

## **The European Commission's role in assessing the sustainability of gas projects on the list of 'projects of regional significance' of the 'Energy Community'**

**Case 327/2021/KR - Opened on 19/04/2021 - Decision on 15/07/2022 - Institution concerned** European Commission ( No maladministration found ) |

The complainant raised concerns about the selection of gas projects as part of the 'projects of regional significance' of the Energy Community, an international organisation for cooperation on energy between the EU and countries in the Western Balkans and in the Black Sea region. These infrastructure projects may benefit from streamlined permitting procedures and cross-border cost allocation, and are expected to comply with the criteria set out in the EU's Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E) Regulation.

As the European Commission represents the EU in the Energy Community, the Ombudsman's inquiry sought to establish how the Commission ensures that the sustainability of gas projects is properly assessed before they are included on the list of priority projects.

The Ombudsman found satisfactory the Commission's explanations as to how it verifies that the sustainability of projects is assessed, and closed the case with a finding of no maladministration. However, the inquiry showed that the sustainability assessment highlighted the risk of gas projects "crowding out" renewable energy sources. Against this background, the Ombudsman urged the Commission to carefully monitor this concern.

In the context of this inquiry, the Commission also gave an update on its efforts to improve how the sustainability of gas 'projects of common interest' (PCI) is assessed, which was the subject of a previous Ombudsman inquiry. The Commission said that the sustainability of all projects had been assessed and taken into account for the fifth PCI list.