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DRAFT REPORT

on the role of EU cohesion policy and its actors in implementing the new
European energy policy
(2012/2099(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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CONTENTS

Page

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION	3
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the role of EU cohesion policy and its actors in implementing the new European energy policy (2012/2099(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 194 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to the communication of 10 November 2010 entitled ‘Energy 2020 – A strategy for competitive, sustainable and secure energy’ (COM(2010)0639),
 - having regard to the communication of 15 December 2011 entitled ‘Energy Roadmap 2015’ (COM(2011)0885),
 - having regard to the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on energy efficiency and repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC (COM(2011)0370),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A7-0000/2012),
- A. whereas the common objectives of European energy policy are security of supply, sustainability and competitiveness;
- B. whereas the common objectives of the EU cohesion policy are the economic, social and territorial cohesion of Europe’s regions through investment in growth and jobs;
- C. whereas the cohesion policy investments in the area of energy could contribute to the realisation of both policies by promoting growth in underdeveloped regions and local job creation, and ensuring security of energy supply across the whole EU;

General approach

1. Emphasises, in view of the crisis’ negative effect of increasing local and regional disparities in Europe, the need for strong EU support for cohesion; believes that European energy projects could contribute to regional development through investments in decentralised energy sources, energy efficiency and other measures which support growth and jobs;
2. Stresses, however, that the cohesion policy programmes should not be seen as a replacement for the proper funding of European energy policy proposals; stresses that cohesion policy can support actions, such as energy efficiency measures, as an additional source of funding, but only when these programmes promote the cohesion policy objectives;
3. Believes that the regions of Europe should be able to focus on those energy sources which are best suited to the local conditions and that the EU should start measuring European

energy objectives on an EU-wide scale;

4. Stresses, that, owing to the EU's climate change objectives, developments in energy pricing may place citizens in the less developed EU regions at a particular disadvantage; asks, therefore, that this be considered within cohesion policy planning;

Capacity building

5. Stresses that any future energy goals should be based on fair burden sharing between European regions and should allow them the possibility of future development; firmly believes, therefore, that any multiannual financial allocation needs to take into consideration not only the general Europe-wide objectives, but also the institutional capacities of regions throughout the EU;
6. Points out, with regard to large-scale energy projects, the possible capacity deficiencies of various regional and local authorities, which might seriously hamper implementation; believes, therefore, not only that JESSICA, ELENA and IEE-MLEI should be strengthened, but that any energy allocations within the cohesion policy should be reviewed by 2018 in light of their absorption rate;
7. Stresses, while supporting new financial instruments for energy projects, that this should be in addition to direct grants and co-financing of energy projects and not a replacement for them; draws the attention of the Member States and the Commission to the fact that individuals, small and medium-sized towns and rural communities should be eligible for direct funding aid for energy efficiency and building renovation projects as they are likely to lack the administrative capacity to use other financial instruments fully;

Partnership agreements

8. Notes that, for projects to be properly implemented, regional and local authorities should be consulted on partnership agreements in such a way as to give them a real opportunity to influence their goals, the content of expenditure and their implementation;
9. Points out that cohesion policy funding arrangements should ensure that the differing economic, social and territorial features of regions are fully taken into consideration;
10. Believes that, while the Common Strategic Framework provides for general earmarking, ring-fencing and other thematic targets, these measures should be applied in a flexible manner within partnership agreements to allow Member States to pursue individual national paths towards the 2020 goals;
11. Singles out the need to apply the broadest possible terms of reference and definitions in the energy projects put forward for cohesion policy funding;

Implementation and policy suggestions

12. Notes that, while Member States are changing their energy mixes in accordance with the EU's climate goals, many regions are dependent on fossil fuels; believes, therefore, that not only low-carbon, but all low-emission sources of energy, such as shale gas, ought to be accepted, including those of a transitional nature;

13. Supports the use of cohesion and energy policy funds for cross-border projects with third partner countries; stresses that bordering regions should be incorporated into the EU system to ensure sustainable development on both sides of the border; stresses that such funding should be subject to the application of the EU energy market rules;
14. Believes that cohesion policy funds should be available to educate SMEs and individuals on national renewable energy schemes; notes that this is especially needed in those Member States where a 'certificate of origin' system has been adopted;
15. Supports the revision of the EU VAT Regulation (2006/112/EC) to allow for a reduction of the VAT rate applied to regional and local projects seeking to increase energy efficiency and to the purchase of products in the highest energy efficiency class under Directive 2010/30/EU;
16. Believes that excluding projects which might come under Directive 2003/87/EC from the ERDF and the CF is likely to have a disproportional effect on less developed regions and delay their transition to low-emission regions; asks the Commission to further clarify and define which energy sectors would not be eligible for cohesion policy funding and to withdraw this exclusion from projects located in convergence regions;

Energy efficiency, renewables and infrastructure

17. Agrees that energy efficiency is vital to the EU's energy goals and should be promoted above all within the thematic concentration structure; believes that EU measures should support energy efficiency in both energy consumption and production;
18. Stresses that any EU energy policy requires the development of local and regional smart distribution and transmission networks for electricity and gas, together with gas storage facilities; believes that the energy thematic concentration should support grid creation and renovation;
19. Notes the need for energy efficiency and development of renewable energy in rural areas; stresses the increasing energy saving potential in rural households, which might require innovative funding schemes; supports steps to facilitate access to new technologies for rural areas;
20. Notes the imbalance in sustainable resource use between different Member States, takes the view that measures to support resource efficiency and the recycling of materials should be stepped up;
21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.