



News from EUROPE

Edited by Luigi Ugliati, UGL Deputy Secretary, member of the EESC

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CESE, UGLIATI AT THE TEN SECTION MEETING

Councillor Luigi Ugliati participated in Brussels, as a member of the TEN Section (Transport, Energy and Infrastructure) of the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), in the meeting held on the 3rd of February, with the approval of two Opinions on the agenda: one on the "European Strategy on Life Sciences" and the other on "Energy Interconnection and Electricity Networks", speaking on the latter (TEN/865). «The Opinion in question - said Ugliati - highlights the critical issues of the system, as well as the advantages that interconnections, especially cross-border ones between Countries, generate throughout the European system, ensuring greater stability and security of infrastructure, in addition to significant economic savings. A secure network - continued the EESC representative - would guarantee the supply and competitiveness of our industrial system. However, long-term energy plans and strategies are needed, supported not only by the budgets of the various Member States, but also by the European Union budget, otherwise there is a risk that individual EU Countries will be interested in investing in network interconnections that have an exclusive, direct, certain and short-term return, thus undermining the objective of a European infrastructure network». The consideration of public opinion, the provision of compensation and the request for the enhancement of both prosumers and local energy communities are also defined as interesting. Finally, the Opinion calls for the production of electricity from renewable energy sources, which are useful for reducing CO2 emissions but are not stable or programmable. According to Councillor Ugliati «we must not therefore forget the production of electricity from nuclear sources, in particular through the use of small reactors such as SMRs (Small Modular Reactors), which have been mentioned several times in other EESC Opinions».



EU: 20TH PACKAGE OF SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA PRESENTED

The European Commission has just presented a new Package of sanctions, the twentieth since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, in light of the fact that the Kremlin is doubling down on its war crimes, deliberately targeting civilian homes and infrastructure, with energy and heating systems being targeted and entire communities left without electricity in freezing temperatures. «While important peace talks are underway in Abu Dhabi, we must be clear: Russia will only sit at the negotiating table with genuine intentions if it is pushed to do so». This was the reasoning given by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, who explained how the new measures will further reduce Russia's energy revenues, making it more difficult to find buyers for its oil. The aim of the European Union, just a few days before the fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion, is therefore to increase pressure on the Kremlin to sit down seriously at the negotiating table. The twentieth EU sanctions Package follows in the footsteps of the previous nineteen, targeting sectors such as energy, financial services and trade in particular. With regard to energy, a total ban on maritime services for Russian crude oil is introduced, with the addition of generalised prohibitions on the provision of maintenance and other services for LNG tankers and icebreakers in order to further damage gas export projects. Measures are included that further restrict the Russian banking system and also combat cryptocurrency trading in order to eliminate any possibility of tax evasion. In addition, restrictions on exports to Russia are tightened with further bans on goods and services, from rubber to tractors and IT security services, in addition to new restrictions on imports of metals, chemicals and essential minerals not yet subject to sanctions, as well as further restrictions on exports of products and technologies used in Russia's war effort, such as materials for the production of explosives. Finally, the anti-circumvention tool is being activated for the first time, prohibiting the export of computerised numerical control machines and radios to jurisdictions where there is a high risk that such products will be re-exported to Russia, in order to demonstrate the European Union's strong determination to reduce sanctions evasion.

