

Ladies and gentlemen

Dear EEAC friends,

Welcome to our 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference, on “Sustainable European Infrastructures”.

Today we will have a very ambitious project. We will discuss three dimensions together:

- the long-term perspective beyond 2050,
- the integration of different sectors and
- the integration of different levels from local to European, known as the subsidiarity principle.

I hope, we manage to get those different streams together to a consistent message. Our EEAC statement, besides endorsed by 19 Councils from 11 Countries, certainly is not more, than a first step in that direction.

Let me have a closer look at those three dimensions.

The first challenge is: the long term perspective beyond 2050.

It is a misunderstanding to consider such a perspective as utopian vision with little connection to today's decisions. No it is vice-versa: we want to assess today's infrastructure projects for their impacts in the „long run“. Infrastructures have a life time of 50 – 100 years . So we have to assess now, what they can be used for in that time span.

The key challenge however is: The world in 40 years will be completely different to today's world in any case: either we understand the radicality of transformation needed to prevent dangerous climate change and the loss of biodiversity or we do not: then the system will beat back and change our lives.

The EU Commission enters in reflection on such a “Project 2050”. Commission President Barroso has promised to put decarbonisation of our electricity and transport systems on the EU agenda.

This conference and the EEAC statement may be helpful on that road.

In any case we are convinced: the perspective 2050 is the end of “predict and provide”: we cannot extrapolate past trends in the future and on that basis determine future infrastructure needs. We have to go another route, that of backcasting: seeing what type of sustainable future we need and would like to see, and then identify, what needs to be done and what needs to be prevented – for that future.

Just to give you one example: if we now invest in coal power or nuclear plants, we might undermine the growth of renewable electricity in the future. Nuclear is no bridge to renewables, but rather builds a wall. There is little doubt, that an electricity system based upon renewables is feasible, but it needs new infrastructures and much more flexibility for dispatch and storage than traditional baseload can deliver.

We will discuss this in the working groups and many plenary speeches.

The second point is multiple Integration of sectors: the systems become more interconnected. To give you just one example:

New infrastructures regularly conflict with green networks, such as Natura 2000, or the European networks established by the habitat or the water framework directive, the many sensitive corridors in mountainous regions or coastal zones etc.: so we need strategies to anticipate those conflicts as far as possible and to avoid them. Therefore we will hear a lot about EIS, SEA, Green Infrastructures and Spatial Planning.

The third dimension of our conference is a bit hidden: it is about subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is a complex idea – it is neither related to fully centralized or decentralized solutions, but looking for the right combination of both. It is about cooperative multilevel governance.

So when we talk about European Infrastructures, about a long-distance electricity grid or a European spatial planning competence – we do not do so as

alternative to smart grids and renewable communities , local transport managements or urban green belts. But as a very selective complementary approach. Multilevel thinking is asked – sometimes we need more Europe – but sometimes also less: the transeuropean motorway networks for instance needs to be more selective: not every national motorway has a relevant European dimension.

Lets see, how we get all those streams of together. A first attempt was the statement – which is not only a product of the EEAC energy WG. It is an integrative exercise of the Energy, Sustainable Development and Biodiversity Working Groups. Thanks a lot to the enthousiasm of all the EEAC working group. The statement is also a multi-author exercise.

That things come well together is also the merit of the enthousiasm of our Croatian hosts, namliy Natalija Kaprivanac and Hroje Kusic. They do not only take care of intellectual integration for the long-term future – but also for a fantastic working environment. Thanks for your perfect organisation, thanks to the Croatian government for its support. Much of what we enjoy those days is due to lot of voluntary work. This is very impressive. All merit a heavy applause.