Joint Statement

by the Chairs of

Belgian Hydrogen Council
NLHydrogen
German National Hydrogen Council

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Priorities for the European Clean Industrial Deal to accelerating the deployment of clean hydrogen in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands

Introduction

The anticipated **Clean Industrial Deal** (CID) should provide Europe's solution towards developing a flourishing industrial environment that is robust, resilient, competitive and clean. Affordable, clean hydrogen and its derivatives (e.g. RFNBO and low-carbon) are key cornerstones of such an industrial environment, especially for Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands which are considered the **current and future beating industrial and hydrogen heart of Europe**. Therefore, the hydrogen councils of Belgium, Germany and the hydrogen association of the Netherlands unitedly share their priorities for the CID in order to **accelerate the cross-border development of clean hydrogen in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands** ultimately realising a European single market for clean hydrogen. The fundamentals of these expectations are set in its **5-point action plan** which was presented at the High-Level Policy Conference at the European Hydrogen Week 2024.

Priorities

1. Create an improved, simplified, harmonised and flexible regulatory framework for clean hydrogen and its derivatives

European regulatory complexity has put clean hydrogen developments in an uncomfortably tight and restraining regulatory space which has paralysed the needed investment decisions. Notable and meanwhile notorious examples are the conditions and timeframes associated to the e.g. RFNBO Delegated Act, RED III and if nothing changes, also the Delegate Act for Low Carbon Hydrogen. Disharmonised national regulatory implementations create a diffused cross-border regulatory landscape that affects the principles of the Single Market. Hence, a regulatory framework that is designed to establish an equal level playing field for clean hydrogen that enhances the competitiveness of Belgian, German and Dutch industries and provides more flexibility and less constraints to produce, import and consume clean hydrogen in a harmonised manner is needed. Cross-border exchangeable certificates will amongst others enable such an equal level playing field.

2. Prioritise the development of a pan-European hydrogen infrastructure

Investments in a fully-fledged, pan-European hydrogen infrastructure (i.e. pipelines, storage and import facilities) is in many cases a no-regret option and should be developed with the highest priority. It enables critical matchmaking between regions with low-cost clean hydrogen production opportunities and industrial regions that require it. Meanwhile, regional opportunities for clean hydrogen developments should be cultivated to drive the expansion of cross-border infrastructures with the support of strong funding and financing frameworks, commonly aligned specifications and mild and harmonised connection conditions. It is vital that the development of such infrastructures is centrally coordinated, associated with minimised permitting burden and established with priority in countries that strongly depend on it, like Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.

3. Develop tailored financial support schemes that recognise geographical and sectorial needs

Europe should continue to look towards easing the way it funds the production and consumption of clean hydrogen and should be much more wary regarding creating an equal level playing field across Europe. European funding mechanisms (e.g. the European Hydrogen Bank) need to be more flexible and significantly reinforced and tailored to specific geographical and sectoral needs. It also needs to be supportive to all means of clean hydrogen production in a fair manner. Belgium, Germany and Dutch industries will under such circumstances be able to lead the transition for its critical industries, like it has done so in the past for hydrogen. Moreover, it should be made possible to align national and European funding opportunities in a much smoother and more flexible manner. European Funding in the form of state guarantees can finally play a central role in securing long-term supply contracts, hereby enabling the development of hydrogen application in the industry.

4. Advance the development of the lead markets for clean hydrogen derived products

Demand creation for clean hydrogen derived products (e.g. steel) in downstream lead markets (public and private) as well as a reliable home market for European technology suppliers are key for the development of integrated clean hydrogen value chains. Public authorities should also play a key role for the offtake of clean hydrogen derived products through the renewed orientation of their national public procurement strategies, like public contracts, auctions and publicly financed companies. Such strategies should be based on technology agnostic and robust standards for climate friendly products that support the ramp-up of hydrogen based industrial applications. They should be combined with resilience attributes and be complemented by fit-for-purpose standards. Key industrial value chains in Belgium,

Germany and the Netherlands can play a pivotal role in materialising a European lead market strategy.

5. Utilise regional strengths to create global champions for industrial innovations and technology leadership

Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands are among the countries which host the most innovative and advanced technology and innovation developers in clean hydrogen in Europe. Advancements in research, development and innovations has led to state-of-the-art industries and technologies that are exported globally and create a thriving environment for knowledge institutes of excellence. Equally important is the training and education of skilled taskforce that will be responsible for implementing and operating these new technologies. To this end, appropriate educational programmes and vocational training initiatives must be established and expanded to equip workers with the necessary skills and qualifications to thrive in the hydrogen economy. This investment in human capital is as critical as the technological advancements themselves. The development of regional, cross-border centres of technology and innovation excellence is needed and should be more than ever leveraged upon in Europe's challenge to stay industrial competitive and create global leadership. Therefore, the development of a strong and smart innovation framework for clean hydrogen and its derivatives is needed that leverages upon regional, cross-border strengths in the EU. Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands are key countries for implementing game changing solutions in key European industries and serve as a cross-border validation zone for the deployment of European excellence across Europe and globally.

All in all, the Belgian Hydrogen Council, the German National Hydrogen Council and NLHydrogen are looking forward to an effective and powerful Clean Industrial Deal for clean hydrogen and collectively support the further cross-border development and implementation for Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.

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