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Science Advisory Council

Response to the consultation 'A 2030 framework for climate and energy policies'

This response to the consultation on the green paper 'A 2030 framework for climate and energy policies' is made by the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), the body established by the national science academies of the EU member states, together with Norway and Switzerland, in 2001 to provide independent advice on the science underpinning key European policy issues[1]. It has been drafted by the Steering Panel of EASAC's Energy Programme.

In establishing the 2030 framework there needs to be greater clarity than hitherto in the goals of EU energy policy, the means to reach them and the pathways that should be followed. The cornerstone of policy formulation should be systematic and independent analysis of the options. Such analysis needs to be transparent and available to stakeholders.

All policies and initiatives have distributional implications: lobbying is generally about such distributional consequences. More transparency in such distributional effects will be helpful, particularly in tempering the claims of lobbyists. Care must be taken to avoid policy formulation according to lobbyists' interests – who shouts loudest – and genuinely independent and objective advice should be at a premium. Europe's science academies stand ready to play their part in the provision of such advice.

The green paper appropriately recognises the potential conflicts between targets due to interactions between them. In respect of Europe's ambitions on climate change mitigation, there consequently needs to be a strong case if targets (for example, on energy efficiency or renewable energy production) additional to an overall requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are to be included. Any such targets and measures need to be carefully thought through, and must be resilient to the inevitability of future surprises. Underpinning analysis should be made available for challenge and discussion before policy decisions are taken.

To the extent that mitigating climate change is the driver of EU energy policy, there should be a clearer recognition that reductions in EU emissions of greenhouse gases will have only a marginal impact on global emissions, particularly as BRICS emissions are increasingly dominant. If the purpose of a strong EU policy to reduce greenhouse gases is to enable the EU to influence more effectively international policy to secure reduce global emissions, then this should be clearly stated. But other consequences of EU policies and actions more generally, for example the importation of energy intensive goods from BRICS countries and

[1] For further information see www.easac.eu

the issues associated with energy provision for development, should more clearly be brought into the energy policy frame.

Issues of subsidiarity in respect of the Lisbon Treaty are important. In developing EU energy policies, careful consideration should consequently be given to the authority of Member States to take decisions on which technologies to adopt, giving subsidies etc? A clearer framework is needed.

An effective innovation framework is needed which enables the development of the technologies that will be required to transform Europe's energy system. Such a framework needs to be capable of setting clear priorities, to enable learning by evaluation and feedback so as to identify and address gaps, and to establish a more 'open' innovation system bringing in a wider network of actors and expertise.

Europe is falling behind key other countries, the best of which should provide the benchmark against which Europe's innovation in energy technologies is measured. A discussion is needed on the appropriate role of the State in respect of driving innovation in energy technologies. While it will vary from country to country according to the various national 'policy styles', it should in general terms be to set up a framework in which innovators can thrive.