

DIRECTIVE 2009/73/EC of 13 July 2009 concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas and repealing Directive 2003/55/EC

Incorporated and adapted by Ministerial Council Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC of 6 October 2011 on the implementation of Directive 2009/72/EC, Directive 2009/73/EC, Regulation (EC) 714/2009 and Regulation (EC) 715/2009 and amending Articles 11 and 59 of the Energy Community Treaty.

*The adaptations made by Ministerial Council Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC are highlighted in **bold and blue**.*

Whereas:

(1) The internal market in natural gas, which has been progressively implemented throughout the Community since 1999, aims to deliver real choice for all consumers of the European Union, be they citizens or businesses, new business opportunities and more cross-border trade, so as to achieve efficiency gains, competitive prices, and higher standards of service, and to contribute to security of supply and sustainability.

(2) Directive 2003/55/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2003 concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas has made a significant contribution towards the creation of such an internal market in natural gas.

(3) The freedoms which the Treaty guarantees the citizens of the Union - *inter alia*, the free movement of goods, the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services - are achievable only in a fully open market, which enables all consumers freely to choose their suppliers and all suppliers freely to deliver to their customers.

(4) However, at present, there are obstacles to the sale of gas on equal terms and without discrimination or disadvantages in the Community. In particular, non-discriminatory network access and an equally effective level of regulatory supervision in each Member State do not yet exist.

(5) The Communication of the Commission of 10 January 2007 entitled "An Energy Policy for Europe" highlighted the importance of completing the internal market in natural gas and of creating a level playing field for all natural gas undertakings established in the Community. The Communications of the Commission of 10 January 2007 entitled "Prospects for the internal gas and electricity market" and "Inquiry pursuant to Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 1/2003 into the European gas and electricity sectors (Final Report)" showed that the present rules and measures do not provide the necessary framework for achieving the objective of a well-functioning internal market.

(6) Without effective separation of networks from activities of production and supply (effective unbundling), there is a risk of discrimination not only in the operation of the network but also in the incentives for vertically integrated undertakings to invest adequately in their networks.

(7) The rules on legal and functional unbundling as provided for in Directive 2003/55/EC have not, however, led to effective unbundling of the transmission system operators. At its meeting on 8 and 9 March 2007, the European Council therefore invited the Commission to develop legislative proposals for the "effective separation of supply and production activities from network operations".

(8) Only the removal of the incentive for vertically integrated undertakings to discriminate against competitors as regards network access and investment can ensure effective unbundling. Ownership unbundling, which implies the appointment of the network owner as the system operator and its

independence from any supply and production interests, is clearly an effective and stable way to solve the inherent conflict of interests and to ensure security of supply. For that reason, the European Parliament, in its resolution of 10 July 2007 on prospects for the internal gas and electricity market referred to ownership unbundling at transmission level as the most effective tool by which to promote investments in infrastructure in a non-discriminatory way, fair access to the network for new entrants and transparency in the market. Under ownership unbundling, Member States should therefore be required to ensure that the same person or persons are not entitled to exercise control over a production or supply undertaking and, at the same time, exercise control or any right over a transmission system operator or transmission system. Conversely, control over a transmission system or transmission system operator should preclude the possibility of exercising control or any right over a production or supply undertaking. Within those limits, a production or supply undertaking should be able to have a minority shareholding in a transmission system operator or transmission system.

(9) Any system for unbundling should be effective in removing any conflict of interests between producers, suppliers and transmission system operators, in order to create incentives for the necessary investments and guarantee the access of new market entrants under a transparent and efficient regulatory regime and should not create an overly onerous regulatory regime for national regulatory authorities.

(10) The definition of the term “control” is taken from Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 of 20 January 2004 on the control of concentrations between undertakings (the EC Merger Regulation).

(11) Since ownership unbundling requires, in some instances, the restructuring of undertakings, Member States that decide to implement ownership unbundling should be granted additional time to apply the relevant provisions. In view of the vertical links between the electricity and gas sectors, the unbundling provisions should apply across the two sectors.

(12) Under ownership unbundling, to ensure full independence of network operation from supply and production interests and to prevent exchanges of any confidential information, the same person should not be a member of the managing boards of both a transmission system operator or a transmission system and an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply. For the same reason, the same person should not be entitled to appoint members of the managing boards of a transmission system operator or a transmission system and to exercise control or any right over a production or supply undertaking.

(13) The setting up of a system operator or a transmission operator that is independent from supply and production interests should enable a vertically integrated undertaking to maintain its ownership of network assets whilst ensuring an effective separation of interests, provided that such independent system operator or such independent transmission operator performs all the functions of a system operator and detailed regulation and extensive regulatory control mechanisms are put in place.

(14) Where, on 3 September 2009, an undertaking owning a transmission system is part of a vertically integrated undertaking, Member States should therefore be given a choice between ownership unbundling and setting up a system operator or transmission operator which is independent from supply and production interests.

(15) To preserve fully the interests of the shareholders of vertically integrated undertakings, Member States should have the choice of implementing ownership unbundling either by direct divestiture or by splitting the shares of the integrated undertaking into shares of the network undertaking and shares of the remaining supply and production undertaking, provided that the requirements result-

ing from ownership unbundling are complied with.

(16) The full effectiveness of the independent system operator or independent transmission operator solutions should be ensured by way of specific additional rules. The rules on the independent transmission operator provide an appropriate regulatory framework to guarantee fair competition, sufficient investment, access for new market entrants and the integration of gas markets. Effective unbundling through the independent transmission operator provisions should be based on a pillar of organisational measures and measures relating to the governance of transmission system operators and on a pillar of measures relating to investment, connecting new production capacities to the network and market integration through regional cooperation. The independence of the transmission operator should also, *inter alia*, be ensured through certain “cooling-off” periods during which no management or other relevant activity giving access to the same information as could have been obtained in a managerial position is exercised in the vertically integrated undertaking. The independent transmission operator model of effective unbundling is in line with the requirements laid down by the European Council at its meeting on 8 and 9 March 2007.

(17) In order to develop competition in the internal market in gas, large non-household customers should be able to choose their suppliers and enter into contracts with several suppliers to secure their gas requirements. Such customers should be protected against exclusivity clauses, the effect of which is to exclude competing or complementary offers.

(18) A Member State has the right to opt for full ownership unbundling in its territory. Where a Member State has exercised that right, an undertaking does not have the right to set up an independent system operator or an independent transmission operator. Furthermore, an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply cannot directly or indirectly exercise control or any right over a transmission system operator from a Member State that has opted for full ownership unbundling.

(19) Under this Directive different types of market organisation will exist in the internal market in natural gas. The measures that Member States could take in order to ensure a level playing field should be based on overriding requirements of general interest. The Commission should be consulted on the compatibility of the measures with the Treaty and Community law.

(20) The implementation of effective unbundling should respect the principle of non-discrimination between the public and private sectors. To that end, the same person should not be able to exercise control or any right, in violation of the rules of ownership unbundling or the independent system operator option, solely or jointly, over the composition, voting or decision of the bodies of both the transmission system operators or the transmission systems and the production or supply undertakings. With regard to ownership unbundling and the independent system operator solution, provided that the Member State in question is able to demonstrate that the requirement is complied with, two separate public bodies should be able to control production and supply activities on the one hand and transmission activities on the other.

(21) Fully effective separation of network activities from supply and production activities should apply throughout the Community to both Community and non-Community undertakings. To ensure that network activities and supply and production activities throughout the Community remain independent from each other, regulatory authorities should be empowered to refuse certification to transmission system operators that do not comply with the unbundling rules. To ensure the consistent application of those rules across the Community, the regulatory authorities should take utmost

account of the Commission's opinion when the former take decisions on certification. To ensure, in addition, respect for the international obligations of the Community and solidarity and energy security within the Community, the Commission should have the right to give an opinion on certification in relation to a transmission system owner or a transmission system operator which is controlled by a person or persons from a third country or third countries.

(22) The security of energy supply is an essential element of public security and is therefore inherently connected to the efficient functioning of the internal market in gas and the integration of the isolated gas markets of Member States. Gas can reach the citizens of the Union only through the network. Functioning open gas markets and, in particular, the networks and other assets associated with gas supply are essential for public security, for the competitiveness of the economy and for the well-being of the citizens of the Union. Persons from third countries should therefore only be allowed to control a transmission system or a transmission system operator if they comply with the requirements of effective separation that apply inside the Community. Without prejudice to the international obligations of the Community, the Community considers that the gas transmission system sector is of high importance to the Community and therefore additional safeguards are necessary regarding the preservation of the security of supply of energy to the Community to avoid any threats to public order and public security in the Community and the welfare of the citizens of the Union. The security of supply of energy to the Community requires, in particular, an assessment of the independence of network operation, the level of the Community's and individual Member States' dependence on energy supply from third countries, and the treatment of both domestic and foreign trade and investment in energy in a particular third country. Security of supply should therefore be assessed in the light of the factual circumstances of each case as well as the rights and obligations arising under international law, in particular the international agreements between the Community and the third country concerned. Where appropriate the Commission is encouraged to submit recommendations to negotiate relevant agreements with third countries addressing the security of supply of energy to the Community or to include the necessary issues in other negotiations with those third countries.

(23) Further measures should be taken in order to ensure transparent and non-discriminatory tariffs for access to transport. Those tariffs should be applicable to all users on a non-discriminatory basis. Where a storage facility, linepack or ancillary service operates in a sufficiently competitive market, access could be allowed on the basis of transparent and non-discriminatory market-based mechanisms.

(24) It is necessary to ensure the independence of storage system operators in order to improve third-party access to storage facilities that are technically and/or economically necessary for providing efficient access to the system for the supply of customers. It is therefore appropriate that storage facilities are operated through legally separate entities that have effective decision-making rights with respect to assets necessary to maintain, operate and develop storage facilities. It is also necessary to increase transparency in respect of the storage capacity that is offered to third parties, by obliging Member States to define and publish a non-discriminatory, clear framework that determines the appropriate regulatory regime applicable to storage facilities. That obligation should not require a new decision on access regimes but should improve the transparency regarding the access regime to storage. Confidentiality requirements for commercially sensitive information are particularly important where data of a strategic nature are concerned or where there is only a single user of a storage facility.

(25) Non-discriminatory access to the distribution network determines downstream access to customers at retail level. The scope for discrimination as regards third party access and investment,

however, is less significant at distribution level than at transmission level where congestion and the influence of production interests are generally greater than at distribution level. Moreover, legal and functional unbundling of distribution system operators was required, pursuant to Directive 2003/55/EC, only from 1 July 2007 and its effects on the internal market in natural gas still need to be evaluated. The rules on legal and functional unbundling currently in place can lead to effective unbundling provided they are more clearly defined, properly implemented and closely monitored. To create a level playing field at retail level, the activities of distribution system operators should therefore be monitored so that they are prevented from taking advantage of their vertical integration as regards their competitive position on the market, in particular in relation to household and small non-household customers.

(26) Member States should take concrete measures to assist the wider use of biogas and gas from biomass, the producers of which should be granted non-discriminatory access to the gas system, provided that such access is compatible with the relevant technical rules and safety standards on an ongoing basis.

(27) To avoid imposing a disproportionate financial and administrative burden on small distribution system operators, Member States should be able, where necessary, to exempt the undertakings concerned from the legal distribution unbundling requirements.

(28) Where a closed distribution system is used to ensure the optimal efficiency of an integrated energy supply requiring specific operational standards, or a closed distribution system is maintained primarily for the use of the owner of the system, it should be possible to exempt the distribution system operator from obligations which would constitute an unnecessary administrative burden because of the particular nature of the relationship between the distribution system operator and the users of the system. Industrial, commercial or shared services sites such as train station buildings, airports, hospitals, large camping sites with integrated facilities or chemical industry sites can include closed distribution systems because of the specialised nature of their operations.

(29) Directive 2003/55/EC introduced a requirement for Member States to establish regulators with specific competences. However, experience shows that the effectiveness of regulation is frequently hampered through a lack of independence of regulators from government, and insufficient powers and discretion. For that reason, at its meeting on 8 and 9 March 2007, the European Council invited the Commission to develop legislative proposals providing for further harmonisation of the powers and strengthening of the independence of national energy regulators. It should be possible for those national regulatory authorities to cover both the electricity and the gas sectors.

(30) Energy regulators need to be able to take decisions in relation to all relevant regulatory issues if the internal market in natural gas is to function properly, and to be fully independent from any other public or private interests. This precludes neither judicial review nor parliamentary supervision in accordance with the constitutional law of the Member States. In addition, approval of the budget of the regulator by the national legislator does not constitute an obstacle to budgetary autonomy. The provisions relating to autonomy in the implementation of the allocated budget of the regulatory authority should be implemented within the framework defined by national budgetary law and rules. While contributing to the independence of the national regulatory authority from any political or economic interest through an appropriate rotation scheme, it should be possible for Member States to take due account of the availability of human resources and of the size of the board.

(31) In order to ensure effective market access for all market players, including new entrants,

non-discriminatory and cost-reflective balancing mechanisms are necessary. This should be achieved through the setting up of transparent market-based mechanisms for the supply and purchase of gas, needed in the framework of balancing requirements. National regulatory authorities should play an active role to ensure that balancing tariffs are non-discriminatory and cost-reflective. At the same time, appropriate incentives should be provided to balance the in-put and off-take of gas and not to endanger the system.

(32) National regulatory authorities should be able to fix or approve tariffs, or the methodologies underlying the calculation of the tariffs, on the basis of a proposal by the transmission system operator or distribution system operator(s) or liquefied natural gas (LNG) system operator, or on the basis of a proposal agreed between those operator(s) and the users of the network. In carrying out those tasks, national regulatory authorities should ensure that transmission and distribution tariffs are non-discriminatory and cost-reflective, and should take account of the long-term, marginal, avoided network costs from demand-side management measures.

(33) Energy regulators should have the power to issue binding decisions in relation to natural gas undertakings and to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties on natural gas undertakings which fail to comply with their obligations or to propose that a competent court impose such penalties on them. Energy regulators should also be granted the power to decide, irrespective of the application of competition rules, on appropriate measures ensuring customer benefits through the promotion of effective competition necessary for the proper functioning of the internal market in natural gas. The establishment of gas-release programmes is one of the possible measures that can be used to promote effective competition and ensure the proper functioning of the market. Energy regulators should also be granted the powers to contribute to ensuring high standards of public service in compliance with market opening, to the protection of vulnerable customers, and to the full effectiveness of consumer protection measures. Those provisions should be without prejudice to both the Commission's powers concerning the application of competition rules including the examination of mergers with a Community dimension, and the rules on the internal market such as the free movement of capital. The independent body to which a party affected by the decision of a national regulator has a right to appeal could be a court or other tribunal empowered to conduct a judicial review.

(34) Any harmonisation of the powers of national regulatory authorities should include the powers to provide incentives to natural gas undertakings and to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties on natural gas undertakings or to propose that a competent court impose such penalties. Moreover, regulatory authorities should have the power to request relevant information from natural gas undertakings, make appropriate and sufficient investigations and settle disputes.

(35) Investments in major new infrastructure should be strongly promoted while ensuring the proper functioning of the internal market in natural gas. In order to enhance the positive effect of exempted infrastructure projects on competition and security of supply, market interest during the project planning phase should be tested and congestion management rules should be implemented. Where an infrastructure is located in the territory of more than one Member State, the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators established by Regulation (EC) No 713/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing an Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (the "Agency") should handle as a last resort the exemption request in order to take better account of its cross-border implications and to facilitate its administrative handling. Moreover, given the exceptional risk profile of constructing those exempt major infrastructure projects, it should

be possible temporarily to grant partial derogations to undertakings with supply and production interests in respect of the unbundling rules for the projects concerned. The possibility of temporary derogations should apply, for security of supply reasons, in particular, to new pipelines within the Community transporting gas from third countries into the Community. Exemptions granted under Directive 2003/55/EC continue to apply until the scheduled expiry date as decided in the granted exemption decision.

(36) The internal market in natural gas suffers from a lack of liquidity and transparency hindering the efficient allocation of resources, risk hedging and new entry. Trust in the market, its liquidity and the number of market participants needs to increase, and, therefore, regulatory oversight of undertakings active in the supply of gas needs to be increased. Such requirements should be without prejudice to, and compatible with, existing Community law in relation to the financial markets. Energy regulators and financial market regulators need to cooperate in order to enable each other to have an overview of the markets concerned.

(37) Natural gas is mainly, and increasingly, imported into the Community from third countries. Community law should take account of the characteristics of natural gas, such as certain structural rigidities arising from the concentration of suppliers, the long-term contracts or the lack of downstream liquidity. Therefore, more transparency is needed, including in regard to the formation of prices.

(38) Prior to the adoption by the Commission of Guidelines defining further the record-keeping requirements, the Agency and the Committee of European Securities Regulators (the "CESR"), established by Commission Decision 2009/77/EC, should confer and advise the Commission in regard to their content. The Agency and the CESR should also cooperate to investigate further and advise on whether transactions in gas supply contracts and gas derivatives should be subject to pre- and/or post-trade transparency requirements and, if so, what the content of those requirements should be.

(39) Member States or, where a Member State has so provided, the regulatory authority, should encourage the development of interruptible supply contracts.

(40) In the interests of security of supply, the balance between supply and demand in individual Member States should be monitored, and such monitoring should be followed by a report on the situation at Community level, taking account of interconnection capacity between areas. Such monitoring should be carried out sufficiently early to enable appropriate measures to be taken if security of supply is compromised. The construction and maintenance of the necessary network infrastructure, including interconnection capacity, should contribute to ensuring a stable gas supply.

(41) Member States should ensure that, taking into account the necessary quality requirements, biogas and gas from biomass or other types of gas are granted non-discriminatory access to the gas system, provided such access is permanently compatible with the relevant technical rules and safety standards. Those rules and standards should ensure that those gases can technically and safely be injected into, and transported through the natural gas system and should also address their chemical characteristics.

(42) Long-term contracts will continue to be an important part of the gas supply of Member States and should be maintained as an option for gas supply undertakings in so far as they do not undermine the objective of this Directive and are compatible with the Treaty, including the competition rules. It is therefore necessary to take into account long-term contracts in the planning of supply and transport capacity of natural gas undertakings.

(43) In order to ensure the maintenance of high standards of public service in the Community, all measures taken by Member States to achieve the objectives of this Directive should be regularly notified to the Commission. The Commission should regularly publish a report analysing measures taken at national level to achieve public service objectives and comparing their effectiveness, with a view to making recommendations as regards measures to be taken at national level to achieve high public service standards. Member States should ensure that when they are connected to the gas system customers are informed about their rights to be supplied with natural gas of a specified quality at reasonable prices. Measures taken by Member States to protect final customers may differ according to whether they are aimed at household customers or small and medium-sized enterprises.

(44) Respect for the public service requirements is a fundamental requirement of this Directive, and it is important that common minimum standards, respected by all Member States, are specified in this Directive, which take into account the objectives of common protection, security of supply, environmental protection and equivalent levels of competition in all Member States. It is important that the public service requirements can be interpreted on a national basis, taking into account national circumstances and subject to the respect of Community law.

(45) It should be possible for measures implemented by Member States to achieve the objectives of social and economic cohesion to include, in particular, the provision of adequate economic incentives, using, where appropriate, all existing national and Community tools. It should be possible for such tools to include liability mechanisms to guarantee the necessary investment.

(46) To the extent to which measures taken by Member States to fulfil public service obligations constitute State aid under Article 87(1) of the Treaty, there is an obligation under Article 88(3) of the Treaty to notify them to the Commission.

(47) The public service requirements and the common minimum standards that follow from them need to be further strengthened to make sure that all consumers, especially vulnerable ones, can benefit from competition and fair prices. The public service requirements should be defined at national level, taking into account national circumstances; Community law should, however, be respected by the Member States. The citizens of the Union and, where Member States deem it to be appropriate, small enterprises, should be able to enjoy public service obligations, in particular with regard to security of supply and reasonable tariffs. A key aspect in supplying customers is access to objective and transparent consumption data. Thus, consumers should have access to their consumption data and associated prices and services costs so that they can invite competitors to make an offer based on those data. Consumers should also have the right to be properly informed about their energy consumption. Prepayments should reflect the likely consumption of natural gas and different payment systems should be non-discriminatory. Information on energy costs provided to consumers frequently enough will create incentives for energy savings because it will give customers direct feedback on the effects of investment in energy efficiency and change of behaviour.

(48) Consumer interests should be at the heart of this Directive and quality of service should be a central responsibility of natural gas undertakings. Existing rights of consumers need to be strengthened and guaranteed, and should include greater transparency. Consumer protection should ensure that all consumers in the wider remit of the Community benefit from a competitive market. Consumer rights should be enforced by Member States or, where a Member State has so provided, the regulatory authorities.

(49) Clear and comprehensible information should be made available to consumers concerning their

rights in relation to the energy sector. The Commission should establish, after consulting relevant stakeholders including Member States, national regulatory authorities, consumer organisations and natural gas undertakings, an accessible, user-friendly energy consumer checklist providing consumers with practical information about their rights. That energy consumer checklist should be provided to all consumers and should be made publicly available.

(50) Energy poverty is a growing problem in the Community. Member States which are affected and which have not yet done so should, therefore, develop national action plans or other appropriate frameworks to tackle energy poverty, aiming at decreasing the number of people suffering such situation. In any event, Member States should ensure the necessary energy supply for vulnerable customers. In doing so, an integrated approach, such as in the framework of social policy, could be used and measures could include social policies or energy efficiency improvements for housing. At the very least, this Directive should allow national policies in favour of vulnerable customers.

(51) Greater consumer protection is guaranteed by the availability of effective means of dispute settlement for all consumers. Member States should introduce speedy and effective complaint handling procedures.

(52) It should be possible to base the introduction of intelligent metering systems on an economic assessment. Should that assessment conclude that the introduction of such metering systems is economically reasonable and cost-effective only for consumers with a certain amount of gas consumption, Member States should be able to take this into account when implementing intelligent metering systems.

(53) Market prices should give the right incentives for the development of the network.

(54) Promoting fair competition and easy access for different suppliers should be of the utmost importance for Member States in order to allow consumers to take full advantage of the opportunities of a liberalised internal market in natural gas.

(55) In order to contribute to security of supply whilst maintaining a spirit of solidarity between Member States, notably in the event of an energy supply crisis, it is important to provide a framework for regional cooperation in a spirit of solidarity. Such cooperation may rely, if Member States so decide, first and foremost on market-based mechanisms. Cooperation for the promotion of regional and bilateral solidarity should not impose a disproportionate burden on or discriminate between market participants.

(56) With a view to creating an internal market in natural gas, Member States should foster the integration of their national markets and the cooperation of system operators at Community and regional level, also incorporating the isolated systems forming gas islands that persist in the Community.

(57) The development of a true internal market in natural gas, through a network connected across the Community, should be one of the main goals of this Directive and regulatory issues on cross border interconnections and regional markets should, therefore, be one of the main tasks of the regulatory authorities, in close cooperation with the Agency where relevant.

(58) Securing common rules for a true internal market and a broad supply of gas should also be one of the main goals of this Directive. To that end, undistorted market prices would provide an incentive for cross-border interconnections while leading, in the long term, to price convergence.

(59) The regulatory authorities should also provide information on the market to permit the Commission to exercise its role of observing and monitoring the internal market in natural gas and its short,

medium and long-term evolution, including aspects such as supply and demand, transmission and distribution infrastructure, quality of service, cross-border trade, congestion management, investments, wholesale and consumer prices, market liquidity and environmental and efficiency improvements. National regulatory authorities should report to the competition authorities and the Commission those Member States in which prices impair competition and proper functioning of the market.

(60) Since the objective of this Directive, namely the creation of a fully operational internal market in natural gas, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore be better achieved at Community level, the Community may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Directive does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve that objective.

(61) Under Regulation (EC) No 715/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 on conditions for access to the natural gas transmission networks, the Commission may adopt Guidelines to achieve the necessary degree of harmonisation. Such Guidelines, which constitute binding implementing measures, are, also with regard to certain provisions of this Directive, a useful tool which can be adapted quickly where necessary.

(62) The measures necessary for the implementation of this Directive should be adopted in accordance with Council Decision 1999/468/EC of 28 June 1999 laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission.

(63) In particular, the Commission should be empowered to adopt the Guidelines necessary for providing the minimum degree of harmonisation required to achieve the aim of this Directive. Since those measures are of general scope and are designed to amend non-essential elements of this Directive, by supplementing it with new non-essential elements, they must be adopted in accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny provided for in Article 5a of Decision 1999/468/EC.

(64) In accordance with point 34 of the Interinstitutional Agreement on better law-making, Member States are encouraged to draw up, for themselves and in the interest of the Community, their own tables, illustrating, as far as possible, the correlation between this Directive and the transposition measures, and to make them public.

(65) Given the scope of the amendments made to Directive 2003/55/EC herein, it is desirable, for reasons of clarity and rationalisation, that the provisions in question should be recast by bringing them all together in a single text in a new Directive.

(66) This Directive respects the fundamental rights, and observes the principles, recognised in particular by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

CHAPTER I

SUBJECT MATTER, SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

Article 1

Subject matter and scope

1. This Directive establishes common rules for the transmission, distribution, supply and storage of natural gas. It lays down the rules relating to the organisation and functioning of the natural gas sector, access to the market, the criteria and procedures applicable to the granting of authorisations for transmission, distribution, supply and storage of natural gas and the operation of systems.

2. The rules established by this Directive for natural gas, including LNG, shall also apply in a non-discriminatory way to biogas and gas from biomass or other types of gas in so far as such gases can technically and safely be injected into, and transported through, the natural gas system.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Directive, the following definitions apply:

(1) “natural gas undertaking” means a natural or legal person carrying out at least one of the following functions: production, transmission, distribution, supply, purchase or storage of natural gas, including LNG, which is responsible for the commercial, technical and/or maintenance tasks related to those functions, but shall not include final customers;

(2) “upstream pipeline network” means any pipeline or network of pipelines operated and/or constructed as part of an oil or gas production project, or used to convey natural gas from one or more such projects to a processing plant or terminal or final coastal landing terminal;

(3) “transmission” means the transport of natural gas through a network, which mainly contains high-pressure pipelines, other than an upstream pipeline network and other than the part of high-pressure pipelines primarily used in the context of local distribution of natural gas, with a view to its delivery to customers, but not including supply;

(4) “transmission system operator” means a natural or legal person who carries out the function of transmission and is responsible for operating, ensuring the maintenance of, and, if necessary, developing the transmission system in a given area and, where applicable, its interconnections with other systems, and for ensuring the long-term ability of the system to meet reasonable demands for the transport of gas;

(5) “distribution” means the transport of natural gas through local or regional pipeline networks with a view to its delivery to customers, but not including supply;

(6) “distribution system operator” means a natural or legal person who carries out the function of distribution and is responsible for operating, ensuring the maintenance of, and, if necessary, developing the distribution system in a given area and, where applicable, its interconnections with other systems, and for ensuring the long-term ability of the system to meet reasonable demands for the

distribution of gas;

(7) “supply” means the sale, including resale, of natural gas, including LNG, to customers;

(8) “supply undertaking” means any natural or legal person who carries out the function of supply;

(9) “storage facility” means a facility used for the stocking of natural gas and owned and/or operated by a natural gas undertaking, including the part of LNG facilities used for storage but excluding the portion used for production operations, and excluding facilities reserved exclusively for transmission system operators in carrying out their functions;

(10) “storage system operator” means a natural or legal person who carries out the function of storage and is responsible for operating a storage facility;

(11) “LNG facility” means a terminal which is used for the liquefaction of natural gas or the importation, offloading, and re-gasification of LNG, and includes ancillary services and temporary storage necessary for the re-gasification process and subsequent delivery to the transmission system, but does not include any part of LNG terminals used for storage;

(12) “LNG system operator” means a natural or legal person who carries out the function of liquefaction of natural gas, or the importation, offloading, and re-gasification of LNG and is responsible for operating a LNG facility;

(13) “system” means any transmission networks, distribution networks, LNG facilities and/or storage facilities owned and/or operated by a natural gas undertaking, including linepack and its facilities supplying ancillary services and those of related undertakings necessary for providing access to transmission, distribution and LNG;

(14) “ancillary services” means all services necessary for access to and the operation of transmission networks, distribution networks, LNG facilities, and/or storage facilities, including load balancing, blending and injection of inert gases, but not including facilities reserved exclusively for transmission system operators carrying out their functions;

(15) “linepack” means the storage of gas by compression in gas transmission and distribution systems, but not including facilities reserved for transmission system operators carrying out their functions;

(16) “interconnected system” means a number of systems which are linked with each other;

(17) “interconnector” means a transmission line which crosses or spans a border between **Contracting Parties** for the sole purpose of connecting the national transmission systems of those **Contracting Parties**;

(18) “direct line” means a natural gas pipeline complementary to the interconnected system;

(19) “integrated natural gas undertaking” means a vertically or horizontally integrated undertaking;

(20) “vertically integrated undertaking” means a natural gas undertaking or a group of natural gas undertakings where the same person or the same persons are entitled, directly or indirectly, to exercise control, and where the undertaking or group of undertakings perform at least one of the functions of transmission, distribution, LNG or storage, and at least one of the functions of production or supply of natural gas;

(21) “horizontally integrated undertaking” means an undertaking performing at least one of the functions of production, transmission, distribution, supply or storage of natural gas, and a non-gas activity;

- (22) “related undertaking” means an affiliated undertaking, within the meaning of Article 41 of Seventh Council Directive 83/349/EEC of 13 June 1983 based on the Article 44(2)(g) of the Treaty on consolidated accounts and/or an associated undertaking, within the meaning of Article 33(1) of that Directive, and/or an undertaking which belong to the same shareholders;
- (23) “system user” means a natural or legal person supplying to, or being supplied by, the system;
- (24) “customer” means a wholesale or final customer of natural gas or a natural gas undertaking which purchases natural gas;
- (25) “household customer” means a customer purchasing natural gas for his own household consumption;
- (26) “non-household customer” means a customer purchasing natural gas which is not for his own household use;
- (27) “final customer” means a customer purchasing natural gas for his own use;
- (28) “eligible customer” means a customer who is free to purchase gas from the supplier of his choice, within the meaning of Article 37;
- (29) “wholesale customer” means a natural or legal person other than a transmission system operator or distribution system operator who purchases natural gas for the purpose of resale inside or outside the system where he is established;
- (30) “long-term planning” means the planning of supply and transport capacity of natural gas undertakings on a long-term basis with a view to meeting the demand for natural gas of the system, diversification of sources and securing supplies to customers;
- (31) “emergent market” means a **Contracting Party** in which the first commercial supply of its first long-term natural gas supply contract was made not more than 10 years earlier;
- (32) “security” means both security of supply of natural gas and technical safety;
- (33) “new infrastructure” means an infrastructure not completed by **1 July 2007**;
- (34) “gas supply contract” means a contract for the supply of natural gas, but does not include a gas derivative;
- (35) “gas derivative” means a financial instrument specified in points 5, 6 or 7 of Section C of Annex I to Directive 2004/39/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on markets in financial instruments, where that instrument relates to natural gas;
- (36) “control” means any rights, contracts or any other means which, either separately or in combination and having regard to the considerations of fact or law involved, confer the possibility of exercising decisive influence on an undertaking, in particular by:
- (a) ownership or the right to use all or part of the assets of an undertaking;
 - (b) rights or contracts which confer decisive influence on the composition, voting or decisions of the organs of an undertaking.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL RULES FOR THE ORGANISATION OF THE SECTOR

*Article 3***Public service obligations and customer protection**

1. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure, on the basis of their institutional organisation and with due regard to the principle of subsidiarity, that, without prejudice to paragraph 2, natural gas undertakings are operated in accordance with the principles of this Directive with a view to achieving a competitive, secure and environmentally sustainable market in natural gas, and shall not discriminate between those undertakings as regards their rights or obligations.

2. Having full regard to the relevant provisions of the **Energy Community Treaty, in particular Article 19 thereof, Contracting Parties** may impose on undertakings operating in the gas sector, in the general economic interest, public service obligations which may relate to security, including security of supply, regularity, quality and price of supplies, and environmental protection, including energy efficiency, energy from renewable sources and climate protection. Such obligations shall be clearly defined, transparent, non-discriminatory, verifiable and shall guarantee equality of access for natural gas undertakings of the **Energy Community** to national consumers. In relation to security of supply, energy efficiency/demand-side management and for the fulfilment of environmental goals and goals for energy from renewable sources, as referred to in this paragraph, **Contracting Parties** may introduce the implementation of long-term planning, taking into account the possibility of third parties seeking access to the system.

3. **Contracting Parties** shall take appropriate measures to protect final customers, and shall, in particular, ensure that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. In this context, each **Contracting Party** shall define the concept of vulnerable customers which may refer to energy poverty and, *inter alia*, to the prohibition of disconnection of gas to such customers in critical times. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that rights and obligations linked to vulnerable customers are applied. In particular, they shall take appropriate measures to protect final customers in remote areas who are connected to the gas system. **Contracting Parties** may appoint a supplier of last resort for customers connected to the gas system. They shall ensure high levels of consumer protection, particularly with respect to transparency regarding contractual terms and conditions, general information and dispute settlement mechanisms. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the eligible customer is in fact able easily to switch to a new supplier. As regards at least household customers those measures shall include those set out in Annex I.

4. **Contracting Parties** shall take appropriate measures, such as formulating national energy action plans, providing social security benefits to ensure the necessary gas supply to vulnerable customers, or providing for support for energy efficiency improvements, to address energy poverty where identified, including in the broader context of poverty. Such measures shall not impede the effective opening of the market set out in Article 37 and market functioning and shall be notified to the **Energy Community Secretariat**, where relevant, in accordance with paragraph 11 of this Article. Such notification shall not include measures taken within the general social security system.

5. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that all customers connected to the gas network are entitled

to have their gas provided by a supplier, subject to the supplier's agreement, regardless of the **Contracting Party** in which the supplier is registered, as long as the supplier follows the applicable trading and balancing rules and subject to security of supply requirements. In this regard, **Contracting Parties** shall take all measures necessary to ensure that administrative procedures do not constitute a barrier for supply undertakings already registered in another **Contracting Party**.

6. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that:

(a) where a customer, while respecting the contractual conditions, wishes to change supplier, the change is effected by the operator(s) concerned within three weeks; and

(b) customers are entitled to receive all relevant consumption data.

Contracting Parties shall ensure that the rights referred to in points (a) and (b) of the first subparagraph are granted to customers in a non-discriminatory manner as regards cost, effort or time.

7. **Contracting Parties** shall implement appropriate measures to achieve the objectives of social and economic cohesion and environmental protection, which may include means to combat climate change, and security of supply. Such measures may include, in particular, the provision of adequate economic incentives, using, where appropriate, all existing national tools, as well as financing from the international donors, for the maintenance and construction of necessary network infrastructure, including interconnection capacity.

8. In order to promote energy efficiency, **Contracting Parties** or, where a **Contracting Party** has so provided, the regulatory authority shall strongly recommend that natural gas undertakings optimise the use of gas, for example by providing energy management services, developing innovative pricing formulas or introducing intelligent metering systems or smart grids where appropriate

9. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure the provision of single points of contact to provide consumers with all necessary information concerning their rights, current legislation and the means of dispute settlement available to them in the event of a dispute. Such contact points may be part of general consumer information points.

Contracting Parties shall ensure that an independent mechanism such as an energy ombudsman or a consumer body is in place in order to ensure efficient treatment of complaints and out-of-court dispute settlements.

10. **Contracting Parties** may decide not to apply the provisions of Article 4 with respect to distribution insofar as their application would obstruct, in law or in fact, the performance of the obligations imposed on natural gas undertakings in the general economic interest and insofar as the development of trade would not be affected to such an extent as would be contrary to the interests of the **Energy Community**. The interests of the **Energy Community** include, *inter alia*, competition with regard to eligible customers in accordance with this Directive **and Annex III of the Energy Community Treaty**.

11. **Contracting Parties** shall, upon implementation of this Directive, inform the **Energy Community Secretariat** of all measures adopted to fulfill public service obligations, including consumer and environmental protection, and their possible effect on national and international competition, whether or not such measures require a derogation from the provisions of this Directive. They shall notify the **Energy Community Secretariat** subsequently every two years of any changes to such measures, whether or not they require a derogation from this Directive.

12.¹ **1. Contracting Parties shall ensure that <...> gas suppliers or distribution system operators, in cooperation with the regulatory authority, take the necessary steps to provide their consumers with a copy of the energy consumer checklists established by the European Commission <...>.**

2. The checklists shall be adopted by the Permanent High Level Group, following the procedure laid down in Article 79 of the Treaty.

Article 4

Authorisation procedure

1. In circumstances where an authorisation (for example, licence, permission, concession, consent or approval) is required for the construction or operation of natural gas facilities, the **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate shall grant authorisations to build and/or operate such facilities, pipelines and associated equipment on their territory, in accordance with paragraphs 2 to 4. **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate may also grant authorisations on the same basis for the supply of natural gas and for wholesale customers.

2. Where **Contracting Parties** have a system of authorisation, they shall lay down objective and non-discriminatory criteria which shall be met by an undertaking applying for an authorisation to build and/or operate natural gas facilities or applying for an authorisation to supply natural gas. The non-discriminatory criteria and procedures for the granting of authorisations shall be made public. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that authorisation procedures for facilities, pipelines and associated equipment take into account the importance of the project for the internal market in natural gas where appropriate.

3. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the reasons for any refusal to grant an authorisation are objective and non-discriminatory and that they are given to the applicant. Reasons for such refusals shall be notified to the **Energy Community Secretariat** for information. Contracting Parties shall establish a procedure enabling the applicant to appeal against such refusals.

4. For the development of newly supplied areas and efficient operation generally, and without prejudice to Article 38, **Contracting Parties** may decline to grant a further authorisation to build and operate distribution pipeline systems in any particular area once such pipeline systems have been or are proposed to be built in that area and if existing or proposed capacity is not saturated.

Article 5

Monitoring of security of supply

Contracting Parties shall ensure the monitoring of security of supply issues. Where **Contracting Parties** consider it appropriate, they may delegate that task to the regulatory authorities referred to in Article 39(1). Such monitoring shall, in particular, cover the balance of supply and demand on the national market, the level of expected future demand and available supplies, envisaged additional capacity being planned or under construction, and the quality and level of maintenance of the net-

¹ Replaced by Article 6 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC.

works, as well as measures to cover peak demand and to deal with shortfalls of one or more suppliers. The competent authorities shall publish, by 31 July each year, a report outlining the findings resulting from the monitoring of those issues, as well as any measures taken or envisaged to address them and shall forward that report to the **Energy Community Secretariat** forthwith.

Article 6

Regional solidarity

1. In order to safeguard a secure supply on the internal market in natural gas, **Contracting Parties** shall cooperate in order to promote regional and bilateral solidarity.
2. Such cooperation shall cover situations resulting or likely to result in the short term in a severe disruption of supply affecting a **Contracting Party**. It shall include:
 - (a) coordination of national emergency measures referred to in Article 8 of Council Directive 2004/67/EC of 26 April 2004 concerning measures to safeguard security of natural gas supply, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**;
 - (b) identification and, where necessary, development or upgrading of electricity and natural gas interconnections; and
 - (c) conditions and practical modalities for mutual assistance.
3. The **Energy Community Secretariat** and the other **Contracting Parties** shall be kept informed of such cooperation.
4. <...>

Article 7

Promotion of regional cooperation²

1. **Contracting Parties** as well as the regulatory authorities shall cooperate with each other for the purpose of integrating their national markets at regional level, as a first step towards the creation of a fully liberalised internal market. In particular, the regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall promote and facilitate the cooperation of transmission system operators at a regional level, including on cross-border issues with the aim of creating a competitive internal market in natural gas, foster the consistency of their legal, regulatory and technical framework and facilitate integration of the isolated systems forming gas islands that persist in the **Energy Community**. <...>
2. The **Energy Community Regulatory Board** shall cooperate with national regulatory authorities and transmission system operators to ensure the compatibility of regulatory frameworks with other European regions with the aim of creating a competitive internal market in natural gas. <...>
3. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure, through the implementation of this Directive, that transmission

² In addition, Article 25 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC reads: 'Transmission system operators shall promote operational arrangements in order to ensure the optimum management of the Energy Community network and shall promote the development of energy exchanges, the coordinated allocation of cross-border capacity through non-discriminatory market-based solutions, paying due attention to the specific merits of implicit auctions for short-term allocations, and the integration of balancing and reserve power mechanisms.'

system operators have one or more integrated system(s) at regional level covering two or more **Contracting Parties** for capacity allocation and for checking the security of the network.

4. Where vertically integrated transmission system operators participate in a joint undertaking established for implementing such cooperation, the joint undertaking shall establish and implement a compliance programme which sets out the measures to be taken to ensure that discriminatory and anticompetitive conduct is excluded. That compliance programme shall set out the specific obligations of employees to meet the objective of excluding discriminatory and anticompetitive conduct. It shall be notified to the **Energy Community Regulatory Board**. Compliance with the programme shall be independently monitored by the compliance officers of the vertically integrated transmission system operators.

Article 8

Technical rules

The regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that technical safety criteria are defined and that technical rules establishing the minimum technical design and operational requirements for the connection to the system of LNG facilities, storage facilities, other transmission or distribution systems, and direct lines, are developed and made public. Those technical rules shall ensure the interoperability of systems and shall be objective and non-discriminatory. <...>

CHAPTER III

TRANSMISSION, STORAGE AND LNG

Article 9

Unbundling of transmission systems and transmission system operators

1. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that from **1 June 2016**³:
 - (a) each undertaking which owns a transmission system acts as a transmission system operator;
 - (b) the same person or persons are entitled neither:
 - (i) directly or indirectly to exercise control over an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply, and directly or indirectly to exercise control or exercise any right over a transmission system operator or over a transmission system; nor
 - (ii) directly or indirectly to exercise control over a transmission system operator or over a transmission system, and directly or indirectly to exercise control or exercise any right over an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply;
 - (c) the same person or persons are not entitled to appoint members of the supervisory board, the administrative board or bodies legally representing the undertaking, of a transmission system oper-

³ According to Ministerial Council Decision 2012/05/MC-EnC of 5 December 2012, this date is replaced by 1 January 2020 for the Republic of Moldova.

ator or a transmission system, and directly or indirectly to exercise control or exercise any right over an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply; and

(d) the same person is not entitled to be a member of the supervisory board, the administrative board or bodies legally representing the undertaking, of both an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply and a transmission system operator or a transmission system.

2. The rights referred to in points (b) and (c) of paragraph 1 shall include, in particular:

(a) the power to exercise voting rights;

(b) the power to appoint members of the supervisory board, the administrative board or bodies legally representing the undertaking; or

(c) the holding of a majority share.

3. For the purpose of paragraph 1(b), the notion “undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply” shall include “undertaking performing any of the functions of generation and supply” within the meaning of Directive 2009/72/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, and the terms “transmission system operator” and “transmission system” shall include “transmission system operator” and “transmission system” within the meaning of that Directive.

4. **Contracting Parties** may allow for derogations from points (b) and (c) of paragraph 1 until **1 June 2017**, provided that transmission system operators are not part of a vertically integrated undertaking.

5. The obligation set out in paragraph 1(a) of this Article shall be deemed to be fulfilled in a situation where two or more undertakings which own transmission systems have created a joint venture which acts as a transmission system operator in two or more **Contracting Parties** for the transmission systems concerned. No other undertaking may be part of the joint venture, unless it has been approved under Article 14 as an independent system operator or as an independent transmission operator for the purposes of Chapter IV.

6. For the implementation of this Article, where the person referred to in points (b), (c) and (d) of paragraph 1 is the Contracting Party or another public body, two separate public bodies exercising control over a transmission system operator or over a transmission system on the one hand, and over an undertaking performing any of the functions of production or supply on the other, shall be deemed not to be the same person or persons.

7. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that neither commercially sensitive information referred to in Article 16 held by a transmission system operator which was part of a vertically integrated undertaking, nor the staff of such a transmission system operator, is transferred to undertakings performing any of the functions of production and supply.

8. Where on **6 October 2011**, the transmission system belongs to a vertically integrated undertaking a **Contracting Party** may decide not to apply paragraph 1.

In such case, the **Contracting Party** concerned shall either:

(a) designate an independent system operator in accordance with Article 14, or

(b) comply with the provisions of Chapter IV.

9. Where on **6 October 2011**, the transmission system belongs to a vertically integrated undertaking

and there are arrangements in place which guarantee more effective independence of the transmission system operator than the provisions of Chapter IV, a **Contracting** Party may decide not to apply paragraph 1.

10. Before an undertaking is approved and designated as a transmission system operator under paragraph 9 of this Article, it shall be certified according to the procedures laid down in Article 10(4), (5) and (6) of this Directive and in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, pursuant to which the **Energy Community Secretariat** shall verify that the arrangements in place clearly guarantee more effective independence of the transmission system operator than the provisions of Chapter IV.

11. Vertically integrated undertakings which own a transmission system shall not in any event be prevented from taking steps to comply with paragraph 1.

12. Undertakings performing any of the functions of production or supply shall not in any event be able to directly or indirectly take control over or exercise any right over unbundled transmission system operators in **Contracting Parties** which apply paragraph 1.

Article 10

Designation and certification of transmission system operators

1. Before an undertaking is approved and designated as transmission system operator, it shall be certified according to the procedures laid down in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of this Article and in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**.

2. Undertakings which own a transmission system and which have been certified by the national regulatory authority as having complied with the requirements of Article 9, pursuant to the certification procedure, shall be approved and designated as transmission system operators by **Contracting Parties**. The designation of transmission system operators shall be notified to the **Energy Community Secretariat** and published in **a dedicated section of the website of the Energy Community**.

3. Transmission system operators shall notify to the regulatory authority any planned transaction which may require a reassessment of their compliance with the requirements of Article 9.

4. The regulatory authorities shall monitor the continuing compliance of transmission system operators with the requirements of Article 9. They shall open a certification procedure to ensure such compliance:

- (a) upon notification by the transmission system operator pursuant to paragraph 3;
- (b) on their own initiative where they have knowledge that a planned change in rights or influence over transmission system owners or transmission system operators may lead to an infringement of Article 9, or where they have reason to believe that such an infringement may have occurred; or
- (c) upon a reasoned request from the **Energy Community Secretariat**.

5. The regulatory authorities shall adopt a decision on the certification of a transmission system operator within a period of four months from the date of the notification by the transmission system operator or from the date of the **Energy Community Secretariat** request. After expiry of that period, the certification shall be deemed to be granted. The explicit or tacit decision of the regulatory authority shall become effective only after the conclusion of the procedure set out in paragraph 6.

6. The explicit or tacit decision on the certification of a transmission system operator shall be notified without delay to the **Energy Community Secretariat** by the regulatory authority, together with all the relevant information with respect to that decision. The **Energy Community Secretariat** shall act in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**.

7. The regulatory authorities and the **Energy Community Secretariat** may request from transmission system operators and undertakings performing any of the functions of production or supply any information relevant for the fulfillment of their tasks under this Article.

8. The regulatory authorities and the **Energy Community Secretariat** shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information.

Article 11

Certification in relation to third countries

1. Where certification is requested by a transmission system owner or a transmission system operator which is controlled by a person or persons from a third country or third countries, the regulatory authority shall notify the **Energy Community Secretariat**.

The regulatory authority shall also notify to the **Energy Community Secretariat** without delay any circumstances that would result in a person or persons from a third country or third countries acquiring control of a transmission system or a transmission system operator.

2. The transmission system operator shall notify to the regulatory authority any circumstances that would result in a person or persons from a third country or third countries acquiring control of the transmission system or the transmission system operator.

3. The regulatory authority shall adopt a draft decision on the certification of a transmission system operator within four months from the date of notification by the transmission system operator. It shall refuse the certification if it has not been demonstrated:

(a) that the entity concerned complies with the requirements of Article 9; and

(b) to the regulatory authority or to another competent authority designated by the **Contracting Party** that granting certification will not put at risk the security of energy supply of the **Contracting Party** and the **Energy Community**. In considering that question the regulatory authority or other competent authority so designated shall take into account:

(i) the rights and obligations of the **Energy Community** with respect to that third country arising under international law, including any agreement concluded with one or more third countries to which the **Energy Community** is a party and which addresses the issues of security of energy supply

(ii) the rights and obligations of the **Contracting Party** with respect to that third country arising under agreements concluded with it, insofar as they are in compliance with **Energy Community law**; and

(iii) other specific facts and circumstances of the case and the third country concerned.⁴

⁴ According to Article 10(1) of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC, 'the regulatory authority or other competent authority designated shall also take into account the rights and obligations resulting from association or trade agreements between the Contracting Party and the European Union'.

4. The regulatory authority shall notify the decision to the **Energy Community Secretariat** without delay, together with all the relevant information with respect to that decision.

5. **Contracting Parties** shall provide for the regulatory authority or the designated competent authority referred to in paragraph 3(b), before the regulatory authority adopts a decision on the certification, to request an opinion from the **Energy Community Secretariat** on whether:

(a) the entity concerned complies with the requirements of Article 9; and

(b) granting certification will not put at risk the security of energy supply to the **Energy Community**.

6. The **Energy Community Secretariat** shall examine the request referred to in paragraph 5 as soon as it is received. Within a period of two months after receiving the request, it shall deliver its opinion to the national regulatory authority or, if the request was made by the designated competent authority, to that authority.

In preparing its opinion, the Secretariat shall request the views of the Energy Community Regulatory Board. It may also request the views of the **Contracting Party** concerned and interested parties. In the event that the **Energy Community Secretariat** makes such a request, the two-month period shall be extended by two months.

In the absence of an opinion by the **Energy Community Secretariat** within the period referred to in the first and second subparagraphs, the **Energy Community Secretariat** is deemed not to raise objections to the decision of the regulatory authority.

7. When assessing whether the control by a person or persons from a third country or third countries will put at risk the security of energy supply to the **Energy Community**, the **Energy Community Secretariat** shall take into account:

(a) the specific facts of the case and the third country or third countries concerned; and

(b) the rights and obligations of the **Energy Community** with respect to that third country arising under international law, including any agreement concluded with one or more third countries to which the **Energy Community** is a party and which addresses the issues of security of energy supply.⁵

8. The national regulatory authority shall, within a period of two months after the expiry of the period referred to in paragraph 6, adopt its final decision on the certification. In adopting its final decision the national regulatory authority shall take utmost account of the the **Energy Community Secretariat's** opinion. In any event **Contracting Parties** shall have the right to refuse certification where granting certification puts at risk the **Contracting Party's** security of energy supply or the security of energy supply of another **Contracting Party**. Where the **Contracting Party** has designated another competent authority to assess paragraph 3(b), it may require the national regulatory authority to adopt its final decision in accordance with the assessment of that competent authority. The regulatory authority's final decision and the opinion of the **Energy Community Secretariat** shall be published together. Where the final decision diverges from the **Energy Community Secretariat's** opinion, the **Contracting Party** concerned shall provide and publish, together with that decision, the reasoning underlying such decision.

9. Nothing in this Article shall affect the right of **Contracting Parties** to exercise, in compliance with **Energy Community** law, national legal controls to protect legitimate public security interests.

⁵ According to Article 10(2) of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC, Article 10(1) of the same Decision applies - 'the regulatory authority or other competent authority designated shall also take into account the rights and obligations resulting from association or trade agreements between the Contracting Party and the European Union'.

10. <...>

11. <...>

Article 12

Designation of storage and LNG system operators

Contracting Parties shall designate, or shall require natural gas undertakings which own storage or LNG facilities to designate, for a period of time to be determined by **Contracting Parties**, having regard to considerations of efficiency and economic balance, one or more storage and LNG system operators.

Article 13

Tasks of transmission, storage and/or LNG system operators

1. Each transmission, storage and/or LNG system operator shall:

(a) operate, maintain and develop under economic conditions secure, reliable and efficient transmission, storage and/or LNG facilities to secure an open market, with due regard to the environment, ensure adequate means to meet service obligations;

(b) refrain from discriminating between system users or classes of system users, particularly in favour of its related undertakings;

(c) provide any other transmission system operator, any other storage system operator, any other LNG system operator and/or any distribution system operator, sufficient information to ensure that the transport and storage of natural gas may take place in a manner compatible with the secure and efficient operation of the interconnected system; and

(d) provide system users with the information they need for efficient access to the system.

2. Each transmission system operator shall build sufficient cross-border capacity to integrate European transmission infrastructure accommodating all economically reasonable and technically feasible demands for capacity and taking into account security of gas supply.

3. Rules adopted by transmission system operators for balancing the gas transmission system shall be objective, transparent and non-discriminatory, including rules for the charging of system users of their networks for energy imbalance. Terms and conditions, including rules and tariffs, for the provision of such services by transmission system operators shall be established pursuant to a methodology compatible with Article 41(6) in a non-discriminatory and cost-reflective way and shall be published.

4. The regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** may require transmission system operators to comply with minimum standards for the maintenance and development of the transmission system, including interconnection capacity.

5. Transmission system operators shall procure the energy they use for the carrying out of their functions according to transparent, non-discriminatory and market based procedures.

Article 14

Independent system operators

1. Where the transmission system belongs to a vertically integrated undertaking on **6 October 2011**, **Contracting Parties** may decide not to apply Article 9(1) and designate an independent system operator upon a proposal from the transmission system owner. Such designation shall be subject to **the opinion of the Energy Community Secretariat**.

2. The **Contracting Party** may approve and designate an independent system operator only where:

(a) the candidate operator has demonstrated that it complies with the requirements of Article 9(1) (b), (c) and (d);

(b) the candidate operator has demonstrated that it has at its disposal the required financial, technical, physical and human resources to carry out its tasks under Article 13;

(c) the candidate operator has undertaken to comply with a ten-year network development plan monitored by the regulatory authority;

(d) the transmission system owner has demonstrated its ability to comply with its obligations under paragraph 5. To that end, it shall provide all the draft contractual arrangements with the candidate undertaking and any other relevant entity; and

(e) the candidate operator has demonstrated its ability to comply with its obligations under Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, including the cooperation of transmission system operators at regional level.

3. Undertakings which have been certified by the regulatory authority as having complied with the requirements of Article 11 and of paragraph 2 of this Article shall be approved and designated as independent system operators by Contracting Parties. The certification procedure in either Article 10 of this Directive and Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, or in Article 11 of this Directive shall be applicable.

4. Each independent system operator shall be responsible for granting and managing third-party access, including the collection of access charges and congestion charges, for operating, maintaining and developing the transmission system, as well as for ensuring the long-term ability of the system to meet reasonable demand through investment planning. When developing the transmission system the independent system operator shall be responsible for planning (including authorisation procedure), construction and commissioning of the new infrastructure. For this purpose, the independent system operator shall act as a transmission system operator in accordance with this Chapter. The transmission system owner shall not be responsible for granting and managing third-party access, nor for investment planning.

5. Where an independent system operator has been designated, the transmission system owner shall:

(a) provide all the relevant cooperation and support to the independent system operator for the fulfillment of its tasks, including in particular all relevant information;

(b) finance the investments decided by the independent system operator and approved by the regulatory authority, or give its agreement to financing by any interested party including the independent system operator. The relevant financing arrangements shall be subject to approval by the regulatory authority. Prior to such approval, the regulatory authority shall consult the transmission system own-

er together with other interested parties;

(c) provide for the coverage of liability relating to the network assets, excluding the liability relating to the tasks of the independent system operator; and

(d) provide guarantees to facilitate financing any network expansions with the exception of those investments where, pursuant to point (b), it has given its agreement to financing by any interested party including the independent system operator.

6. In close cooperation with the regulatory authority, the relevant national competition authority shall be granted all relevant powers to effectively monitor compliance of the transmission system owner with its obligations under paragraph 5.

Article 15

Unbundling of transmission system owners and storage system operators

1. A transmission system owner, where an independent system operator has been appointed, and a storage system operator which are part of vertically integrated undertakings shall be independent at least in terms of their legal form, organisation and decision making from other activities not relating to transmission, distribution and storage.

This Article shall apply only to storage facilities that are technically and/or economically necessary for providing efficient access to the system for the supply of customers pursuant to Article 33.

2. In order to ensure the independence of the transmission system owner and storage system operator referred to in paragraph 1, the following minimum criteria shall apply:

(a) persons responsible for the management of the transmission system owner and storage system operator shall not participate in company structures of the integrated natural gas undertaking responsible, directly or indirectly, for the day-to-day operation of the production and supply of natural gas;

(b) appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that the professional interests of persons responsible for the management of the transmission system owner and storage system operator are taken into account in a manner that ensures that they are capable of acting independently;

(c) the storage system operator shall have effective decision-making rights, independent from the integrated natural gas undertaking, with respect to assets necessary to operate, maintain or develop the storage facilities. This shall not preclude the existence of appropriate coordination mechanisms to ensure that the economic and management supervision rights of the parent company in respect of return on assets regulated indirectly in accordance with Article 41(6) in a subsidiary are protected. In particular, this shall enable the parent company to approve the annual financial plan, or any equivalent instrument, of the storage system operator and to set global limits on the levels of indebtedness of its subsidiary. It shall not permit the parent company to give instructions regarding day-to-day operations, nor with respect to individual decisions concerning the construction or upgrading of storage facilities, that do not exceed the terms of the approved financial plan, or any equivalent instrument; and

(d) the transmission system owner and the storage system operator shall establish a compliance programme, which sets out measures taken to ensure that discriminatory conduct is excluded, and ensure that observance of it is adequately monitored. The compliance programme shall set out the

specific obligations of employees to meet those objectives. An annual report, setting out the measures taken, shall be submitted by the person or body responsible for monitoring the compliance programme to the regulatory authority and shall be published.

3. <...>

Article 16

Confidentiality for transmission system operators and transmission system owners

1. Without prejudice to Article 30 or any other legal duty to disclose information, each transmission, storage and/or LNG system operator, and each transmission system owner, shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information obtained in the course of carrying out its activities, and shall prevent information about its own activities which may be commercially advantageous from being disclosed in a discriminatory manner. In particular, it shall not disclose any commercially sensitive information to the remaining parts of the undertaking, unless this is necessary for carrying out a business transaction. In order to ensure the full respect of the rules on information unbundling, **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the transmission system owner including, in the case of a combined operator, the distribution system operator, and the remaining part of the undertaking do not use joint services, such as joint legal services, apart from purely administrative or IT functions.

2. Transmission, storage and/or LNG system operators shall not, in the context of sales or purchases of natural gas by related undertakings, misuse commercially sensitive information obtained from third parties in the context of providing or negotiating access to the system.

3. Information necessary for effective competition and the efficient functioning of the market shall be made public. That obligation shall be without prejudice to protecting commercially sensitive information.

CHAPTER IV

INDEPENDENT TRANSMISSION OPERATOR

Article 17

Assets, equipment, staff and identity

1. Transmission system operators shall be equipped with all human, technical, physical and financial resources necessary for fulfilling their obligations under this Directive and carrying out the activity of gas transmission, in particular:

(a) assets that are necessary for the activity of gas transmission, including the transmission system, shall be owned by the transmission system operator;

(b) personnel necessary for the activity of gas transmission, including the performance of all corporate tasks, shall be employed by the transmission system operator;

(c) leasing of personnel and rendering of services, to and from any other parts of the vertically integrated undertaking shall be prohibited. A transmission system operator may, however, render

services to the vertically integrated undertaking as long as:

(i) the provision of those services does not discriminate between system users, is available to all system users on the same terms and conditions and does not restrict, distort or prevent competition in production or supply; and

(ii) the terms and conditions of the provision of those services are approved by the regulatory authority;

(d) without prejudice to the decisions of the Supervisory Body under Article 20, appropriate financial resources for future investment projects and/or for the replacement of existing assets shall be made available to the transmission system operator in due time by the vertically integrated undertaking following an appropriate request from the transmission system operator.

2. The activity of gas transmission shall include at least the following tasks in addition to those listed in Article 13:

(a) the representation of the transmission system operator and contacts to third parties and the regulatory authorities;

(b) <...>

(c) granting and managing third-party access on a non-discriminatory basis between system users or classes of system users;

(d) the collection of all the transmission system related charges including access charges, balancing charges for ancillary services such as gas treatment, purchasing of services (balancing costs, energy for losses);

(e) the operation, maintenance and development of a secure, efficient and economic transmission system;

(f) investment planning ensuring the long-term ability of the system to meet reasonable demand and guaranteeing security of supply;

(g) the setting up of appropriate joint ventures, including with one or more transmission system operators, gas exchanges, and the other relevant actors pursuing the objective to develop the creation of regional markets or to facilitate the liberalisation process; and

(h) all corporate services, including legal services, accountancy and IT services.

3. Transmission system operators shall be organised in a legal form as referred to in Article 1 of Council Directive 68/151/EEC.

4. The transmission system operator shall not, in its corporate identity, communication, branding and premises, create confusion in respect of the separate identity of the vertically integrated undertaking or any part thereof.

5. The transmission system operator shall not share IT systems or equipment, physical premises and security access systems with any part of the vertically integrated undertaking, nor use the same consultants or external contractors for IT systems or equipment, and security access systems.

6. The accounts of transmission system operators shall be audited by an auditor other than the one auditing the vertically integrated undertaking or any part thereof.

Article 18

Independence of the transmission system operator

1. Without prejudice to the decisions of the Supervisory Body under Article 20, the transmission system operator shall have:

- (a) effective decision-making rights, independent from the vertically integrated undertaking, with respect to assets necessary to operate, maintain or develop the transmission system; and
- (b) the power to raise money on the capital market in particular through borrowing and capital increase.

2. The transmission system operator shall at all times act so as to ensure it has the resources it needs in order to carry out the activity of transmission properly and efficiently and develop and maintain an efficient, secure and economic transmission system.

3. Subsidiaries of the vertically integrated undertaking performing functions of production or supply shall not have any direct or indirect shareholding in the transmission system operator. The transmission system operator shall neither have any direct or indirect shareholding in any subsidiary of the vertically integrated undertaking performing functions of production or supply, nor receive dividends or any other financial benefit from that subsidiary.

4. The overall management structure and the corporate statutes of the transmission system operator shall ensure effective independence of the transmission system operator in compliance with this Chapter. The vertically integrated undertaking shall not determine, directly or indirectly, the competitive behaviour of the transmission system operator in relation to the day to day activities of the transmission system operator and management of the network, or in relation to activities necessary for the preparation of the ten-year network development plan developed pursuant to Article 22.

5. In fulfilling their tasks in Article 13 and Article 17(2) of this Directive, and in complying with Article 13(1), Article 14(1)(a), Article 16(2), (3) and (5), Article 18(6) and Article 21(1) of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, transmission system operators shall not discriminate against different persons or entities and shall not restrict, distort or prevent competition in production or supply.

6. Any commercial and financial relations between the vertically integrated undertaking and the transmission system operator, including loans from the transmission system operator to the vertically integrated undertaking shall comply with market conditions. The transmission system operator shall keep detailed records of such commercial and financial relations and make them available to the regulatory authority upon request.

7. The transmission system operator shall submit for approval by the regulatory authority all commercial and financial agreements with the vertically integrated undertaking.

8. The transmission system operator shall inform the regulatory authority of the financial resources, referred to in Article 17(1)(d), available for future investment projects and/or for the replacement of existing assets.

9. The vertically integrated undertaking shall refrain from any action impeding or prejudicing the transmission system operator from complying with its obligations in this Chapter and shall not require the transmission system operator to seek permission from the vertically integrated undertaking in fulfilling those obligations.

10. An undertaking which has been certified by the regulatory authority as being in compliance with the requirements of this Chapter shall be approved and designated as a transmission system operator by the **Contracting Party** concerned. The certification procedure in either Article 10 of this Directive and Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, or in Article 11 of this Directive shall apply.

Article 19

Independence of the staff and the management of the transmission system operator

1. Decisions regarding the appointment and renewal, working conditions including remuneration, and termination of the term of office, of the persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator shall be taken by the Supervisory Body of the transmission system operator appointed in accordance with Article 20.

2. The identity of, and the conditions governing the term, the duration and the termination of office of, the persons nominated by the Supervisory Body for appointment or renewal as persons responsible for the executive management and/or as members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator, and the reasons for any proposed decision terminating such term of office, shall be notified to the regulatory authority. Those conditions and the decisions referred to in paragraph 1 shall become binding only if the regulatory authority has raised no objections within three weeks of notification.

The regulatory authority may object to the decisions referred to in paragraph 1 where:

(a) doubts arise as to the professional independence of a nominated person responsible for the management and/or member of the administrative bodies; or

(b) in the case of premature termination of a term of office, doubts exist regarding the justification of such premature termination.

3. No professional position or responsibility, interest or business relationship, directly or indirectly, with the vertically integrated undertaking or any part of it or its controlling shareholders other than the transmission system operator shall be exercised for a period of three years before the appointment of the persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator who are subject to this paragraph.

4. The persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies, and employees of the transmission system operator shall have no other professional position or responsibility, interest or business relationship, directly or indirectly, with any other part of the vertically integrated undertaking or with its controlling shareholders.

5. The persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies, and employees of the transmission system operator shall hold no interest in or receive any financial benefit, directly or indirectly, from any part of the vertically integrated undertaking other than the transmission system operator. Their remuneration shall not depend on activities or results of the vertically integrated undertaking other than those of the transmission system operator

6. Effective rights of appeal to the regulatory authority shall be guaranteed for any complaints by the persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator against premature terminations of their term of office.

7. After termination of their term of office in the transmission system operator, the persons responsible for its management and/or members of its administrative bodies shall have no professional position or responsibility, interest or business relationship with any part of the vertically integrated undertaking other than the transmission system operator, or with its controlling shareholders for a period of not less than four years.

8. Paragraph 3 shall apply to the majority of the persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator.

The persons responsible for the management and/or members of the administrative bodies of the transmission system operator who are not subject to paragraph 3 shall have exercised no management or other relevant activity in the vertically integrated undertaking for a period of at least six months before their appointment.

The first subparagraph of this paragraph and paragraphs 4 to 7 shall be applicable to all the persons belonging to the executive management and to those directly reporting to them on matters related to the operation, maintenance or development of the network.

Article 20

Supervisory Body

1. The transmission system operator shall have a Supervisory Body which shall be in charge of taking decisions which may have a significant impact on the value of the assets of the shareholders within the transmission system operator, in particular decisions regarding the approval of the annual and longer-term financial plans, the level of indebtedness of the transmission system operator and the amount of dividends distributed to shareholders. The decisions falling under the remit of the Supervisory Body shall exclude those that are related to the day to day activities of the transmission system operator and management of the network, and in relation to activities necessary for the preparation of the ten-year network development plan developed pursuant to Article 22.

2. The Supervisory Body shall be composed of members representing the vertically integrated undertaking, members representing third party shareholders and, where the relevant legislation of a **Contracting Party** so provides, members representing other interested parties such as employees of the transmission system operator.

3. The first subparagraph of Article 19(2) and Article 19(3) to (7) shall apply to at least half of the members of the Supervisory Body minus one.

Point (b) of the second subparagraph of Article 19(2) shall apply to all the members of the Supervisory Body.

Article 21

Compliance programme and compliance officer

1. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that transmission system operators establish and implement a compliance programme which sets out the measures taken in order to ensure that discriminatory conduct is excluded, and ensure that the compliance with that programme is adequately monitored.

The compliance programme shall set out the specific obligations of employees to meet those objectives. It shall be subject to approval by the regulatory authority. Without prejudice to the powers of the national regulator, compliance with the program shall be independently monitored by a compliance officer.

2. The compliance officer shall be appointed by the Supervisory Body, subject to the approval by the regulatory authority. The regulatory authority may refuse the approval of the compliance officer only for reasons of lack of independence or professional capacity. The compliance officer may be a natural or legal person. Article 19(2) to (8) shall apply to the compliance officer.

3. The compliance officer shall be in charge of:

(a) monitoring the implementation of the compliance programme;

(b) elaborating an annual report, setting out the measures taken in order to implement the compliance programme and

submitting it to the regulatory authority;

(c) reporting to the Supervisory Body and issuing recommendations on the compliance programme and its implementation;

(d) notifying the regulatory authority on any substantial breaches with regard to the implementation of the compliance programme; and

(e) reporting to the regulatory authority on any commercial and financial relations between the vertically integrated undertaking and the transmission system operator.

4. The compliance officer shall submit the proposed decisions on the investment plan or on individual investments in the network to the regulatory authority. This shall occur at the latest when the management and/or the competent administrative body of the transmission system operator submits them to the Supervisory Body.

5. Where the vertically integrated undertaking, in the general assembly or through the vote of the members of the Supervisory Body it has appointed, has prevented the adoption of a decision with the effect of preventing or delaying investments, which under the ten-year network development plan, was to be executed in the following three years, the compliance officer shall report this to the regulatory authority, which then shall act in accordance with Article 22.

6. The conditions governing the mandate or the employment conditions of the compliance officer, including the duration of his mandate, shall be subject to approval by the regulatory authority. Those conditions shall ensure the independence of the compliance officer, including by providing it with all the resources necessary for fulfilling his duties. During his mandate, the compliance officer shall have no other professional position, responsibility or interest, directly or indirectly, in or with any part of the vertically integrated undertaking or with its controlling shareholders.

7. The compliance officer shall report regularly, either orally or in writing, to the regulatory authority and shall have the right to report regularly, either orally or in writing, to the Supervisory Body of the transmission system operator.

8. The compliance officer may attend all meetings of the management or administrative bodies of the transmission system operator, and those of the Supervisory Body and the general assembly. The compliance officer shall attend all meetings that address the following matters:

(a) conditions for access to the network, as defined in Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**, in particular regarding tariffs, third party

access services, capacity allocation and congestion management, transparency, balancing and secondary markets;

(b) projects undertaken in order to operate, maintain and develop the transmission system, including investments in new transport connections, in expansion of capacity and in optimisation of existing capacity;

(c) energy purchases or sales necessary for the operation of the transmission system.

9. The compliance officer shall monitor the compliance of the transmission system operator with Article 16.

10. The compliance officer shall have access to all relevant data and to the offices of the transmission system operator and to all the information necessary for the fulfillment of his task.

11. After prior approval by the regulatory authority, the Supervisory Body may dismiss the compliance officer. It shall dismiss the compliance officer for reasons of lack of independence or professional capacity upon request of the regulatory authority.

12. The compliance officer shall have access to the offices of the transmission system operator without prior announcement.

Article 22

Network development and powers to make investment decisions

1. Every year, transmission system operators shall submit to the regulatory authority a ten-year network development plan based on existing and forecast supply and demand after having consulted all the relevant stakeholders. That network development plan shall contain efficient measures in order to guarantee the adequacy of the system and the security of supply.

2. The ten-year network development plan shall, in particular:

(a) indicate to market participants the main transmission infrastructure that needs to be built or upgraded over the next ten years;

(b) contain all the investments already decided and identify new investments which have to be executed in the next three years; and

(c) provide for a time frame for all investment projects.

3. When elaborating the ten-year network development plan, the transmission system operator shall make reasonable assumptions about the evolution of the production, supply, consumption and exchanges with other countries, taking into account investment plans for regional and **Energy Community**-wide networks, as well as investment plans for storage and LNG regasification facilities.

4. The regulatory authority shall consult all actual or potential system users on the ten-year network development plan in an open and transparent manner. Persons or undertakings claiming to be potential system users may be required to substantiate such claims. The regulatory authority shall publish the result of the consultation process, in particular possible needs for investments.

5. The regulatory authority shall examine whether the ten-year network development plan covers all investment needs identified during the consultation process <...>. The regulatory authority may require the transmission system operator to amend its ten-year network development plan.

6. The regulatory authority shall monitor and evaluate the implementation of the ten-year network development plan.

7. In circumstances where the transmission system operator, other than for overriding reasons beyond its control, does not execute an investment, which, under the ten-year network development plan, was to be executed in the following three years, **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the regulatory authority is required to take at least one of the following measures to ensure that the investment in question is made if such investment is still relevant on the basis of the most recent ten-year network development plan:

- (a) to require the transmission system operator to execute the investments in question;
- (b) to organise a tender procedure open to any investors for the investment in question; or
- (c) to oblige the transmission system operator to accept a capital increase to finance the necessary investments and allow independent investors to participate in the capital.

Where the regulatory authority has made use of its powers under point (b) of the first subparagraph, it may oblige the transmission system operator to agree to one or more of the following:

- (a) financing by any third party;
- (b) construction by any third party;
- (c) building the new assets concerned itself;
- (d) operating the new asset concerned itself.

The transmission system operator shall provide the investors with all information needed to realise the investment, shall connect new assets to the transmission network and shall generally make its best efforts to facilitate the implementation of the investment project.

The relevant financial arrangements shall be subject to approval by the regulatory authority.

8. Where the regulatory authority has made use of its powers under the first subparagraph of paragraph 7, the relevant tariff regulations shall cover the costs of the investments in question.

Article 23

Decision-making powers regarding the connection of storage facilities, LNG regasification facilities and industrial customers to the transmission system

1. The transmission system operator shall establish and publish transparent and efficient procedures and tariffs for non-discriminatory connection of storage facilities, LNG regasification facilities and industrial customers to the transmission system. Those procedures shall be subject to approval by the regulatory authority.

2. The transmission system operator shall not be entitled to refuse the connection of a new storage facility, LNG regasification facility or industrial customer on the grounds of possible future limitations to available network capacities or additional costs linked with necessary capacity increase. The transmission system operator shall ensure sufficient entry and exit capacity for the new connection.

CHAPTER V

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLY

Article 24

Designation of distribution system operators

Contracting Parties shall designate, or shall require undertakings which own or are responsible for distribution systems to designate, for a period of time to be determined by **Contracting Parties**, having regard to considerations of efficiency and economic balance, one or more distribution system operators and shall ensure that those operators act in accordance with Articles 25, 26 and 27.

Article 25

Tasks of distribution system operators

1. Each distribution system operator shall be responsible for ensuring the long-term ability of the system to meet reasonable demands for the distribution of gas, and for operating, maintaining and developing under economic conditions a secure, reliable and efficient system in its area, with due regard for the environment and energy efficiency.
2. In any event, the distribution system operator shall not discriminate between system users or classes of system users, particularly in favour of its related undertakings.
3. Each distribution system operator shall provide any other distribution, transmission, LNG, and/or storage system operator with sufficient information to ensure that the transport and storage of natural gas takes place in a manner compatible with the secure and efficient operation of the inter-connected system.
4. Each distribution system operator shall provide system users with the information they need for efficient access to, including use of, the system.
5. Where a distribution system operator is responsible for balancing the distribution system, rules adopted by it for that purpose shall be objective, transparent and non-discriminatory, including rules for the charging of system users for energy imbalance. Terms and conditions, including rules and tariffs, for the provision of such services by distribution system operators shall be established pursuant to a methodology compatible with Article 41(6) in a non-discriminatory and cost-reflective way and shall be published.

Article 26

Unbundling of distribution system operators

1. Where the distribution system operator is part of a vertically integrated undertaking, it shall be independent at least in terms of its legal form, organisation and decision making from other activities not relating to distribution. Those rules shall not create an obligation to separate the ownership of assets of the distribution system from the vertically integrated undertaking.

2. In addition to the requirements under paragraph 1, where the distribution system operator is part of a vertically integrated undertaking, it shall be independent in terms of its organisation and decision-making from the other activities not related to distribution. In order to achieve this, the following minimum criteria shall apply:

(a) those persons responsible for the management of the distribution system operator must not participate in company structures of the integrated natural gas undertaking responsible, directly or indirectly, for the day-to-day operation of the production, transmission and supply of natural gas;

(b) appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that the professional interests of persons responsible for the management of the distribution system operator are taken into account in a manner that ensures that they are capable of acting independently;

(c) the distribution system operator must have effective decision-making rights, independent from the integrated natural gas undertaking, with respect to assets necessary to operate, maintain or develop the network. In order to fulfill those tasks, the distribution system operator shall have at its disposal the necessary resources including human, technical, financial and physical resources. This should not prevent the existence of appropriate coordination mechanisms to ensure that the economic and management supervision rights of the parent company in respect of return on assets, regulated indirectly in accordance with Article 41(6) in a subsidiary are protected. In particular, this shall enable the parent company to approve the annual financial plan, or any equivalent instrument, of the distribution system operator and to set global limits on the levels of indebtedness of its subsidiary. It shall not permit the parent company to give instructions regarding day-to-day operations, nor with respect to individual decisions concerning the construction or upgrading of distribution lines, that do not exceed the terms of the approved financial plan, or any equivalent instrument; and

(d) the distribution system operator must establish a compliance programme, which sets out measures taken to ensure that discriminatory conduct is excluded, and ensure that observance of it is adequately monitored. The compliance programme shall set out the specific obligations of employees to meet that objective. An annual report, setting out the measures taken, shall be submitted by the person or body responsible for monitoring the compliance programme, the compliance officer of the distribution system operator, to the regulatory authority referred to in Article 39(1) and shall be published. The compliance officer of the distribution system operator shall be fully independent and shall have access to all the necessary information of the distribution system operator and any affiliated undertaking to fulfill his task.

3. Where the distribution system operator is part of a vertically integrated undertaking, the **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the activities of the distribution system operator are monitored by regulatory authorities or other competent bodies so that it cannot take advantage of its vertical integration to distort competition. In particular, vertically integrated distribution system operators shall not, in their communication and branding, create confusion in respect of the separate identity of the supply branch of the vertically integrated undertaking.

4. **Contracting Parties** may decide not to apply paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 to integrated natural gas undertakings serving less than 100 000 connected customers.

Article 27

Confidentiality obligations of distribution system operators

1. Without prejudice to Article 30 or any other legal duty to disclose information, each distribution system operator shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information obtained in the course of carrying out its business, and shall prevent information about its own activities which may be commercially advantageous from being disclosed in a discriminatory manner.
2. Distribution system operators shall not, in the context of sales or purchases of natural gas by related undertakings, abuse commercially sensitive information obtained from third parties in the context of providing or negotiating access to the system.

Article 28

Closed distribution systems

1. **Contracting Parties** may provide for national regulatory authorities or other competent authorities to classify a system which distributes gas within a geographically confined industrial, commercial or shared services site and does not, without prejudice to paragraph 4, supply household customers, as a closed distribution system if:
 - (a) for specific technical or safety reasons, the operations or the production process of the users of that system are integrated; or
 - (b) that system distributes gas primarily to the owner or operator of the system or to their related undertakings.
2. **Contracting Parties** may provide for national regulatory authorities to exempt the operator of a closed distribution system from the requirement under Article 32(1) that tariffs, or the methodologies underlying their calculation, are approved prior to their entry into force in accordance with Article 41.
3. Where an exemption is granted under paragraph 2, the applicable tariffs, or the methodologies underlying their calculation, shall be reviewed and approved in accordance with Article 41 upon request by a user of the closed distribution system.
4. Incidental use by a small number of households with employment or similar associations with the owner of the distribution system and located within the area served by a closed distribution system shall not preclude an exemption under paragraph 2 being granted.

Article 29

Combined operator

Article 26(1) shall not prevent the operation of a combined transmission, LNG, storage and distribution system operator provided that operator complies with Articles 9(1), or 14 and 15, or Chapter IV or falls under Article 49(6).

CHAPTER VI

UNBUNDLING AND TRANSPARENCY OF ACCOUNTS

Article 30

Right of access to accounts

1. **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate, including the regulatory authorities referred to in Article 39(1) and the dispute settlement authorities referred to in Article 34(3) shall, insofar as necessary to carry out their functions, have right of access to the accounts of natural gas undertakings as set out in Article 31.

2. **Contracting Parties** and any designated competent authority, including the regulatory authorities referred to in Article 39(1) and the dispute settlement authorities, shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information. Contracting Parties may provide for the disclosure of such information where this is necessary in order for the competent authorities to carry out their functions.

Article 31

Unbundling of accounts

1. **Contracting Parties** shall take the necessary steps to ensure that the accounts of natural gas undertakings are kept in accordance with paragraphs 2 to 5 of this Article. Where natural gas undertakings benefit from a derogation from this provision on the basis of Article 49(2) and (4), they shall at least keep their internal accounts in accordance with this Article.

2. Natural gas undertakings, whatever their system of ownership or legal form, shall draw up, submit to audit and publish their annual accounts in accordance with the rules of national law concerning the annual accounts of limited liability companies which should comply with the Fourth Council Directive 78/660/EEC of 25 July 1978 based on Article 44(2)(g) of the Treaty on the annual accounts of certain types of companies.

Undertakings which are not legally obliged to publish their annual accounts shall keep a copy thereof at the disposal of the public at their head office.

3. Natural gas undertakings shall, in their internal accounting, keep separate accounts for each of their transmission, distribution, LNG and storage activities as they would be required to do if the activities in question were carried out by separate undertakings, with a view to avoiding discrimination, cross-subsidisation and distortion of competition. They shall also keep accounts, which may be consolidated, for other gas activities not relating to transmission, distribution, LNG and storage. Until **1 January 2015**, they shall keep separate accounts for supply activities for eligible customers and supply activities for non-eligible customers. Revenue from ownership of the transmission or distribution network shall be specified in the accounts. Where appropriate, they shall keep consolidated accounts for other, non-gas activities. The internal accounts shall include a balance sheet and a profit and loss account for each activity.

4. The audit, referred to in paragraph 2, shall, in particular, verify that the obligation to avoid discrimination and cross-subsidies referred to in paragraph 3 is respected.

5. Undertakings shall specify in their internal accounting the rules for the allocation of assets and liabilities, expenditure and income as well as for depreciation, without prejudice to nationally applicable accounting rules, which they follow in drawing up the separate accounts referred to in paragraph 3. Those internal rules may be amended only in exceptional cases. Such amendments shall be mentioned and duly substantiated.

6. The annual accounts shall indicate in notes any transaction of a certain size conducted with related undertakings.

CHAPTER VII

ORGANISATION OF ACCESS TO THE SYSTEM

Article 32

Third-party access

1. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure the implementation of a system of third party access to the transmission and distribution system, and LNG facilities based on published tariffs, applicable to all eligible customers, including supply undertakings, and applied objectively and without discrimination between system users. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that those tariffs, or the methodologies underlying their calculation are approved prior to their entry into force in accordance with Article 41 by a regulatory authority referred to in Article 39(1) and that those tariffs - and the methodologies, where only methodologies are approved - are published prior to their entry into force.

2. Transmission system operators shall, if necessary for the purpose of carrying out their functions including in relation to cross-border transmission, have access to the network of other transmission system operators.

3. The provisions of this Directive shall not prevent the conclusion of long-term contracts in so far as they comply with **Energy Community** competition rules.

Article 33

Access to storage

1. For the organisation of access to storage facilities and linepack when technically and/or economically necessary for providing efficient access to the system for the supply of customers, as well as for the organisation of access to ancillary services, Contracting Parties may choose either or both of the procedures referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4. Those procedures shall operate in accordance with objective, transparent and non-discriminatory criteria.

The regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall define and publish criteria according to which the access regime applicable to storage facilities and linepack may be determined. They shall make public, or oblige storage and transmission system operators to make public, which storage facilities, or which parts of those storage facilities, and

which linepack is offered under the different procedures referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4.

The obligation referred to in the second sentence of the second subparagraph shall be without prejudice to the right of choice granted to **Contracting Parties** in the first subparagraph.

2. The provisions of paragraph 1 shall not apply to ancillary services and temporary storage that are related to LNG facilities and are necessary for the re-gasification process and subsequent delivery to the transmission system.

3. In the case of negotiated access, **Contracting Parties** or, where **Contracting Parties** have so provided, the regulatory authorities shall take the necessary measures for natural gas undertakings and eligible customers either inside or outside the territory covered by the interconnected system to be able to negotiate access to storage facilities and linepack, when technically and/or economically necessary for providing efficient access to the system, as well as for the organisation of access to other ancillary services. The parties shall be obliged to negotiate access to storage, linepack and other ancillary services in good faith.

Contracts for access to storage, linepack and other ancillary services shall be negotiated with the relevant storage system operator or natural gas undertakings. The regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall require storage system operators and natural gas undertakings to publish their main commercial conditions for the use of storage, linepack and other ancillary services **1 January 2007** and on an annual basis every year thereafter.

When developing the conditions referred to in the second subparagraph, storage operators and natural gas undertakings shall consult system users.

4. In the case of regulated access, **the regulatory authorities where Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall take the necessary measures to give natural gas undertakings and eligible customers either inside or outside the territory covered by the interconnected system a right to access to storage, linepack and other ancillary services, on the basis of published tariffs and/or other terms and obligations for use of that storage and linepack, when technically and/or economically necessary for providing efficient access to the system, as well as for the organisation of access to other ancillary services. The regulatory authorities where **Contracting Parties** have so provided or **Contracting Parties** shall consult system users when developing those tariffs or the methodologies for those tariffs. The right of access for eligible customers may be given by enabling them to enter into supply contracts with competing natural gas undertakings other than the owner and/or operator of the system or a related undertaking.

Article 34

Access to upstream pipeline networks

1. **Contracting Parties** shall take the necessary measures to ensure that natural gas undertakings and eligible customers, wherever they are located, are able to obtain access to upstream pipeline networks, including facilities supplying technical services incidental to such access, in accordance with this Article, except for the parts of such networks and facilities which are used for local production operations at the site of a field where the gas is produced. The measures shall be notified to the **Energy Community Secretariat**.

2. The access referred to in paragraph 1 shall be provided in a manner determined by the **Contract-**

ing Party in accordance with the relevant legal instruments. **Contracting Parties** shall apply the objectives of fair and open access, achieving a competitive market in natural gas and avoiding any abuse of a dominant position, taking into account security and regularity of supplies, capacity which is or can reasonably be made available, and environmental protection. The following matters may be taken into account:

- (a) the need to refuse access where there is an incompatibility of technical specifications which cannot reasonably be overcome;
- (b) the need to avoid difficulties which cannot reasonably be overcome and could prejudice the efficient, current and planned future production of hydrocarbons, including that from fields of marginal economic viability;
- (c) the need to respect the duly substantiated reasonable needs of the owner or operator of the upstream pipeline network for the transport and processing of gas and the interests of all other users of the upstream pipeline network or relevant processing or handling facilities who may be affected; and
- (d) the need to apply their laws and administrative procedures, in conformity with **Energy Community law**, for the grant of authorisation for production or upstream development.

3. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that they have in place dispute-settlement arrangements, including an authority independent of the parties with access to all relevant information, to enable disputes relating to access to upstream pipeline networks to be settled expeditiously, taking into account the criteria in paragraph 2 and the number of parties which may be involved in negotiating access to such networks.

4. In the event of cross-border disputes, the dispute-settlement arrangements for the **Contracting Party** having jurisdiction over the upstream pipeline network which refuses access shall be applied. Where, in cross-border disputes, more than one **Contracting Party** covers the network concerned, the **Contracting Parties** concerned shall consult each other with a view to ensuring that the provisions of this Directive are applied consistently.

Article 35

Refusal of access

1. Natural gas undertakings may refuse access to the system on the basis of lack of capacity or where the access to the system would prevent them from carrying out the public service obligations referred to in Article 3(2) which are assigned to them or on the basis of serious economic and financial difficulties with take-or-pay contracts having regard to the criteria and procedures set out in Article 48 and the alternative chosen by the **Contracting Party** in accordance with paragraph 1 of that Article. Duly substantiated reasons shall be given for any such a refusal.

2. **Contracting Parties** may take the measures necessary to ensure that the natural gas undertaking refusing access to the system on the basis of lack of capacity or a lack of connection makes the necessary enhancements as far as it is economic to do so or when a potential customer is willing to pay for them. In circumstances where **Contracting Parties** apply Article 4(4), **Contracting Parties** shall take such measures.

Article 36

New infrastructure

1. Major new gas infrastructure, i.e. interconnectors, LNG and storage facilities, may, upon request, be exempted, for a defined period of time, from the provisions of Articles 9, 32, 33 and 34 and Article 41(6), (8) and (10) under the following conditions:

- (a) the investment must enhance competition in gas supply and enhance security of supply;
- (b) the level of risk attached to the investment must be such that the investment would not take place unless an exemption was granted;
- (c) the infrastructure must be owned by a natural or legal person which is separate at least in terms of its legal form from the system operators in whose systems that infrastructure will be built;
- (d) charges must be levied on users of that infrastructure; and
- (e) the exemption must not be detrimental to competition or the effective functioning of the internal market in natural gas, or the efficient functioning of the regulated system to which the infrastructure is connected.

2. Paragraph 1 shall also apply to significant increases of capacity in existing infrastructure and to modifications of such infrastructure which enable the development of new sources of gas supply.

3. The regulatory authority referred to in Chapter VIII may, on a case-by-case basis, decide on the exemption referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2.

4. Where the infrastructure in question is located in the territory of more than one **Contracting Party**, the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** may submit an advisory opinion to the regulatory authorities of the **Contracting Parties** concerned, which may be used as a basis for their decision, within two months from the date on which the request for exemption was received by the last of those regulatory authorities.

Where all the regulatory authorities concerned agree on the request for exemption within six months of the date on which it was received by the last of the regulatory authorities, they shall inform the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** of their decision.

The **Energy Community Regulatory Board** shall exercise the tasks conferred on the regulatory authorities of the **Contracting Parties** concerned by the present Article:

- (a) where all regulatory authorities concerned have not been able to reach an agreement within a period of six months from the date on which the request for exemption was received by the last of those regulatory authorities; or
- (b) upon a joint request from the regulatory authorities concerned.

All regulatory authorities concerned may, jointly, request that the period referred to in point (a) of the third subparagraph is extended by up to three months.

5. Before taking a decision, the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** shall consult the relevant regulatory authorities and the applicants.

6. An exemption may cover all or part of the capacity of the new infrastructure, or of the existing infrastructure with significantly increased capacity.

In deciding to grant an exemption, consideration shall be given, on a case-by-case basis, to the need

to impose conditions regarding the duration of the exemption and non-discriminatory access to the infrastructure. When deciding on those conditions, account shall, in particular, be taken of the additional capacity to be built or the modification of existing capacity, the time horizon of the project and national circumstances.

Before granting an exemption, the regulatory authority shall decide upon the rules and mechanisms for management and allocation of capacity. The rules shall require that all potential users of the infrastructure are invited to indicate their interest in contracting capacity before capacity allocation in the new infrastructure, including for own use, takes place. The regulatory authority shall require congestion management rules to include the obligation to offer unused capacity on the market, and shall require users of the infrastructure to be entitled to trade their contracted capacities on the secondary market. In its assessment of the criteria referred to in points (a), (b) and (e) of paragraph 1, the regulatory authority shall take into account the results of that capacity allocation procedure.

The exemption decision, including any conditions referred to in the second subparagraph of this paragraph, shall be duly reasoned and published.

7. Notwithstanding paragraph 3, **Contracting Parties** may provide that their regulatory authority or the **Energy Community Regulatory Board**, as the case may be, shall submit, for the purposes of the formal decision, to the relevant body in the **Contracting Party** its opinion on the request for an exemption. That opinion shall be published together with the decision.

8. The regulatory authority shall transmit to the **Energy Community Secretariat**, without delay, a copy of every request for exemption as of its receipt. The decision shall be notified, without delay, by the competent authority to the **Energy Community Secretariat**, together with all the relevant information with respect to the decision. That information may be submitted to the **Energy Community Secretariat** in aggregate form, enabling the **Energy Community Secretariat** to reach a well-founded decision. In particular, the information shall contain:

- (a) the detailed reasons on the basis of which the regulatory authority, or **Contracting Party**, granted or refused the exemption together with a reference to paragraph 1 including the relevant point or points of that paragraph on which such decision is based, including the financial information justifying the need for the exemption;
- (b) the analysis undertaken of the effect on competition and the effective functioning of the internal market in natural gas resulting from the grant of the exemption;
- (c) the reasons for the time period and the share of the total capacity of the gas infrastructure in question for which the exemption is granted;
- (d) in case the exemption relates to an interconnector, the result of the consultation with the regulatory authorities concerned; and
- (e) the contribution of the infrastructure to the diversification of gas supply.

9. Within a period of two months from the day following the receipt of a notification, the **Secretariat** may issue an opinion inviting the regulatory authority to amend or withdraw the decision to grant an exemption. That two-month period may be extended by an additional period of two months where further information is sought by the **Energy Community Secretariat**. That additional period shall begin on the day following the receipt of the complete information. The initial two-month period may also be extended with the consent of both the **Energy Community Secretariat** and the regulatory authority.

Where the requested information is not provided within the period set out in the request, the notification shall be deemed to be withdrawn unless, before the expiry of that period, either the period has been extended with the consent of both the **Energy Community Secretariat** and the regulatory authority, or the regulatory authority, in a duly reasoned statement, has informed the **Energy Community Secretariat** that it considers the notification to be complete.

The notifying bodies shall take the utmost account of a Secretariat opinion that recommends to amend or withdraw the exemption decision. Where the final decision diverges from the Secretariat's opinion, the regulatory authority concerned shall provide and publish, together with that decision, the reasoning underlying its decision. Diverting decisions shall be included in the agenda of the first meeting of the Ministerial Council following the date of the decision, for information and discussion.

The **Secretariat** shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information.

The **Secretariat's** opinion on an exemption decision shall lose its effect two years from its adoption in the event that construction of the infrastructure has not yet started, and five years from its adoption in the event that the infrastructure has not become operational unless the **Secretariat** considers that any delay is due to major obstacles beyond control of the person to whom the exemption has been granted.

10. <...>

Article 37

Market opening and reciprocity

1. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the eligible customers comprise⁶:

- (a) <...>;
- (b) **from 1 January 2008**, all non-household customers;
- (c) **from 1 January 2015**, all customers.

2. To avoid imbalance in the opening of the gas markets:

- (a) contracts for the supply with an eligible customer in the system of another **Contracting Party** shall not be prohibited if the customer is eligible in both systems involved; and
- (b) <...>.

Article 38

Direct lines

1. **Contracting Parties** shall take the necessary measures to enable:

- (a) natural gas undertakings established within their territory to supply the eligible customers through a direct line; and,
- (b) any such eligible customer within their territory to be supplied through a direct line by natural

⁶ According to Article 17(2) of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC, the following deadlines 'shall apply without prejudice to special deadlines agreed in the Protocols of Accession to the Energy Community'.

gas undertakings.

2. In circumstances where an authorisation (for example, licence, permission, concession, consent or approval) is required for the construction or operation of direct lines, the **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate shall lay down the criteria for the grant of authorisations for the construction or operation of such lines in their territory. Those criteria shall be objective, transparent and non-discriminatory.

3. **Contracting Parties** may issue an authorisation to construct a direct line subject either to the refusal of system access on the basis of Article 35 or to the opening of a dispute-settlement procedure under Article 41.

CHAPTER VIII

NATIONAL REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

Article 39

Designation and independence of regulatory authorities

1. Each **Contracting Party** shall designate a single national regulatory authority at national level.
2. Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be without prejudice to the designation of other regulatory authorities at regional level within **Contracting Parties**, provided that there is one senior representative for representation and contact purposes at **Energy Community** level.
3. By way of derogation from paragraph 1 of this Article, a **Contracting Party** may designate regulatory authorities for small systems on a geographically separate region whose consumption, in 2008, accounted for less than 3% of the total consumption of the **Contracting Party** of which it is part. That derogation shall be without prejudice to the appointment of one senior representative for representation and contact purposes at **Energy Community** level.
4. **Contracting Parties** shall guarantee the independence of the regulatory authority and shall ensure that it exercises its powers impartially and transparently. For this purpose, **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that, when carrying out the regulatory tasks conferred upon it by this Directive and related legislation, the regulatory authority:
 - (a) is legally distinct and functionally independent from any other public or private entity;
 - (b) ensures that its staff and the persons responsible for its management:
 - (i) act independently from any market interest; and
 - (ii) do not seek or take direct instructions from any government or other public or private entity when carrying out the regulatory tasks. That requirement is without prejudice to close cooperation, as appropriate, with other relevant national authorities or to general policy guidelines issued by the government not related to the regulatory powers and duties under Article 41.
5. In order to protect the independence of the regulatory authority, **Contracting Parties** shall in particular ensure that:
 - (a) the regulatory authority can take autonomous decisions, independently from any political body, and has separate annual budget allocations, with autonomy in the implementation of the allocated

budget, and adequate human and financial resources to carry out its duties; and

(b) the members of the board of the regulatory authority or, in the absence of a board, the regulatory authority's top management are appointed for a fixed term of five up to seven years, renewable once.

In regard to point (b) of the first subparagraph, **Contracting Parties** shall ensure an appropriate rotation scheme for the board or the top management. The members of the board or, in the absence of a board, members of the top management may be relieved from office during their term only if they no longer fulfill the conditions set out in this Article or have been guilty of misconduct under national law.

Article 40

General objectives of the regulatory authority

In carrying out the regulatory tasks specified in this Directive, the regulatory authority shall take all reasonable measures in pursuit of the following objectives within the framework of their duties and powers as laid down in Article 41, in close consultation with other relevant national authorities, including competition authorities, as appropriate, and without prejudice to their competencies:

(a) promoting, in close cooperation with the **Energy Community Regulatory Board**, regulatory authorities of other **Contracting Parties** and the **Energy Community Secretariat**, a competitive, secure and environmentally sustainable internal market in natural gas within the **Energy Community**, and effective market opening for all customers and suppliers in the **Energy Community**, and ensuring appropriate conditions for the effective and reliable operation of gas networks, taking into account long-term objectives;

(b) developing competitive and properly functioning regional markets within the **Energy Community** in view of the achievement of the objectives referred to in point (a);

(c) eliminating restrictions on trade in natural gas between **Contracting Parties**, including developing appropriate cross-border transmission capacities to meet demand and enhancing the integration of national markets which may facilitate natural gas flow across the **Energy Community**;

(d) helping to achieve, in the most cost-effective way, the development of secure, reliable and efficient non-discriminatory systems that are consumer oriented, and promoting system adequacy and, in line with general energy policy objectives, energy efficiency as well as the integration of large and small scale production of gas from renewable energy sources and distributed production in both transmission and distribution networks;

(e) facilitating access to the network for new production capacity, in particular removing barriers that could prevent access for new market entrants and of gas from renewable energy sources;

(f) ensuring that system operators and system users are granted appropriate incentives, in both the short and the long term, to increase efficiencies in system performance and foster market integration;

(g) ensuring that customers benefit through the efficient functioning of their national market, promoting effective competition and helping to ensure consumer protection;

(h) helping to achieve high standards of public service for natural gas, contributing to the protection

of vulnerable customers and contributing to the compatibility of necessary data exchange processes for customer switching.

Article 41

Duties and powers of the regulatory authority

1. The regulatory authority shall have the following duties:

(a) fixing or approving, in accordance with transparent criteria, transmission or distribution tariffs or their methodologies;

(b) ensuring compliance of transmission and distribution system operators, and where relevant, system owners, as well as of any natural gas undertakings, with their obligations under this Directive and other relevant **Energy Community** legislation, including as regards cross-border issues;

(c) cooperating in regard to cross-border issues with the regulatory authority or authorities of the **Contracting Parties** concerned and with the **Energy Community Regulatory Board**;

(d) complying with, and implementing, any relevant legally binding decisions of the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** <...>;

(e) reporting annually on its activity and the fulfillment of its duties to the relevant authorities of the **Contracting Parties**, to the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** and the **Energy Community Secretariat**. Such reports shall cover the steps taken and the results obtained as regards each of the tasks listed in this Article;

(f) ensuring that there are no cross-subsidies between transmission, distribution, storage, LNG and supply activities;

(g) monitoring investment plans of the transmission system operators, and providing in its annual report an assessment of the investment plans of the transmission system operators <...>; which may include recommendations to amend those investment plans;

(h) monitoring compliance with and reviewing the past performance of network security and reliability rules and setting or approving standards and requirements for quality of service and supply or contributing thereto together with other competent authorities;

(i) monitoring the level of transparency, including of wholesale prices, and ensuring compliance of natural gas undertakings with transparency obligations;

(j) monitoring the level and effectiveness of market opening and competition at wholesale and retail levels, including on natural gas exchanges, prices for household customers including prepayment systems, switching rates, disconnection rates, charges for and the execution of maintenance services and complaints by household customers, as well as any distortion or restriction of competition, including providing any relevant information, and bringing any relevant cases to the relevant competition authorities;

(k) monitoring the occurrence of restrictive contractual practices, including exclusivity clauses which may prevent large non-household customers from contracting simultaneously with more than one supplier or restrict their choice to do so, and, where appropriate, informing the national competition authorities of such practices;

(l) respecting contractual freedom with regard to interruptible supply contracts as well as with regard

to long-term contracts provided that they are compatible with **Energy Community law**;

(m) monitoring the time taken by transmission and distribution system operators to make connections and repairs;

(n) monitoring and reviewing the access conditions to storage, linepack and other ancillary services as provided for in Article 33. In the event that the access regime to storage is defined according to Article 33(3), that task shall exclude the reviewing of tariffs;

(o) helping to ensure, together with other relevant authorities, that the consumer protection measures, including those set out in Annex I, are effective and enforced;

(p) publishing recommendations, at least annually, in relation to compliance of supply prices with Article 3, and providing those to the competition authorities, where appropriate;

(q) ensuring access to customer consumption data, the provision for optional use, of an easily understandable harmonised format at national level for consumption data and prompt access for all customers to such data under point (h) of Annex I;

(r) monitoring the implementation of rules relating to the roles and responsibilities of transmission system operators, distribution system operators, suppliers and customers and other market parties pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, **as adapted under Article 24 of the Energy Community Treaty**;

(s) monitoring the correct application of the criteria that determine whether a storage facility falls under Article 33(3) or (4); and

(t) monitoring the implementation of safeguards measures as referred to in Article 46;

(u) contributing to the compatibility of data exchange processes for the most important market processes at regional level.

2. Where a **Contracting Party** has so provided, the monitoring duties set out in paragraph 1 may be carried out by other authorities than the regulatory authority. In such a case, the information resulting from such monitoring shall be made available to the regulatory authority as soon as possible. While preserving their independence, without prejudice to their own specific competencies and consistent with the principles of better regulation, the regulatory authority shall, as appropriate, consult transmission system operators and, as appropriate, closely cooperate with other relevant national authorities when carrying out the duties set out in paragraph 1.

Any approvals given by a regulatory authority or the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** under this Directive are without prejudice to any duly justified future use of its powers by the regulatory authority under this Article or to any penalties imposed by other relevant authorities <...>.

3. In addition to the duties conferred upon it under paragraph 1 of this Article, when an independent system operator has been designated under Article 14, the regulatory authority shall:

(a) monitor the transmission system owner's and the independent system operator's compliance with their obligations under this Article, and issue penalties for non compliance in accordance with paragraph 4(d);

(b) monitor the relations and communications between the independent system operator and the transmission system owner so as to ensure compliance of the independent system operator with its obligations, and in particular approve contracts and act as a dispute settlement authority between the independent system operator and the transmission system owner in respect of any complaint

submitted by either party pursuant to paragraph 11;

(c) without prejudice to the procedure under Article 14(2)(c), for the first ten-year network development plan, approve the investments planning and the multi-annual network development plan presented annually by the independent system operator;

(d) ensure that network access tariffs collected by the independent system operator include remuneration for the network owner or network owners, which provides for adequate remuneration of the network assets and of any new investments made therein, provided they are economically and efficiently incurred; and

(e) have the powers to carry out inspections, including unannounced inspections, at the premises of transmission system owner and independent system operator.

4. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that regulatory authorities are granted the powers enabling them to carry out the duties referred to in paragraph 1, 3 and 6 in an efficient and expeditious manner. For this purpose, the regulatory authority shall have at least the following powers:

(a) to issue binding decisions on natural gas undertakings;

(b) to carry out investigations into the functioning of the gas markets, and to decide upon and impose any necessary and proportionate measures to promote effective competition and ensure the proper functioning of the market. Where appropriate, the regulatory authority shall also have the power to cooperate with the national competition authority and the financial market regulators or the **Energy Community Secretariat** in conducting an investigation relating to competition law;

(c) to require any information from natural gas undertakings relevant for the fulfillment of its tasks, including the justification for any refusal to grant third-party access, and any information on measures necessary to reinforce the network;

(d) to impose effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties on natural gas undertakings not complying with their obligations under this Directive or any relevant legally binding decisions of the regulatory authority or of the **Energy Community Regulatory Board**, or to propose to a competent court to impose such penalties. This shall include the power to impose or propose the imposition of penalties of up to 10% of the annual turnover of the transmission system operator or of up to 10% of the annual turnover of the vertically integrated undertaking on the transmission system operator or on the vertically integrated undertaking, as the case may be, for non compliance with their respective obligations pursuant to this Directive; and

(e) appropriate rights of investigations and relevant powers of instructions for dispute settlement under paragraphs 11 and 12.

5. In addition to the duties and powers conferred on it under paragraphs 1 and 4 of this Article, when a transmission system operator has been designated in accordance with Chapter IV, the regulatory authority shall be granted at least the following duties and powers:

(a) to issue penalties in accordance with paragraph 4(d) for discriminatory behaviour in favour of the vertically integrated undertaking;

(b) to monitor communications between the transmission system operator and the vertically integrated undertaking so as to ensure compliance of the transmission system operator with its obligations;

(c) to act as dispute settlement authority between the vertically integrated undertaking and the transmission system operator in respect of any complaint submitted pursuant to paragraph 11;

(d) to monitor commercial and financial relations including loans between the vertically integrated

undertaking and the transmission system operator;

(e) to approve all commercial and financial agreements between the vertically integrated undertaking and the transmission system operator, on the condition that they comply with market conditions;

(f) to request justification from the vertically integrated undertaking when notified by the compliance officer in accordance with Article 21(4). Such justification shall in particular include evidence to the end that no discriminatory behaviour to the advantage of the vertically integrated undertaking has occurred;

(g) to carry out inspections, including unannounced inspections, on the premises of the vertically integrated undertaking and the transmission system operator; and

(h) to assign all or specific tasks of the transmission system operator to an independent system operator appointed in accordance with Article 14 in case of a persistent breach by the transmission system operator of its obligations under this Directive, in particular in case of repeated discriminatory behaviour to the benefit of the vertically integrated undertaking.

6. The regulatory authorities shall be responsible for fixing or approving sufficiently in advance of their entry into force at least the methodologies used to calculate or establish the terms and conditions for:

(a) connection and access to national networks, including transmission and distribution tariffs, and terms, conditions and tariffs for access to LNG facilities. Those tariffs or methodologies shall allow the necessary investments in the networks and LNG facilities to be carried out in a manner allowing those investments to ensure the viability of the networks and LNG facilities;

(b) the provision of balancing services which shall be performed in the most economic manner and provide appropriate incentives for network users to balance their input and off-takes. The balancing services shall be provided in a fair and non-discriminatory manner and be based on objective criteria; and

(c) access to cross-border infrastructures, including the procedures for the allocation of capacity and congestion management.

7. The methodologies or the terms and conditions referred to in paragraph 6 shall be published.

8. In fixing or approving the tariffs or methodologies and the balancing services, the regulatory authorities shall ensure that transmission and distribution system operators are granted appropriate incentive, over both the short and long term, to increase efficiencies, foster market integration and security of supply and support the related research activities

9. The regulatory authorities shall monitor congestion management of national gas transmission networks including interconnectors, and the implementation of congestion management rules. To that end, transmission system operators or market operators shall submit their congestion management rules, including capacity allocation, to the national regulatory authorities. National regulatory authorities may request amendments to those rules.

10. Regulatory authorities shall have the authority to require transmission, storage, LNG and distribution system operators, if necessary, to modify the terms and conditions, including tariffs and methodologies referred to in this Article, to ensure that they are proportionate and applied in a non-discriminatory manner. In the event that the access regime to storage is defined according to Article 33(3), that task shall exclude the modification of tariffs. In the event of delay in the fixing of transmission and distribution tariffs, regulatory authorities shall have the power to fix or approve

provisional transmission and distribution tariffs or methodologies and to decide on the appropriate compensatory measures if the final tariffs or methodologies deviate from those provisional tariffs or methodologies.

11. Any party having a complaint against a transmission, storage, LNG or distribution system operator in relation to that operator's obligations under this Directive may refer the complaint to the regulatory authority which, acting as dispute settlement authority, shall issue a decision within a period of two months after receipt of the complaint. That period may be extended by two months where additional information is sought by the regulatory authorities. That extended period may be further extended with the agreement of the complainant. The regulatory authority's decision shall have binding effect unless and until overruled on appeal.

12. Any party who is affected and who has a right to complain concerning a decision on methodologies taken pursuant to this Article or, where the regulatory authority has a duty to consult, concerning the proposed tariffs or methodologies, may, at the latest within two months, or a shorter time period as provided by **Contracting Parties**, following publication of the decision or proposal for a decision, submit a complaint for review. Such a complaint shall not have suspensive effect.

13. **Contracting Parties** shall create appropriate and efficient mechanisms for regulation, control and transparency so as to avoid any abuse of a dominant position, in particular to the detriment of consumers, and any predatory behaviour. Those mechanisms shall take account the provisions of the Treaty, and in particular Article 82 thereof.⁷

14. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the appropriate measures are taken, including administrative action or criminal proceedings in conformity with their national law, against the natural or legal persons responsible where confidentiality rules imposed by this Directive have not been respected.

15. Complaints referred to in paragraphs 11 and 12 shall be without prejudice to the exercise of rights of appeal under national law.

16. Decisions taken by regulatory authorities shall be fully reasoned and justified to allow for judicial review. The decisions shall be available to the public while preserving the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information.

17. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that suitable mechanisms exist at national level under which a party affected by a decision of a regulatory authority has a right of appeal to a body independent of the parties involved and of any government.

Article 42

Regulatory regime for cross-border issues

1. Regulatory authorities shall closely consult and cooperate with each other, and shall provide each other and the **Energy Community Regulatory Board** with any information necessary for the fulfillment of their tasks under this Directive. In respect of the information exchanged, the receiving authority shall ensure the same level of confidentiality as that required of the originating authority.

2. Regulatory authorities shall cooperate at least at a regional level to:

(a) foster the creation of operational arrangements in order to enable an optimal management of

⁷ In the Energy Community Treaty, Article 82 of the EC Treaty is incorporated through Article 18 and Annex III.

the network, promote joint gas exchanges and the allocation of cross-border capacity, and to enable an adequate level of interconnection capacity, including through new interconnections, within the region and between regions to allow for development of effective competition and improvement of security of supply without discriminating between supply undertakings in different **Contracting Parties**;

(b) coordinate the development of all network codes for the relevant transmission system operators and other market actors; and

(c) coordinate the development of the rules governing the management of congestion.

3. National regulatory authorities shall have the right to enter into cooperative arrangements with each other to foster regulatory cooperation.

4. The actions referred to in paragraph 2 shall be carried out, as appropriate, in close consultation with other relevant national authorities and without prejudice to their specific competencies.

5. <...>

Article 43

Compliances with the Guidelines⁸

The Energy Community shall endeavour to apply the Guidelines adopted by the European Commission under <...> Directive 2009/73/EC, <...> [and] Regulation (EC) No 715/2009.

These Guidelines, which may need to be adapted to the institutional framework of the Energy Community, shall be adopted by the Permanent High Level Group, following the procedure laid down in Article 79 of the Treaty.

The Permanent High Level Group shall adopt a Procedural Act on application of this article.⁹

Article 44

Record keeping

1. **Contracting Parties** shall require supply undertakings to keep at the disposal of the national authorities, including the regulatory authority, the national competition authorities and the **Energy Community Secretariat**, for the fulfillment of their tasks, for at least five years, the relevant data relating to all transactions in gas supply contracts and gas derivatives with wholesale customers and transmission system operators as well as storage and LNG operators.

2. The data shall include details on the characteristics of the relevant transactions such as duration, delivery and settlement rules, the quantity, the dates and times of execution and the transaction prices and means of identifying the wholesale customer concerned, as well as specified details of all unsettled gas supply contracts and gas derivatives.

3. The regulatory authority may decide to make available to market participants elements of this

⁸ Not applicable according to Article 21 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC. The following text corresponds to Article 27 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC.

⁹ Procedural Act 01/2012/PHLG-EnC of Permanent High Level Group of 21 June 2012 laying down the rules governing the adoption of Guidelines and Network Codes in the Energy Community was adopted on 21 June 2012, see page 835.

information provided that commercially sensitive information on individual market players or individual transactions is not released. This paragraph shall not apply to information about financial instruments which fall within the scope of Directive 2004/39/EC.

4. <...>

5. With respect to transactions in gas derivatives of supply undertakings with wholesale customers and transmission system operators as well as storage and LNG operators, this Article shall apply only once **the Permanent High Level Group** has endorsed the Guidelines referred to in paragraph 4.

6. <...>

7. <...>

CHAPTER IX

RETAIL MARKETS

Article 45

Retail markets

In order to facilitate the emergence of well functioning and transparent retail markets in the **Energy Community, Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the roles and responsibilities of transmission system operators, distribution system operators, supply undertakings and customers and if necessary other market parties are defined with respect to contractual arrangements, commitment to customers, data exchange and settlement rules, data ownership and metering responsibility.

Those rules shall be made public, be designed with the aim to facilitate customers' and suppliers' access to networks and they shall be subject to review by the regulatory authorities or other relevant national authorities.

CHAPTER X

FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 46

Safeguard measures

1. In the event of a sudden crisis in the energy market or where the physical safety or security of persons, apparatus or installations or system integrity is threatened, a Contracting Party may temporarily take the necessary safeguard measures.

Instead of the second and third subparagraphs, Articles 36 to 39 of the Energy Community Treaty apply.

Article 47**Level playing field**

1. Measures that the **Contracting Parties** may take pursuant to this Directive in order to ensure a level playing field shall be compatible with the Treaty, notably Article 30 thereof,¹⁰ and with **Energy Community law**.
2. The measures referred to in paragraph 1 shall be proportionate, non-discriminatory and transparent. Those measures may be put into effect only **following notification to the Secretariat, which shall issue an opinion**.
3. The **Energy Community Secretariat** shall act on the notification referred to in paragraph 2 within two months of the receipt of the notification. That period shall begin on the day following receipt of the complete information. In the event that the **Energy Community Secretariat** has not acted within that two-month period, it shall be deemed not to have raised objections to the notified measures.

Article 48**Derogations in relation to take-or-pay commitments**

1. If a natural gas undertaking encounters, or considers it would encounter, serious economic and financial difficulties because of its take-or-pay commitments accepted in one or more gas-purchase contracts, it may send an application for a temporary derogation from Article 32 to the **Contracting Party** concerned or the designated competent authority. Applications shall, in accordance with the choice of **Contracting Parties**, be presented on a case-by-case basis either before or after refusal of access to the system. **Contracting Parties** may also give the natural gas undertaking the choice of presenting an application either before or after refusal of access to the system. Where a natural gas undertaking has refused access, the application shall be presented without delay. The applications shall be accompanied by all relevant information on the nature and extent of the problem and on the efforts undertaken by the natural gas undertaking to solve the problem.

If alternative solutions are not reasonably available, and taking into account paragraph 3, the **Contracting Party** or the designated competent authority may decide to grant a derogation.

2. The **Contracting Party**, or the designated competent authority, shall notify the **Energy Community Secretariat** without delay of its decision to grant a derogation, together with all the relevant information with respect to the derogation. That information may be submitted to the **Energy Community Secretariat** in an aggregated form, enabling the **Energy Community Secretariat** to reach a well-founded decision. Within eight weeks of receipt of that notification, the **Secretariat shall issue an opinion, inviting, as the case may be, the Contracting Party** or the designated competent authority concerned to amend or withdraw the decision to grant a derogation.

<...>

The **Energy Community Secretariat** shall preserve the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information.

¹⁰ Procedural Act 01/2012/PHLG-EnC of Permanent High Level Group of 21 June 2012 laying down the rules governing the adoption of Guidelines and Network Codes in the Energy Community was adopted on 21 June 2012, see page 835.

3. When deciding on the derogations referred to in paragraph 1, the **Contracting Party**, or the designated competent authority, and the **Energy Community Secretariat** shall take into account, in particular, the following criteria:

- (a) the objective of achieving a competitive gas market;
- (b) the need to fulfill public-service obligations and to ensure security of supply;
- (c) the position of the natural gas undertaking in the gas market and the actual state of competition in that market;
- (d) the seriousness of the economic and financial difficulties encountered by natural gas undertakings and transmission undertakings or eligible customers;
- (e) the dates of signature and terms of the contract or contracts in question, including the extent to which they allow for market changes;
- (f) the efforts made to find a solution to the problem;
- (g) the extent to which, when accepting the take-or-pay commitments in question, the undertaking could reasonably have foreseen, having regard to the provisions of this Directive, that serious difficulties were likely to arise;
- (h) the level of connection of the system with other systems and the degree of interoperability of those systems; and
- (i) the effects the granting of a derogation would have on the correct application of this Directive as regards the smooth functioning of the internal market in natural gas.

A decision on a request for a derogation concerning take-or-pay contracts concluded **before 1 July 2006** should not lead to a situation in which it is impossible to find economically viable alternative outlets. Serious difficulties shall in any case be deemed not to exist when the sales of natural gas do not fall below the level of minimum offtake guarantees contained in gas-purchase take-or-pay contracts or in so far as the relevant gas-purchase take-or-pay contract can be adapted or the natural gas undertaking is able to find alternative outlets.

4. Natural gas undertakings which have not been granted a derogation as referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall not refuse, or shall no longer refuse, access to the system because of take-or-pay commitments accepted in a gas purchase contract. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that the relevant provisions of Articles 32 to 44 are complied with.

5. Any derogation granted under the above provisions shall be duly substantiated. The **Energy Community Secretariat** shall publish the decision **in a dedicated section of the website of the Energy Community**.

6. <...>

Article 49

Emergent and isolated markets

<...>

Article 50**Review procedure**

<...>

Article 51**Committee**

<...>

Article 52¹¹**Reporting**

1. The Secretariat shall monitor and review application of this Decision in the Contracting Parties.

2. The Secretariat shall submit an overall progress report to the Ministerial Council for the first time by 30 June 2012, and thereafter on an annual basis. The progress report shall reflect the progress made on creating a complete and fully operational internal market in electricity and gas and the obstacles that remain in this respect, including aspects of market dominance, market concentration, predatory or anti-competitive behaviour and the effect thereof in terms of market distortion. It shall in particular consider:

- the implementation by each Contracting Party of the provisions on unbundling, certification and on independence of the national regulatory authorities and application of these provisions in practice,
- the existence of non-discriminatory network access,
- effective regulation,
- the development of interconnection infrastructure and the security of supply situation in the Energy Community,
- the extent to which the full benefits of the opening of markets are accruing to small enterprises and household customers, notably with respect to public service and universal service standards,
- the extent to which markets are in practice open to effective competition, including aspects of market dominance, market concentration and predatory or anti-competitive behaviour,
- the extent to which customers are actually switching suppliers and renegotiating tariffs,
- price developments, including supply prices, in relation to the degree of opening of the markets, and
- the experience gained from application of this Decision as far as effective independence of system operators in vertically integrated undertakings is concerned and whether other measures in addition to functional independence and separation of accounts have been developed which have effects equivalent to legal unbundling.

¹¹ The text displayed here corresponds to Article 31 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC.

3. The Secretariat shall present a report to the Ministerial Council for the first time by 30 June 2012, and thereafter on an annual basis, summarising the opinions issued by the Secretariat in application of the acts referred to in Article 1, as adapted by this Decision.

Article 53

Repeal

<...>

***Article 54*¹²**

Implementation of the energy acquis

1. Each Contracting Party shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with <...> Directive 2009/73/EC, <...> and Regulation (EC) No 715/2009, as adapted by this Decision, by 1 January 2015. They shall forthwith inform the Energy Community Secretariat thereof.

The Contracting Parties shall apply the measures referred to in the previous paragraph with effect from 1 January 2015 with the following exceptions:

– <...>;

– Article 11 of Directive 2009/73/EC, which they shall apply from 1 January 2017.

2. The Contracting Parties shall communicate to the Energy Community Secretariat the text of the main provisions of national law which they adopt in the field covered by this Decision.

***Articles 55 and 56*¹³**

Entry into force and Addressees

This Decision [2011/02/MC-EnC] enters into force upon its adoption and is addressed to the Contracting Parties.

¹² The text displayed here corresponds to Article 3 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC.

¹³ The text displayed here corresponds to Article 32 of Decision 2011/02/MC-EnC.

ANNEX I

MEASURES ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

1. Without prejudice to Energy Community rules on consumer protection <...> the measures referred to in Article 3 are to ensure that customers:

(a) have a right to a contract with their gas service provider that specifies:

- the identity and address of the supplier,
- the services provided, the service quality levels offered, as well as the time for the initial connection,
- the types of maintenance service offered,
- the means by which up-to-date information on all applicable tariffs and maintenance charges may be obtained,
- the duration of the contract, the conditions for renewal and termination of services and of the contract, and whether withdrawal from the contract without charge is permitted,
- any compensation and the refund arrangements which apply if contracted service quality levels are not met including inaccurate and delayed billing,
- the method of initiating procedures for settlement of disputes in accordance with point (f); and,
- information relating to consumer rights, including on the complaint handling and all of the information referred to in this point, clearly communicated through billing or the natural gas undertaking's web site,

Conditions shall be fair and well-known in advance. In any event, that information should be provided prior to the conclusion or confirmation of the contract. Where contracts are concluded through intermediaries, the information relating to the matters set out in this point shall also be provided prior to the conclusion of the contract;

(b) are given adequate notice of any intention to modify contractual conditions and are informed about their right of withdrawal when the notice is given. Service providers shall notify their subscribers directly of any increase in charges, at an appropriate time no later than one normal billing period after the increase comes into effect in a transparent and comprehensible manner. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure that customers are free to withdraw from contracts if they do not accept the new conditions notified to them by their gas service provider;

(c) receive transparent information on applicable prices and tariffs and on standard terms and conditions, in respect of access to and use of gas services;

(d) are offered a wide choice of payment methods, which do not unduly discriminate between customers. Prepayment systems shall be fair and adequately reflect likely consumption. Any difference in terms and conditions shall reflect the costs to the supplier of the different payment systems. General terms and conditions shall be fair and transparent. They shall be given in clear and comprehensible language and shall not include non-contractual barriers to the exercise of customers' rights, for example excessive contractual documentation. Customers shall be protected against unfair or misleading selling methods;

(e) are not charged for changing supplier;

(f) benefit from transparent, simple and inexpensive procedures for dealing with their complaints. In

particular, all consumers shall have the right to a good standard of service and complaint handling by their gas service provider. Such out-of-court dispute settlements procedures shall enable disputes to be settled fairly and promptly, preferably within three months, with provision, where warranted, for a system of reimbursement and/or compensation. They should, wherever possible, be in line with the principles set out in Commission Recommendation 98/257/EC of 30 March 1998 on the principles applicable to the bodies responsible for out-of-court settlement of consumer disputes;

(g) connected to the gas system are informed about their rights to be supplied, under the national legislation applicable, with natural gas of a specified quality at reasonable prices;

(h) have at their disposal their consumption data, and shall be able to, by explicit agreement and free of charge, give any registered supply undertaking access to its metering data. The party responsible for data management shall be obliged to give those data to the undertaking. **Contracting Parties** shall define a format for the data and a procedure for suppliers and consumers to have access to the data. No additional costs shall be charged to the consumer for that service;

(i) are properly informed of actual gas consumption and costs frequently enough to enable them to regulate their own gas consumption. That information shall be given by using a sufficient time frame, which takes account of the capability of customer's metering equipment. Due account shall be taken of the cost-efficiency of such measures. No additional costs shall be charged to the consumer for that service;

(j) receive a final closure account following any change of natural gas supplier no later than six weeks after the change of supplier has taken place.

2. **Contracting Parties** shall ensure the implementation of intelligent metering systems that shall assist the active participation of consumers in the gas supply market. The implementation of those metering systems may be subject to an economic assessment of all the long-term costs and benefits to the market and the individual consumer or which form of intelligent metering is economically reasonable and cost-effective and which timeframe is feasible for their distribution.

Such assessment shall take place by **1 January 2014**.

Subject to that assessment, **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate, shall prepare a timetable for the implementation of intelligent metering systems.

The **Contracting Parties** or any competent authority they designate, shall ensure the interoperability of those metering systems to be implemented within their territories and shall have due regard to the use of appropriate standards and best practice and the importance of the development of the internal market in natural gas.