



**Politecnico
di Torino**

Energy and Climate High Level Group (HLG) meeting

Turin, May 21st, 2025

Polito's Rectorate Meeting Room A

Attendees:

Giovanni De Santi	HLG Chairman
Jean-Michel Glachant	HLG Co-Chairman
Stefano Corgnati	Polito's Rector
Leigh Hancher	HLG Member
Andris Piebalgs (remote)	HLG Member
Tim Schittekatte	HLG Member
Lucia Visconti Parisio	HLG Member
Peter Vis	HLG Member
Chiara Casalino	FSP Initiative
Matteo Bilardo	FSP Initiative

The meeting starts at 15:18 and ends at 17:49 (CET Time).

Meeting short summary

The discussion began with a review of the first edition of the 2025 “*Foresight and Innovation Award*”, which was presented to Mario Draghi during the morning session. Participants highlighted the event’s extremely high quality, which was enhanced by the presence of distinguished institutional figures. While the use of Italian enhanced the local impact of the event, it prevented foreign guests from fully understanding it. This aspect may be modified for future editions, which will be oriented towards a multilingual context. Additionally, the HLG confirmed to maintain a separation between the “*Foresight and Innovation Award*” ceremony and the main *EU-Italy Energy Days* symposium to avoid focusing too much attention on one event at the expense of the other discussion panels.

The discussion then moved on to the future. Everyone agreed that, by 2026, it would be appropriate to explore a “territorial” approach where the energy transition is no longer defined exclusively by large-scale European strategies but rather becomes a reality in local communities, the so-called “districts of the future”. In this vision, technologies – from modular nuclear to renewable sources – are integrated into a system combining sustainable business models and capacity-building pathways. The group outlined three key areas: energy infrastructure; related economic and employment schemes; and the development of skills in the territory. These three elements, driven by a bottom-up approach, are intended to form a systemic framework capable of responding to Europe’s challenges of resilience, independence, and sustainability. Andris Piebalgs's presentation addressed these aspects.

There was also an emphasis on the urgent need to make Europe a proactive rather than reactive player. This calls for greater regulatory flexibility to allow for “pilot zones” and experimental exemptions. The concept of the “28th Region” was introduced as a metaphor for an ideal laboratory free from national legal constraints where innovative policies and technologies could be tested before being implemented on a larger scale. At the same time, the need to rebuild political cohesion and strategic leadership at the European level was recognized to avoid being overwhelmed by rapid geopolitical developments.

In closing, the High Level Group shared a provisional roadmap. This includes the possible drafting of two flagship reports each year dedicated to selected topics in energy and climate policy. These reports, authored by HLG members, will be shared with key Italian and European decision makers with the HLG and Polito logos. The first is nearing completion and will focus on the European Net Zero Energy industry for 2050, authored by R. Belmans and J.M. Glachant.

The HLG also confirms the two-days format for the 2026 edition of the *EU-Italy Energy Days*. A concept paper dedicated to the new edition is being drafted and will be shared with the Italian government and the European Commission by June. At the end of the meeting, HLG members also agreed to provide the chairman with a list of two potential candidates each for the next edition of the “*Foresight and Innovation Award*” by private communication, with gender equality if possible. The discussion regarding the future winner of the award will continue in forthcoming meetings. A possible version of the award dedicated to students could also be considered.

Meeting brief notes

Purpose of the meeting

- Reflect on the first edition of the 2025 *Foresight and Innovation Award* and its future role within the context of the EU-Italy Energy Days
- Begin brainstorming the theme for the 2026 *EU-Italy Energy Days* and start a strategic discussion about how Europe can address current and future geopolitical and energy challenges

1) Review of the First Edition (2025) of the *Foresight and Innovation Award*

- The event was considered a success in terms of quality and impact, thanks to Draghi's presence, institutional participation, and the quality of the audience.
- Some members suggested keeping the award ceremony separate from the main symposium to avoid imbalances in attention.
- The prevalent use of Italian during the event was viewed positively in terms of local accessibility. However, the importance of a European and multilingual approach in the future was also emphasized.

2) Brainstorming for the 2026 *EU-Italy Energy Days* Edition

Suggested concept: “Districts of the Future”. A systemic concept for:

- Envisioning integrated, resilient, and autonomous local energy districts
- Connecting technologies (e.g., modular nuclear, renewables), business models, and local expertise
- Responding to energy, employment, and environmental needs in a contextualized way

The three pillars of the new format could be:

1. Technologies and systems that provide sufficient and sustainable energy on a local scale
2. Economic and employment models that support implementation
3. Training and local skills development (capacity building)

Methodological guidelines:

- A two-day hybrid format is proposed.
 - Day 1: Technical analysis (research, case studies, and visions).
 - Day 2: Political and strategic discussion
- Strong emphasis on bottom-up approaches and local community involvement

Geopolitical and strategic context: discussion on the challenges facing the European Union:

- Energy and defense dependence on the US
- Internal political fragmentation and the need for strategic leadership
- Proposal for a “28th Region” as an ideal model for testing policies and technologies in contexts without national legal constraints

Key Takeaways

- The energy transition must be rethought as an integrated system of technologies, skills, and territories.
- The local level is crucial. We need to consider districts rather than just top-down policies.
- Europe must transition from a reactive to a proactive approach by creating its own defensible vision.
- There is room for innovation, experimentation, and regulatory flexibility (e.g., pilot zones and targeted exemptions).
- Polito can play a central role as a neutral, visionary platform for testing local, systemic solutions.