EPG

Workshop on EU Public Investment for Industry & Energy:
The next Multiannual Financial Framework as a bridge to 2050

22 October 2025, 13:00 – 17:00
Impact Hub, Str. Tudor Arghezi 8-10, Bucharest, Romania (in person)
Chatham House Rules

Context

The purpose of this workshop organised by the **Energy Policy Group (EPG)** is to provide a **framework for analysis and strategic dialogue** on the future of the energy and industrial sectors in the region, particularly in the context of the negotiations on the next **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union (EU) (2028–2034)**.

The event aims to contribute to the **strategic alignment of investment priorities** between public, private and institutional actors, in support of industrial transformation to integrate both the objectives of the energy transition and the need for competitive reindustrialisation of Europe, with **focus on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Southeastern Europe (SEE)**.

The workshop is designed as a **Foresight exercise**, aiming to bring together decision-makers, industrial leaders, financial experts and representatives of the academic and research environment aiming to connect scenario analysis with real investment and public policy priorities for the region.

This process is essential to guide political decisions on public and private investments for the future **MFF**, aligning regional and national development strategies with long-term industrial and economic transformation goals. The next MFF will be decisive in determining whether the **EU can translate its industrial and climate ambitions into effective policies** while safeguarding regional convergence, especially as CEE and SEE face specific structural and economic challenges that existing EU funding instruments have only partially addressed.

Industry across Europe faces mounting challenges from volatile energy prices, rising international competition, and shrinking demand, pressures that have led to a significant contraction in recent years and have been particularly acute in CEE. In this region, **heavy industry remains a major contributor to GDP** (21—33%), yet the scale of transformation required for decarbonisation and clean technology manufacturing far exceeds the available fiscal capacity. Despite access to EU funding, **low absorption rates and limited fiscal space** have slowed the roll-out of industrial transformation plans, undermining competitiveness and progress towards climate goals. Against this backdrop, **CEE and SEE countries often lack the coordination and influence needed to shape EU-level decisions** on funding and industrial policy.

The workshop will provide a forward-looking space to explore **how the next MFF can better support industrial transformation** and **economic resilience** across Europe, **particularly in CEE and SEE**. Discussions will consider how changes to EU funding instruments, evolving industrial policy priorities, and potential EU

enlargement could reshape the region's capacity to achieve climate and competitiveness objectives. By **exploring alternative scenarios for 2050** and analysing their implications in contexts of accelerated **transformation and systemic uncertainty**, the workshop **seeks to identify key investment priorities** suitable for a constantly changing industrial and geopolitical context.

Working format

The event will promote **an open and hands-on dialogue** between institutional and economic actors that goes beyond conventional formats, aiming to identify areas of investment that can generate the greatest systemic impact and regional added value. Participants will work in mixed sessions, namely **plenary discussions and thematic working groups** based on **alternative future scenarios for 2050**, developed as a starting point for reflection and collaboration. These scenarios will explore possible trajectories of industrial transformation from accelerated transition through innovation and digitalisation, to slower or fragmented developments at European level.

The methodology will include elements of **horizon scanning** (identifying uncertainties and cross-system linkages) and **backcasting** (defining the necessary action steps starting from a future vision and then working backward to identify the investment needs, policies, and milestones required to move from the present toward that future).

Objective

To facilitate a forward-looking discussion on how different industrial sectors can evolve in coming decades and identify how EU funding priorities and policy choices, particularly in the context of the upcoming MFF 2028–2034, could shape sectoral transformation, competitiveness, and regional development.

Workshop set-up

From arrival, participants will be seated in **mixed teams across several thematic tables** (e.g., 4 tables with 5-6 participants each), bringing together representatives from think tanks, government institutions, and industry. Each table will focus **on a specific sector** or **area of activity**.

The discussions will centre on **developing a shared vision for the future of each sector**, reflecting on how different funding priorities and policy choices could shape industrial transformation. Participants will also be invited to **consider the implications of the 2050 foresight scenarios presented during the session**, exploring how their sector can contribute to and benefit from Europe's long-term objectives.

Meeting Protocol

The event aims to foster open and constructive discussions. At times, this may involve sharing sensitive information or examples that are not publicly available. To ensure a candid exchange of views, the event will be held under the Chatham House Rule, and no social media coverage or reporting from inside the room will be permitted

Working language: English

13:00 – 13:15	**Welcome Coffee**
13:15 – 13:40	**Word of Welcome** - *Radu Dudău* - President, EPG **Short description of workshop format** - *Mihnea Cătuți* - Executive Director, EPG **Introductory reflections on shifting European and regional priorities** - *Christian Egenhofer* - Senior Research Associate, EUI, and Senior Fellow, EPG - *Joanna Pandera* - President, Forum Energii, PL (TBC)
13:40 – 14:55	**Session 1: Foresight Exercise** **Introduction of future scenarios for 2050** Presentation of the structure of the foresight session, a brief overview of potential key drivers, uncertainties, and cross-system dynamics shaping the future of the region's industry and energy landscape, and the four contrasting future scenarios for 2050. **Moderator:** *Luminita Gabriela Horga* - Senior Researcher, EPG **Group discussions** Breakout session to select a desired future scenario and discuss the implications of the presented scenarios for the specific sector, reflecting on: 1. **Impact on the region** – *What is the preferable future scenario of the specific sector in the region and what will be the implications?* 2. **Milestones** – *What are the indicative developments for 2028, 2035, 2040 for the specific sector in the CEE and SEE region?* 3. **Investment needs/levers** - *What are the key investment priorities required to accelerate transformation in your sector (e.g., technology deployment, infrastructure, skills, innovation)?* 4. **Type of instruments** - *Which instruments or mechanisms (i.e., EU, national, or private) could be most effective in mobilising these investments?* 5. **Policy enablers** - *What policy frameworks or regulatory changes are needed in the region and the specific sector to create stable conditions for industrial & energy transition?* **Moderators:** *Mihnea Cătuți* - Executive Director, EPG *Alina Arsani* - Head of Energy Systems, EPG *Andrei Covatariu* - Policy Leader Fellow, EUI and Senior Associate, EPG *Luminita Gabriela Horga* - Senior Researcher, EPG

	Elena Alexandra Miron - Researcher, EPG **Exercise Outcomes** Discussion of the envisioned scenario and implications for each specific sector, together with priority investment needs and policy enablers.
14:55 – 15:15	**Coffee break**
15:15 – 16:30	**Session 2: Open Discussion on MFF 2028-2034** **Introductory Presentation on the next MFF** Brief presentation on the current and proposed 2028–2034 MFF, with changing narrative on new priorities (i.e., industrial competitiveness, climate action, defense), role of EU budget for CEE and SEE industry & energy transition, regional ambitions **Presenter:** Representative of the European Commission's Representation in Romania **Discussion Session on MFF** Conversation on the priorities for the next MFF, including the role of National and Regional Partnership Plans, the Competitiveness Fund, Horizon Europe, and the Connecting Europe Facility. **Key Highlights:** • Strategic alignment between regional industrial visions and EU priorities • Role of public finance and the new MFF to support regional resilience, the energy transition, industrial transformation and competitiveness • Approaches to overcome limited public budgets, austerity pressures, and restricted access to private capital **Moderator:** *Mihnea Cătuți* - Executive Director, EPG
16:30 – 17:00	**Conclusion and next steps** The session will conclude with reflections on how participants can strengthen regional coordination, continue collaborating to shape effective strategies for industrial transformation, climate objectives, and the implementation of the next MFF. **Reflection on discussions and concluding remarks** *László Szabó* – Director, REKK Regional Centre for Energy Policy Research, HU (TBC) *András Huszár* - Co-Founder and Director, Green Policy Center, HU (TBC) *Andrei Covatariu* - Policy Leader Fellow, EUI and Senior Associate, EPG **Moderator:** *Radu Dudău* - President, EPG
17:00 – 17:30	**Networking & buffet dinner**