

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2959/03
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to the Commission

Subject: Risks of electricity blackouts

On Thursday, 28 August 2003, parts of southern London were hit by an electricity blackout thanks to which some 250 000 people were immobilised in trains, on the underground, in lifts and at crossroads. A spokesman for the management of National Grid, the British electricity distribution network, claimed this was an 'unusual occurrence' which, even in the wake of the recent blackout in the US, he had never thought could happen in the UK.

In Italy, the Ministry for Productive Activities has announced that new infrastructures will be put in place by 2005, while a management spokesman for the national distribution network has warned that there will be more blackouts over the next two years.

1. Does the Commission consider that the privatisation of infrastructures could be the cause of these occurrences?
2. What initiatives will the Commission take to ensure that the infrastructure development plans are compatible with the growth trends of individual countries' productive and social needs?
3. What initiatives will the Commission take to harmonise security standards with a view to preventing or reducing blackout risks?
4. What measures have been taken to encourage greater use of new energy sources, especially renewables, given that, as decentralised energy sources, these represent the only guarantee against blackouts?