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Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

2008/0014(COD)

10.9.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council
on the effort of Member States to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to
meet the Community's greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments up to
2020
(COM(2008)0017 – C6-0041/2008 – 2008/0014(COD))

Rapporteur: Sepp Kusstatscher

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SHORT JUSTIFICATION

On 23 January 2008 the Commission published its proposals on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the coming years in the Member States. The emissions considered were those from transport, buildings (mainly heating and air-conditioning), services, small industries, agriculture and waste disposal. These currently account for some 60% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions.

The fact that the proposal sets concrete targets for each Member State, to be met by 2020, is welcome. However, there is no similarly ambitious catalogue of measures for the period after 2020.

What are the implications of this proposal for EU employment policy?

Initial studies, e.g. the joint study by ETUC, ISTAS, SDA, Syndex and the Wuppertal-Institut, show that the consequences of climate change will have positive effects on employment in the EU: there will be scope for the creation of more and better-qualified jobs.

However, the effects will vary considerably from one economic sector or geographical region to another. In particular the Mediterranean regions will suffer more from the rise in temperatures than those further north. Problems will increase most markedly in agriculture and in tourism, where there will be a need for restructuring with more investments to prevent the worst impacts.

As the greatest emitter of CO₂, transport requires special efforts. There are great possibilities, and determined action is needed to exploit them: reducing unnecessary transport, restricting the most energy-intensive modes of transport, and increasing efficiency by technical and logistical means. There are also good opportunities for the creation of new jobs. The consistent expansion of public passenger transport could lead to the creation of four times as many jobs, benefiting local and regional economic structures in particular.

A similar situation obtains in the construction sector. The renovation of existing buildings (improved insulation, installation of renewables, etc.) and the construction of new, more energy-efficient buildings create new jobs at local and regional level.

Climate change is treated as a priority challenge in relation to other areas of policy. However, with all its effects it is a very complex topic. That makes it all the more important to prepare people at all levels for the new situation climate change will engender. We need a strategy on the best way for businesspeople and workers, particularly in SMEs, to adjust themselves. Specific training measures for all are urgently needed. The EU Agencies in Dublin and Bilbao and the European Employment Observatory are now under greater pressure to find answers to the many unanswered questions on what specific effects climate change will have in the various regions and economic sectors.

Climate change changes society. Accordingly it is the poorest in society – both in the EU and worldwide – who are hardest hit by climate change. They, more than any others, lack the resources to adapt to climate change. High energy prices are already affecting people in the lowest income brackets. Rising food prices are likely to drastically exacerbate existing

famines. There is a need for a global offensive against hunger in the world. The burden of saving the energy that produces greenhouse gases needs to be shared in a socially just manner.

Overproduction and unhealthy consumption in the 'First World' not only cause a waste of resources but also have a heavy impact on the climate. On the basis of the 'polluter pays' principle, then, we need to make economical use of all resources, including those which emit greenhouse gases.

Energy taxes should be harmonised at EU level, rewarding forms of business with low emissions and increasing taxes on high greenhouse gas emitters. This would give a solid boost to the development of new technologies and thus promote highly-qualified new jobs, particularly in the alternative energy sector.

It is in the areas already affected by drought and extreme weather conditions that the impact of climate change will be most keenly felt. International solidarity will become even more important than in the past in an increasingly interdependent world. Whether Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects represent a correct way of addressing this issue is as yet unclear.

The idea of 'Building a Global Climate Change Alliance between the European Union and poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change' (COM(2007)540 of 18 September 2007) is very much to be welcomed.

The increasing migration from the poorest countries most severely affected by climate change is socio-political dynamite, and affects not only the countries from which emigration takes place but also those in which heavy pressure from immigration creates social tensions.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Amendment 1

Proposal for a decision Recital 6 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(6a) In fulfilling their obligations, the Member States and the European Union should consider the opportunities and risks associated with the reduction in greenhouse gases for social security and

employment. Since climate change has been included in the new employment guidelines, adjustments to climate change should also play a key role in national action plans, particularly in the areas of employment, education and research. It is increasingly incumbent on existing bodies such as the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao and the European Employment Observatory to provide support for the necessary adjustments by means of analyses and studies.

Justification

The involvement of the European agencies in Dublin and Bilbao and the Employment Observatory is particularly necessary since there is still a major research gap concerning the effects of climate change on social and employment policy in the EU. For example, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work could consider changes to EU health and safety legislation made necessary as a result of climate change.

Amendment 2

Proposal for a decision Recital 6 b (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(6b) Adjustments and restructuring in the labour market which become necessary as a result of climate change should be supported with appropriations from the structural funds, particularly the European Social Fund and, where appropriate, from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, and facilitated by promoting social dialogue at various levels (sector specific, inter-sectoral, and at regional, national and EU levels) and by creating socially egalitarian conditions in order to promote training and retraining for businesses and individuals. These measures should be taken in the context of a preventive

approach and should involve the social partners in accordance with national customs and practice.

Amendment 3

Proposal for a decision Recital 6 c (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(6c) In assessing progress towards the achievement of the stated objectives, emissions reduction should not be the sole criterion: there should also be a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the impact on the employment situation in terms of new jobs and/or adaptation of jobs and better working conditions.

Amendment 4

Proposal for a decision Article 4 – paragraph 1 – subparagraph 2

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

Member States shall ensure that their policies for purchasing these credits enhance the equitable geographical distribution of projects and the achievement of an international agreement on climate change.

Member States shall ensure that their policies for purchasing these credits ***give priority to environmentally and socially friendly projects***, enhance the equitable geographical distribution of projects and the achievement of an international agreement on climate change.

PROCEDURE

Title	Shared effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions		
References	COM(2008)0017 – C6-0041/2008 – 2008/0014(COD)		
Committee responsible	ENVI		
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	EMPL 10.4.2008		
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Sepp Kusstatscher 26.2.2008		
Discussed in committee	29.5.2008	24.6.2008	9.9.2008
Date adopted	10.9.2008		
Result of final vote	+: 44	–: 2	0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Jan Andersson, Edit Bauer, Iles Braghetto, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnock, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Jean Louis Cottigny, Proinsias De Rossa, Harald Ettl, Richard Falbr, Carlo Fatuzzo, Ilda Figueiredo, Roger Helmer, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Ona Juknevičienė, Jean Lambert, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Maria Matsouka, Mary Lou McDonald, Elisabeth Morin, Juan Andrés Naranjo Escobar, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Rovana Plumb, Jacek Protasiewicz, Bilyana Ilieva Raeva, Elisabeth Schroedter, José Albino Silva Peneda, Jean Spautz, Gabriele Stauner, Ewa Tomaszewska, Anne Van Lancker, Gabriele Zimmer		
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Petru Filip, Donata Gottardi, Rumiana Jeleva, Sepp Kusstatscher, Claude Moraes, Roberto Musacchio, Csaba Sógor		