

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002267/23
to the Commission
Gunnar Beck (ID)
(19 July 2023)**

Subject: Worrying developments on the Bulgarian gas market

In any industry where the state is simultaneously the regulator, the legislator and a market player, conflicts of interest cannot be avoided. The Bulgarian gas industry is a case in point. It is dominated by state-owned enterprises with a distinctly anti-private-sector ethos, creating one of the most carbon-intensive economies in the EU. Serious institutional reform is needed in order to create a functional internal gas market, as envisaged in the Gas Directive (Directive 2009/73/EC).

Can the Commission indicate what steps it has taken to ensure a level playing field for all operators on the Bulgarian market in the years that have passed since it reached a decision in the BEH Gas case?

Submitted: 19.7.2023

**Answer given by Ms Simson on behalf of the European Commission
(15 September 2023)**

In the previous years, significant progress has been achieved in terms of competitiveness, transparency and openness by the Bulgarian gas market, including the development of alternative gas supply routes such as Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB).

There has been a growing number of market participants registered on the exchange and the number of concluded transactions and traded quantities in the spot and forward market segments has been increasing on the Balkan Gas Hub, a Bulgarian gas exchange.

The energy crisis has put a strain on European gas markets, particularly on those most dependent on Russian gas imports, such as Bulgaria. In this context, the Commission remains extremely vigilant that levels of competitiveness, market access and transparency are not hampered and meet the highest European standards across those markets.

In a common effort to diversify supply sources and routes, further momentum is needed for coordinated regulatory actions among key players to phase out Russian gas in accordance with the REPowerEU plan and remove the remaining regulatory obstacles that may affect both market liberalisation and the continuous flow of gas across the whole region.

To this end, and by means of several initiatives and workstreams, the Commission services are constantly engaged in monitoring the functioning of the Bulgarian gas market and supporting and facilitating a coordinated regulatory approach between all relevant stakeholders active in Bulgaria.
