EU green strategic autonomy
The challenge of combining two objectives

SUMMARY
The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and the 2019 European Green Deal initiated a wave of EU policies and legislation to combat climate change and protect the environment. Achieving a green transition became a key driver of EU policies. While many pieces of legislation were being discussed or adopted, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine moved the political focus to supply chain security and energy dependencies. Since then, achieving open European strategic autonomy for the EU economy has become an equally important EU policy driver. The European Commission is trying to reconcile these environmental and economic objectives by advocating a green and digital transition, which should lead to green growth, decoupling growth and pollution. The 2023 strategic foresight report 'Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's open strategic autonomy' illustrates this effort.

However, greening the economy and making the EU more autonomous do not always overlap. Whereas the Commission emphasises synergy between these objectives, that is just one possible scenario for the EU’s future. Focusing on greening or autonomy only are equally viable scenarios, as is the possibility of achieving none of these objectives. Recently, tensions between the objectives of greening and becoming more autonomous have surfaced in political debates. French President Emmanuel Macron suggested a pause in European environmental legislation to increase industrial competitiveness. In debates on the EU nature restoration law, opponents pointed to possible negative economic consequences for European farmers of the proposed law. Tensions may also increase in the area of energy production, particularly if energy prices rise again.

To achieve a combined transition towards a green and more autonomous EU, the EU and its Member States will have to focus on win-win solutions. A more circular economy with a higher degree of recycling and nature-based solutions in construction or agriculture are examples of such solutions. Some consider that long-term solutions should also question the principle of economic growth itself, and Western societies may have to aim for ‘de-growth’, whereas others fear this might hamper green investment, and therefore stick to the notion of ‘green growth’.

IN THIS BRIEFING
- Two EU objectives: greening and autonomy
- Twinning greening and autonomy
- Tensions between greening and autonomy
- Towards win-win solutions
Two EU objectives: Greening and autonomy

The EU Green Deal and its policies

Whereas EU climate and environmental policies go back to the 1990s, it was the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement that gave a decisive incentive to the EU to increase its focus on carbon emission reduction. This culminated in the adoption of the EU Green Deal in 2019, which specified the EU target of zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a reduction of net emissions by 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The EU Climate Law of June 2021 made the targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions legally binding. Immediately after its adoption, the Commission launched a package of proposals called 'fit for 55', containing the main instruments for implementing the interim 55% reduction objective by 2030. To date, the European Parliament and the Council have reached agreement on many of these proposals, such as reform of the Emissions Trading System (ETS), revision of the Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry Regulation (LULUCF) and the introduction of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Some proposals are still awaiting final agreement, such as the revision of the Energy Taxation Directive, which has to be decided by unanimity.

Figure 1 – Commission infographic of measures to achieve the 2030 EU climate targets

Strategic autonomy as an EU objective

EU strategic autonomy refers to the capacity of the EU to act autonomously – that is, without being dependent on other countries – in strategically important policy areas. These can range from defence policy to the economy, and the capacity to uphold democratic values. The term originates from defence policy and one of the first official mentions was in the European Council conclusions of December 2013, indicating the need for a ‘European defence technological and industrial base’ that can ‘enhance its strategic autonomy and its ability to act with partners’. In 2016, the year the Paris Agreement entered into force, the Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy still used the expression mainly in relation to security and defence. However, since the pandemic highlighted the EU’s economic dependencies on medical supplies and the general vulnerability of economic supply chains, strategic autonomy has increasingly been used to indicate the desire for the EU to shape its own economic destiny. Economic strategic autonomy intends to combine open trade relations with a certain level of support for European producers, for instance through an industrial policy. Therefore, in an economic context the usual term is ‘open strategic autonomy’. Strategic sovereignty and strategic autonomy can be considered synonyms and are both used regularly in EU documents.¹

The consequences of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have pushed strategic autonomy high up on the EU agenda, particularly in relation to energy policy. On 10-11 March 2022, the European Council adopted the Versailles Declaration, which called in particular for more European sovereignty as regards defence and energy, and emphasised the importance of a ‘robust economic base’. Achieving strategic energy autonomy necessitates reducing dependencies through diversification of imports and energy sources. The term ‘de-risking’ is also used in this context, although mostly for reducing the risk of economic dependency on China for the import of critical raw materials.² Many of these critical raw materials are essential for green technologies, such as the production of solar panels, wind turbines and batteries. This is where the objectives of greening and autonomy started to meet.

Figure 2 – Main suppliers of critical raw materials to the EU in 2023

Source: EPRS briefing based on Commission CRM report.
Twinning greening and autonomy

The Versailles Declaration had a strong focus on increasing European sovereignty in the energy sector, and the REPowerEU plan of May 2022 requested by the European Council linked achieving energy sovereignty to delivering on the objectives of the Green Deal. Its introduction stated: 'REPowerEU is about rapidly reducing our dependence on Russian fossil fuels by fast forwarding the clean transition and joining forces to achieve a more resilient energy system and a true Energy Union' (italics by the author). Combining the objectives of strategic autonomy and greening was also an underlying theme in the Commission's 2022 strategic foresight report 'Twinning the green and digital transitions in the new geopolitical context'. The introduction stated: 'The long-term implications of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine … will clearly affect Europe’s path to achieving fair green and digital transitions. However, these and other future challenges will not divert the European Union from its long-term objectives. With the right set of policies, they can serve as a catalyst to speed up achieving them. Ultimately, this could foster our resilience and open strategic autonomy in various areas, from energy, food, security and critical supplies – including raw materials needed for the transitions – to cutting-edge technologies.' The objective of combining open strategic autonomy with the green transition also resounds in the Commission’s 2023 strategic foresight report and its underlying policy report by the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

The Commission's 2023 strategic foresight report

The title of the Commission’s 2023 strategic foresight report 'Sustainability and well-being at the heart of Europe’s open strategic autonomy' clearly reflects a combination of greening and autonomy. Furthermore, the report adds the social dimension ('well-being') to the main objectives and acknowledges challenges to achieving these objectives. The report aims ‘... to clarify the potential choices and trade-offs that the EU is likely to face in the future.’

Figure 3 – Key challenges for the EU’s sustainability transition according to the Commission

Of the six challenges identified by the Commission, two are mainly threats to the EU's autonomy and capacity to act: the rise of geopolitics and pressure on funding. Many elements of these challenges originate outside the EU and the EU can only partly influence them. The rise of geopolitics not only means that the EU has to cope with an aggressive Russia and an assertive China. The EU also faces stronger geo-economic competition from the US, which – as the report says – ‘is following a course of deeply integrating domestic and foreign policies … strengthening its industrial base, protecting next-generation technologies’. Rising geo-economic confrontations also ‘exacerbate the EU’s dependencies, including access to critical raw materials needed for the twin transitions’. Lack of available funds also threatens the access to these raw materials. While an ageing population generates less income tax for governments, green taxes and private investment will have to fill the financial gap. It is unclear to what extent the private sector, confronted with high inflation and energy prices and strong competition, will be able to deliver the necessary funds.

If public and private funding can no longer deliver sufficiently on citizens’ needs, this will lead to eroding social cohesion and a decrease in support for the democratic model. Therefore, the final two challenges point to a change of the socio-economic paradigm: the quest for a net-zero economy and well-being will require transformative changes and new skills. The term ‘well-being’ hides the underlying problem of income and wealth disparities, which are – according to the report – ‘tightly connected to ecological inequalities’: the richest 10% of Europeans emit over three times more than the rest, while low-income households spend proportionally more on food, electricity, gas, heating and transportation.

The report sums up 10 areas of action to counter the challenges. It suggests coping with geopolitical challenges by fostering partnerships and creating a ‘green transatlantic marketplace’ with the US. The funding challenge could be dealt with by a better internal market and better trade policies, decarbonisation and greening of the economy, sound fiscal policies including new instruments, such as ‘European green bonds’, and achieving the banking and capital markets union. The Commission proposes nothing less than ‘a new European social contract’, including a stronger focus on a just and inclusive transition, regional cohesion, intergenerational fairness, upward social convergence and a healthy environment. Although the report shies away from mentioning politically sensitive options to decrease income and wealth inequality, such as wealth or financial transaction taxes, it calls for limiting the race to the bottom in corporate taxes and pursuing global initiatives against tax avoidance. It furthermore proposes the use of other socio-economic indicators in addition to GDP, skills development and strengthening democracy. The latter could include increased use of foresight in policy making, more openness in decision making and more accountability for social media platforms. ‘Building a positive vision and preserving the sense of opportunity and optimism’ will be vital to build support for the changes and trade-offs of the green transition, according to the report.

The 2023 JRC science for policy report

The 2023 JRC science for policy report 'Towards a fair and sustainable Europe 2050: social and economic choices in sustainability transitions' forms the scientific basis on which the 2023 Commission strategic foresight report was built. The JRC report defines four scenarios, each describing a different version of a plausible sustainable EU in 2050. The scenarios are structured along two dimensions projected on two axes. The X-axis indicates whether broad policy mixes supportive of transformative change for sustainability would emerge or not. The Y-axis shows whether society would become more collaborative/collectivist or more individualistic/competitive. All four resulting scenarios were developed under the framing (and constraining) condition that the EU would meet its ambitions of climate neutrality in 2050. Therefore, the scenarios mainly vary according to the main actors achieving the green transition. In the 'Eco-states' scenario, these are national governments together with the EU, motivated by climate change impacts. In the 'Green business boom' scenario, these are global markets, motivated by high costs, scarcity and unreliable supply chains. The 'Glocal eco-world' scenario is driven by individual people motivated by
government inaction. In the ‘Greening through crisis’ scenario, green changes happen in response to crises, driven by EU action and motivated by geopolitical instability and climate change impacts.

Figure 4 – 2023 JRC science for policy report, EU 2050 scenarios

Although all JRC scenarios achieve a green transition, it is not entirely clear to what extent they also achieve EU strategic autonomy. Only in the Greening through crisis scenario is it clearly stated that crises lead to national governments devolving competences and power to the EU, which will evolve as a federal state and increase its strategic autonomy. The backdrop for this scenario is a world fragmented into regional spheres. The opposite Eco-states scenario is, however, characterised by a world with strong governments, who strengthen their coordination to jointly address challenges they cannot tackle alone. This multilateral order is focused on cooperation rather than competition, and therefore EU strategic autonomy seems less important in this scenario.

Cooperation is also a red thread running through the Glocal eco-world scenario, but this time at local rather than global level. The EU is, in general, weaker in this scenario, but has acquired new competences in the fields of taxation and energy, and therefore seems rather strategically autonomous, at least in these new areas – while it remains highly reliant on the US for security.

The Green business boom scenario depends greatly on decisions by private investors. The EU mainly plays a role in areas such as standard-setting, competition, market regulation of externalities and common fiscal rules, and it will forge strategic alliances on raw materials with African and Latin American countries. Similar to the Eco-states scenario, strategic autonomy may be less of an issue, because the green transition has become a shared global objective, although this time mostly based on competitive business actors.

The JRC report also distinguishes four ‘strategic areas of intervention’, which are cross-cutting through all scenarios. These are formulated as needs arising from the current European situation and include a new social contract, renewal of democracy, intergenerational fairness and the concept of well-being. All these areas have an increased focus on the quality of life and social fairness, rather than economic growth and maximisation of material gains.
Tensions between greening and autonomy

Conceptual tensions

The 2023 strategic foresight report and the science for policy report both transmit a positive message that, in spite of challenges, all green, social and economic objectives could be achieved. The four scenarios of the JRC report differ in the road towards achievement, not in the assumption of achievement, and this is the Achilles heel of both reports. Although optimism may be the best attitude for facing crises, greening the economy and strengthening its autonomy do not automatically reinforce each other. Especially in times of crisis, when availability and affordability of basic goods and needs prevail, socio-economic drivers tend to outweigh environmental drivers. Therefore, a more complete foresight exercise for the EU’s future should also include scenarios in which not all or even none of the objectives will be achieved. Foresight is not an attempt to predict the future, nor to present only desirable futures, but an exercise to show various possible futures, both positive and negative ones.

One way of doing this is by choosing EU strategic autonomy and achievement of the green transition as the drivers expressed on the axes of the 2 x 2 scenario grid. If the X-axis represented the level of EU strategic autonomy, stretching from low autonomy or dependence to high autonomy, we would no longer need to guess to what extent autonomy had been achieved. And if the Y-axis represented the level of greening, stretching from low greening or a polluting society to a high level of greening, we would also see scenarios in which the green objectives would not or would not sufficiently be achieved. The figure below shows how this results in four scenarios, of which only one (Green Autonomy) achieves both objectives. Two other scenarios would achieve only one objective, either greening (Green Dependence) or autonomy (Polluting Autonomy). The last and least desirable scenario of ‘Polluting Dependence’ would achieve none of the objectives. Each box contains possible elements of the respective scenarios.

Table 1 – Four EU scenarios according to greening and autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dependence</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continuation of raw material imports</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reduction of raw material imports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Limited EU mining, high eco-standards</strong></td>
<td><strong>EU mining, high eco-standards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Limited circular economy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highly circular economy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Solar, wind, green imported hydrogen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Solar, wind, green EU hydrogen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Imported eco-design products</strong></td>
<td><strong>'Made in EU' eco-design products</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Import-based organic agriculture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regional organic agriculture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Green growth if there is security of supply</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderate green growth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polluting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continuation of raw material imports</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reduction of raw material imports</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Limited EU mining, low eco-standards</strong></td>
<td><strong>EU mining, low eco-standards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>No circular economy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited circular economy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Imported fossil fuels</strong></td>
<td><strong>EU-extracted fossil fuels</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Imported non-eco-design products</strong></td>
<td><strong>'Made in EU' non-eco-design products</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Import-based conventional agriculture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regional conventional agriculture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Polluting growth if there is security of supply</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moderate polluting growth</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author, EPRS. Horizontal axis: level of autonomy; Vertical axis: level of greening.
Practical and political tensions

In 2023, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published the report ‘EU climate and energy targets – 2020 targets achieved but little indication that actions to reach the 2030 targets will be sufficient’. The ECA criticises the Commission for not having assessed the extent to which progress until 2020 was a result of policies rather than external factors, such as the financial crisis in 2009 and the contribution of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. With a view to achieving the targets for 2030, the ECA stated: ‘we found little indication so far that the ambitious 2030 EU targets will be translated into sufficient action. There is no information that sufficient financing will be made available to reach the 2030 targets, in particular from the private sector.’ This statement is worrying and in contrast to the optimistic undertone of the Commission’s 2023 strategic foresight report. A related and no less relevant obstacle to achieving the green targets is that the oil industry does not seem to be using the staggering profits it made during the energy crisis for green investment, but is rather reducing such investment and using part of these profits to lobby against restricting their polluting activities.

While the objective of greening could be in danger, assessing whether the EU will achieve its objective of strategic autonomy becomes more important. If we take the example of strategic autonomy in the energy sector, the signals are mixed at best. On the one hand, the International Energy Agency (IEA) praised the EU in its June 2023 Renewable Energy Market Update for its substantial increase in solar power. However, the report does not show the EU’s dependence on Chinese imports for solar panels and their components. Whereas the EU has drastically reduced its dependence on Russian gas imports, it has substantially increased its reliance on imports of American LNG. Europe has become the main export destination for US LNG, overtaking Asia. Although reliance on the US may not be considered a security risk, it does constitute an economic risk, given the substantially higher price of American LNG compared to Russian pipeline gas.4 Structurally high energy prices not only drive up inflation, but can also make industries decide to relocate to countries with cheaper energy, leading to a de-industrialisation of Europe.

Given the increasing challenges to achieving both objectives of greening and autonomy in practice, the idea that choices between greening and autonomy may have to be made was voiced by French President Emmanuel Macron, who called in May 2023 for a pause in European environmental legislation to increase industrial competitiveness. Macron’s priority for autonomy over greening may not come as a surprise, with France traditionally being a staunch supporter of EU strategic autonomy. However, political opposition to pushing ahead with the green transition has been surfacing elsewhere as well. In Germany, for instance, the debate about a new heating law has become much polarised. While the governing coalition, in particular the Green Party, is trying to stick as much as possible to the green transition, opposition parties are voicing concerns over the practical implementation and financial implications of the law. In the Netherlands, resistance to implementing the Green Deal and in particular the nitrogen emission standards came from farmers, leading to a major election victory for the newly created ‘farmer citizens movement’ in the March 2023 provincial elections. While these elections also showed general dissatisfaction with the then ruling government coalition, ecologists interpret it as a signal of government failure to satisfy both farmers’ needs and green objectives. The latter concerns, in particular, played a role in the tense debate about the EU nature restoration law. In July 2023, the European Parliament adopted its negotiation position for that law by a very small majority. In her 2023 State of the Union address, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen therefore emphasised that ‘food security, in harmony with nature, remains an essential task’.

These examples show that the green objectives are currently the subject of debate, although not necessarily as a zero sum game with strategic autonomy. More mundane reasons such as economic feasibility seem to be the main driver of opposition; some speak of a green backlash or ‘greenlash’. In the run-up to the 2024 European Parliament elections, the question whether ‘green strategic autonomy’ is a contradiction or the solution to a paradox is likely to come increasingly to the fore.
Towards win-win solutions

To overcome the practical and political obstacles, win-win solutions that reduce both dependence and pollution are necessary. Three examples of such win-win solutions are a circular economy, nature-based solutions and looking beyond economic growth as the sole indicator of success.

Circular economy

A circular economy is not only good from an environmental point of view, because it saves raw materials and produces less waste, but it also increases the EU’s autonomy by reducing the need for new imports of products and raw materials. In March 2020, the Commission presented a new circular economy action plan, followed by proposals for concrete measures on, for instance, sustainable products (March 2022) and packaging (November 2022).

The European Commission is well aware that a circular economy serves both objectives of greening and autonomy. For instance, Frans Timmermans, at that time Executive Vice-President responsible for the EU Green Deal, said on 1 March 2022: ‘The green transition will free us from our dependence on energy- and other resource imports. The circular economy more specifically will allow us to reduce our demand for primary resources, and use a lot less energy for our production and consumption.’

Environment Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevicius was even more explicit in linking the objectives in an article of November 2022, entitled ‘Circular economy – the high road to strategic autonomy’. In building up this strategic autonomy, the circular economy will be essential, not least because of the evident potential for recycling materials from waste. When we follow the principles of the circular economy, we use materials and resources as efficiently as possible, we maximise the value of products, they are kept functional for as long as possible and their use is optimised. In this way EU economic growth is decoupled from resource use, while minimising waste and pollution. Circular economy is central to meeting our climate, biodiversity and zero pollution objectives, but as part of the European Green Deal, it is also central to the EU growth and recovery strategies.

Nature-based solutions

Another way of achieving both objectives of greening and autonomy is by the use of ‘nature-based solutions’. The concept is relatively new, not restricted to the EU and still in flux, as illustrated by various definitions. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines nature-based solutions as: ‘actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural and modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously benefiting people and nature’.

This rather broad concept is mostly applied at local and global level. Examples of local applications come, for instance, from the Nature-based Solutions Initiative, an international team of scientists, and include bringing nature into cities through green walls and roofs and planting trees, and from the 2023 Commission report ‘Harnessing the power of collaboration for nature-based solutions’, which presents eight case studies of nature-based solutions in European cities. Examples of global applications are the inclusion of the notion in several texts of the United Nations, such as the Sharm el-Sheikh implementation plan on climate change, the targets adopted at COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and a resolution of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Most examples focus on their benefits for nature and people’s well-being. However, nature-based solutions also carry great potential for increasing autonomy, for instance by reducing energy consumption or replacing imported raw materials by regionally available bio-based materials. An example of the latter is the use of wood as a sustainable construction material, particularly if grown in Europe. Food from organic agriculture is another example, again if grown in Europe. The case for nature-based solutions in agriculture has been made by international organisations and representatives of organic agriculture, although more for its environmental benefits than for its
positive effect on the EU’s strategic autonomy. The Commission has included autonomy in its long-term view of organic agriculture, by including in the Green Deal the target of at least 25% of EU agricultural land to be farmed organically by 2030, and presenting an action plan for the development of organic production in March 2021.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the Commission defines nature-based solutions slightly differently to the IUCN, namely as: ‘Solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience.’ In particular, the notion of ‘resilience’ associates nature-based solutions with the concept of EU strategic autonomy.

The European Parliament also linked nature-based solutions with EU strategic autonomy and food security, for instance in its resolution of 24 March 2022 on ‘the need for an urgent EU action plan to ensure food security inside and outside the EU in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine’. Parliament called for reinforcing ‘European strategic autonomy in food, feed and the agricultural sector overall … in line with the Green Deal objectives’ and particularly called for a reduction of imports of (components for) synthetic nitrogen fertilisers and potash-based fertilisers and using ‘alternative organic sources of nutrients and nutrient cycling’ through measures ‘to enhance the use of organic fertilising products obtained from sewage sludge, processed manure, biocharcoal and frass in order to substitute chemical fertilisers’.

Beyond growth?

Commissioner Sinkevicius spoke in his November 2022 article about EU economic growth being decoupled from resource use. Some question whether sufficient levels of such decoupling are possible and consider that the EU needs to question the principle of economic growth itself. Calls for the reduction of economic growth in highly developed Western societies are currently referred to as ‘de-growth’ and could be considered a recent development in the tradition of the 1972 Club of Rome report ‘Limits to growth’. De-growth is currently a subject of debate among experts and politicians. Advocates point to the social and ecological benefits, while opponents foresee a loss of welfare and well-being, also because its application may hamper green investment. Much will also depend on whether citizens appreciate de-growth and the reduction in consumption it will entail. In spring 2023, the European Parliament organised the conference ‘Beyond Growth’, backed up by a comprehensive study which, among other things, explains the differences between ‘green growth’, ‘de-growth’ and ‘post-growth’.

Conclusion

In spite of the assumptions of the Commission and JRC foresight reports that the challenges to the green transition can be met one way or another, there are serious indications that they will not be met. Moreover, the other important objective of achieving open EU strategic autonomy is equally in danger. Win-win solutions to achieve both objectives do exist – including the circular economy, nature-based solutions and thinking beyond growth – but it needs political will and possibly additional measures to achieve this. In the run-up to the 2024 European elections, parties have to make their choices and convince voters of their mix of solutions.
ENDNOTES


2 Speech by President von der Leyen on EU-China relations to the Mercator Institute for China Studies and the European Policy Centre, European Commission, 30 March 2023.

3 European Commission, 2023 strategic foresight report: sustainability and well-being at the heart of Europe’s open strategic autonomy, 6 July 2023, p. 1.

4 In contrast to pipelines, LNG requires additional costs for liquefaction, sea transport and regasification and LNG tankers can be directed towards the highest bidder, thus driving up prices. See, for instance, NaturalGasWorld.com; for more information on strategic autonomy and the EU’s energy policy, see for instance: Damen M., Four challenges of the energy crisis for the EU’s strategic autonomy, EPRS, April 2023.