Edited by Luigi Ulgiati, UGL Deputy Secretary, member of the EESC N. 185 - 4th of September 2026

EESC, ULGIATI: ENERGY STORAGE IN THE EU IS ESSENTIAL

The European Union's energy system is undergoing a profound transformation under geopolitical, economic, climatic and social pressures. Russia's war against Ukraine has highlighted structural weaknesses, such as dependence on fossil fuels and imports, the inadequacy and obsolescence of networks, and high price volatility. For this reason, the issue of "Strategic Energy Storage for the European Energy Union" is of great importance; it is at the heart of the Opinion TEN/875, adopted during the July Plenary Session of the EESC (European Economic and Social Committee). Energy storage is a key element of security of supply, particularly in geographically isolated regions such as islands, and the European Union lacks a comprehensive strategy in this area

that takes into account infrastructure, spatial planning, market structure, industrial policy, security, social objectives, environmental impact, as well as training needs and democratic governance. The EESC notes that no single storage technology can meet all the system's needs, which is why a coordinated portfolio of complementary technologies must be used, taking into account regional specificities and needs. For Councillor Ulgiati, energy storage «is a fundamental piece of infrastructure that enables the use of a high proportion of renewable energy, mitigates price fluctuations, reduces overall system costs and promotes decarbonisation, as well as limiting the need for costly grid expansion and the need for fossil fuel reserve capacity». Furthermore, if developed in accordance with social and industrial criteria «storage strengthens the EU's energy sovereignty, resilience, technological leadership and competitiveness. The latter - Ulgiati concluded - is now a key factor for industry and employment: managing it means strengthening the European Union's ability to produce, invest and create jobs».

EUROSTAT: HIGH ENERGY PRICES DRIVE UP INFLATION

The long shadow of the conflict in Iran is looming over the European economy, fuelling energy markets and pushing eurozone inflation to 3.3 per cent in August – the highest level since September 2024 – a jump of 0.4 percentage points from July's 2.9 per cent. This is bad news, therefore, for European consumers and businesses, who are seeing their purchasing power decline significantly. The preliminary data and flash estimate released by Eurostat a few days ago leave no room for doubt, revealing a rise in the cost of living driven unequivocally by energy prices, which soared by 14.3 per cent in August – a sharp acceleration from the 10.3 per cent recorded the previous month – and confirming a monthly increase of 0.4 per cent. An examination of the main components of the reference basket therefore reveals a "boom" in the "energy" category and an increase in "non-energy industrial goods" (1.2%, compared with 0.9% in July). The cost of food, alcohol and tobacco remained stable at 1.2 per cent, whilst services saw a decline, falling to 3.0 per cent from 3.3 per cent in July. This scenario could prompt the European Central Bank (ECB), at its first meeting in Berlin on the 10th of September following the summer break, to continue on the path of monetary tightening, even though it will have to make its decision in the absence of consolidated data, which the European Statistical Office is not due to publish until 17th of September. The Eurotower will therefore have to rely on provisional data, which are nonetheless indicative of the situation. The continental picture is multifaceted, and amongst the main economies of the Eurozone, more marked increases are forecast in Spain (from 3.9 per cent in July to 4.5 per cent in August) and Italy (from 2.9 per cent to 3.2 per cent), whilst France and Germany, despite recording slight rises to 2.7 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively, remain below the European average. Finally, for Bulgaria, a Country which has only recently adopted the single currency, the picture is particularly bleak, with the progress made so far being wiped out and inflation expected to reach 5.1 per cent.