initiative marks the inaugural large-scale HVDC interconnection within the Middle East and North Africa region and it is estimated at $1.8 billion. The endeavor involves the establishment of two high-voltage substations in Saudi Arabia's Medina and Tabuk regions, as well as the "Badr" station located on the outskirts of Cairo, the capital of Egypt. To ensure seamless connectivity, a network of 1,350 km-long overhead power transmission lines and 22 km of undersea cables spanning the Gulf of Aqaba will link the three substations.

Map 5: The Saudi-Egypt Interconnector

Source: MEES

The contract for this undertaking was granted to a consortium comprising Hitachi ABB Power Grids from Japan and Saudi Services for Electro Mechanic Works (SSEM) in 2021. The contractual scope encompasses the implementation of three transformer stations in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The GREGY project

Elica S.A., a member of the Copelouzos Group, a major Greek energy group, is spearheading this project, which concerns the electricity interconnection between Egypt and Attica, Greece. This initiative, endorsed by both Greece and Egypt, as well as the European Commission, stands as a significant step towards enhancing energy connectivity. The project, known as "GREGY project", is included in the 6th PCI/PMI project list. It proposes a direct link between Egypt and mainland Greece, eliminating the need for intermediate supply points.

At the heart of GREGY, it is a state-of-the-art submarine electricity cable with bi-directional power transmission capabilities, boasting a substantial budget of €4.2 billion. This high-tech cable will harness electricity from Egypt's RES, benefiting residential consumers and businesses not only in Greece, but also in neighboring European countries **(11)**.

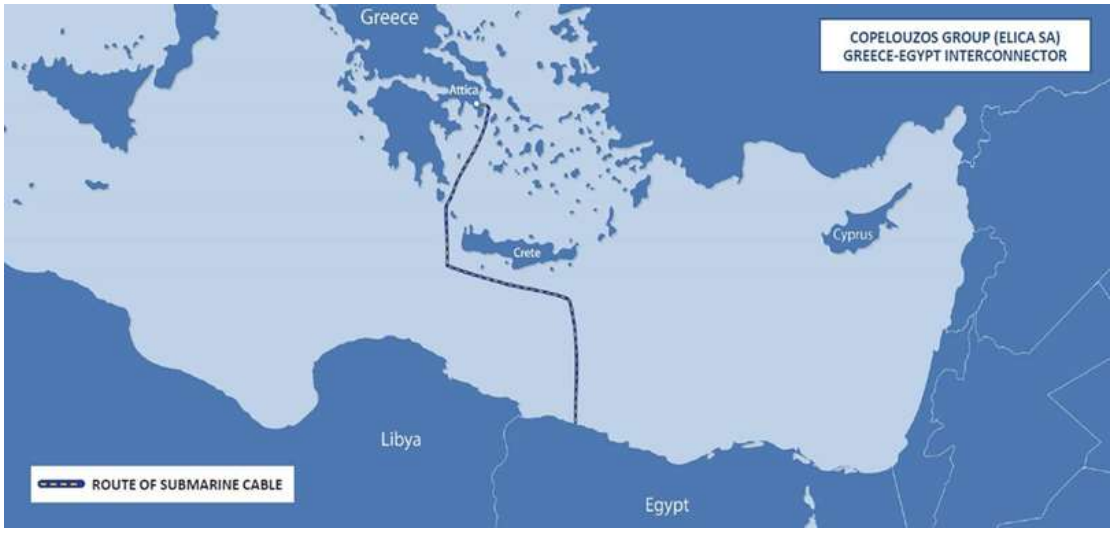
GREGY aims to transmit 3,000 MW of electricity over a distance of 954 km, facilitating the replacement of 4.5 bcm of natural gas annually. This transition will result in a significant

reduction of CO_2 emissions, slashing 10 mt per year. Copelouzos Group plans to establish renewable electricity plants of some 9.5 GW capacity in Egypt, making a substantial impact on the region's energy landscape **(12)**.

In November 2025, Egypt, Greece, and project promoter ELICA signed a tripartite agreement to finalise the technical and economic studies for the GREGY interconnector, which aims to export up to 3,000 MW of electricity to Europe via Greece. This step moves the project closer to implementation by defining key technical and economic parameters needed for investment decision. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed earlier by the transmission system operators of Greece (IPTO), Egypt (EETC), and ELICA to advance the interconnection project and initiate feasibility and route studies for the subsea power cable. In April 2025, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) signed a grant agreement with ELICA to finance the initial studies necessary to advance the project's development phase, reflecting institutional backing from EU-linked financial partners.

Tenders for subsea cable route surveys and contractor selection are expected to be launched by the end of 2025 or in early 2026. These preparatory activities are critical for the eventual final investment decision, currently targeted around late 2027, after which construction would begin.

Map 6: The GREGY project



Source: IPTO

Embracing the EU's vision of green energy corridors from south to north, GREGY serves as a pivotal component of the EU's Global Gateway infrastructure development initiative. Valued at over €3.5 billion, this project not only fosters energy diversification but also aligns with the European Union's commitment to sustainable, environmentally friendly energy solutions.

The Greece-Africa Interconnector

Another important electricity interconnection is the Greece-Africa Power Interconnector. The project, a proposal of the Eunice Group, includes the connection of South-Eastern Crete with Egypt and the extension of this interconnection to Attica as the most suitable option for the power interconnection of the two continents.

The Greece-Africa power interconnector project is among the projects that are gathering strong support from both sides of the Mediterranean and is included in the 2022 ten-year development plan of the ENTSO-E. The planned cable (2,000 MW) is characterised by significant advantages in terms of construction, geopolitical value, energy efficiency, economic viability, and potential for exploitation for the production of clean green energy. The project is expected to cost €1.3 billion, with a completion date of 2030, and will enable the bi-directional supply of electricity to Greece and Egypt.

Map 7: Greece-Africa Power Interconnector

Source: Eunice Group

The EuroGulf Interconnector

The EuroGulf Interconnector is yet another regional electricity project, which aspires to connect the Gulf Countries through Egypt and Cyprus with the European network of electricity grids, which are interconnected via bi-directional subsea DC cable and with HVDC onshore converter stations at each connection point, with a total capacity of 2,000 MW, to provide stable and sufficient electricity. This electricity highway can supply the European markets with electricity produced by gas reserves, as well as from the available RES and creates a reliable alternative route for the transfer of electricity between the Arabian Gulf countries and to/from Europe.

The EuroGulf Interconnector is set to commence its journey from the vicinity of NEOM in Saudi Arabia. It will traverse the sub-sea path through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, ultimately reaching Cyprus to establish a connection at the Kofinou station. Proceeding westward, it will follow a sub-sea route through mainland Greece, extending into

Continental Europe. Spanning a total length of 747 km, the EuroGulf Interconnector will dip to its lowest sub-sea point, positioned at a depth of 3,000 meters below sea level.

These projects increase the green energy ambitions of a region that is still very dependent on hydrocarbons by creating hubs that help the countries concerned realize their RES potential and reduce their carbon footprint. They may also facilitate the transition to green energy for the countries involved. Combining interconnections with other technological innovations, such as creating an electricity highway and linking them to energy storage projects and RES investment in the region, would allow for optimal trade in energy across the European system, given the time differences between countries.

Map 8: The EuroGulf Interconnector

Source: EuroGulf-interconnector.com

The Green Aegean Interconnector

In addition to the above electricity interconnection projects, Greece has proposed building a cable, known as the Green Aegean Interconnector, which will carry electricity mainly produced by RES in Greece to Austria and southern Germany where energy infrastructure is curbed by nature protection laws in the Black Forest region. According to Greek officials, the cable, which would have an initial capacity of 3 GW that could be ramped up to 9 GW, would run offshore through the Adriatic. The cable, which was included in the 2024 Development Procedural Plan by ENTSO-E in February 2024, would then run offshore through the EEZ of Albania, Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia before reaching Austria and southern Germany. **(15)**

So far, the project is still in planning and early preparatory stages, and it has not yet entered construction. Discussions with potential partners and technical studies are ongoing, with the aim of finalising route options and firming up timelines in the coming years.

Map 9: The Green Aegean Interconnector

Source: IPTO

5. Next Steps of the European Grids Package

The legislative proposals will now pass to the European Parliament and the Council under the ordinary legislative procedure. In parallel, the Commission will continue collaborating closely with Member States and all relevant stakeholders to implement key cross-border energy infrastructure projects - as recently published under the second Union list on Projects of Common Interest and Projects of Mutual Interest **(16)**. Such collaboration will be pivotal in view of delivering swiftly on the Energy Highways initiative, as well as on the acceleration of permitting for renewable energy projects, storage projects and recharging stations.

Regardless of the foreseen legislative proposals, which will enhance further the progress already achieved in some of the energy highways mentioned, major regional projects in SE Europe, such as the Great Sea Interconnector and the Trans Balkan Pipeline-Vertical Corridor, have already acquired their own strong momentum which will wheel them through to key implementation stages over the next 12 months. The EU has an obligation to facilitate their progress by weathering any geopolitical challenges and defending the European dimension of these vital energy transfer projects.

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