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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

2006/2113(INI)

11.10.2006

OPINION

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

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy - Green
paper
2006/2113(INI))

Draftsman: Evangelia Tzampazi

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy;
2. Stresses that the European Union is committed to the objective of tackling climate change and therefore of limiting global temperature increase to +2°C compared to pre-industrialised levels;
3. Recalls the need for a legal basis in order to pursue a common European policy in the field of energy, which will secure a safe, affordable and decentralised efficient energy economy whilst protecting the environment; insists that transport is a key component of such a sustainable energy policy and must therefore be fully addressed;
4. Urges the Commission, given the present situation of 25 separate Energy Regulators in the Member States, to complete a review of the role of Regulators within each Member State together with a full assessment of the potential need for a European Energy Regulator;
5. Stresses that the current use of fossil fuels to produce energy is adversely affecting the climate and above all leading to shortages and depletion of these resources, making the Member States dependent for energy on exports from outside the EU; therefore demands that the proposed action plans both for Energy Efficiency and for a Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy be sufficiently ambitious to lead to a 20% cut in our current energy consumption by 2020, be accompanied by a monitoring and control mechanism and be consistent with each other;
6. Stresses that energy security and climate security must go hand in hand and that all efforts to diversify energy supply should give priority to energy efficiency and low-carbon alternatives, with a priority to renewable energy sources;
7. Stresses that energy and climate security for the EU depends to a considerable extent on developments in countries like the US, China, India etc, and urges the Commission and Council to increase efforts to engage these countries in climate change mitigation; considers that one important initiative would be to assist financially developing countries like China and India to invest in more efficient and low-carbon energy technologies;
8. Points out that geo-thermal energy as well as wave energy represent huge potentials in terms of energy supply, including in Europe, and should be vigorously pursued;
9. Recalls the importance of raising the awareness both of the industry and citizens concerning the rational use of energy and prevention of energy waste and calls for wide-ranging information and education campaigns to be launched; calls also for the promotion of renewable sources of energy.;

10. Urges that the European energy strategy should include ambitious targets in order gradually to increase the share of low-CO₂ energy sources in its energy mix; supports the idea of agreeing an overall strategic objective such as aiming for a minimum level in the overall EU energy mix originating from secure and low-carbon energy sources;
11. Points out that the EU's dependence on imported energy has already had a significant effect and will continue to weaken the EU's independence in its decision making in other policy areas, unless strong measures are taken to support the development and use of indigenous energy sources;
12. Welcomes, in the context of the Green Paper, the Commission's recent initiative to undertake a study "addressing the interlinkages between natural resource management and conflict in the Commission's external relations", and stresses in particular the links between energy security and climate security;
13. Recalls that 40% of the EU's energy is used in buildings; supports the idea of extending the current buildings Directive to all buildings; in this context asks the Commission to assess the possibility of creating a pan-European system of 'white certificates' in the field of energy efficiency;
14. Calls for adequate attention to be given to the transport sector in the strategy;
15. Calls for binding targets for CO₂ emissions from cars, i.e. 120 grams CO₂ per vehicle/kilometre by 2012; considers that these targets should be lowered further by at least 10g per km every two years thereafter until a ceiling of 80g/km for all road vehicles is reached in 2020;
16. Calls on the Commission to submit the implementing measures for products with a high energy-saving potential within the framework of the EUP Directive (Directive 2005/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2005 establishing a framework for the setting of ecodesign requirements for energy-using products, OJ L 191, 22.7.2005, p. 29) by spring 2007 at the latest.
17. Considers it alarming that the targets set by the European Union for increasing the use of renewable sources of energy for 2010 will probably not be met by all Member States; calls on the Commission to take the necessary measures to ensure that the objectives set will be achieved;
18. Insists that increased efforts are needed in research and technological demonstration particularly in the new Member States, to encourage and develop even more effectively the use of renewable sources of energy; stresses the importance of introducing tax incentives for the use of biofuels in the transport sector, which may also make a contribution as an alternative source of income in some rural areas of the European Union;
19. Sees a need, in this connection, for increased approximation and harmonisation of support for electricity from renewable energies so that they are used above all in places with the best natural conditions; believes that, according to current knowledge, a European feed-in law would be the best possibility, but that other systems may also be taken into consideration;

20. Hopes that the roadmap on renewable sources of energy provided for in the Green Paper will prove ambitious, put the emphasis on research, and include an annual mechanism for evaluating the targets met;
21. Calls for consideration to be given to the possibility of guaranteeing and prioritizing access to the grid for energy from renewable sources; calls for a coordinated effort to create a more favourable framework for micro generation, and for the possible benefits of decentralised generation in general to be considered;
22. Draws attention to the high demand for primary energy and high potential for savings in relation to heating buildings, and therefore supports the announcement made by Commissioner Piebalg to the effect that he will be submitting a directive on environmentally friendly heating systems before the end of 2006;
23. Recalls that renewable sources of energy are already competitive today in some cases and require only start-up funding or the removal of barriers to their entry into the market, and that, where higher costs still remain, greater weight must be placed on the risks linked to other energy sources, such as CO₂ production and the importing of raw materials from politically unstable regions.
24. Recalls that a long-term diversification strategy for energy sources will benefit from the implementation of a level playing field, i.e. ensuring that comparisons between sources are made with full internalisation of their external costs (waste, dismantling, resource depletion) and taking into account their respective environmental benefits;
25. Calls on the Commission to show its interest both in renewable sources of energy and in saving energy and to integrate these policies in all actions funded by the structural and cohesion funds (mainstreaming) and in particular those of the European Regional Development Fund for all regions of the Union without exception, taking account of their specific features, during the next programming period (2007-2013);)
26. Stresses the need to create more ambitious goals for the revision of the Emissions Trading Directive as part of the strategy presented under the Climate Change Chapter;
27. Calls on the Commission to submit in 2010 a mid-term evaluation of the action proposed in paragraph 25 and finally an ex post evaluation at the end of the programming period;
28. Considers that the impact of the European Union's actions would be considerably strengthened by a strong external policy aimed at persuading all industrialised countries to join the fight against climate change and by greater inclusion of clean and efficient energy programmes in the Union's development policy.

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Never before, since the energy crises of the 70s, were energy issues so high on the political and social agenda. Changes that take place in the energy sector are significant and radical and they will map out in the longer-term the economic course of all countries. Without long-term energy planning the Union is in danger to suffer the consequences that derive from the painful childbirth of a new energy season.

At the social level, public dialogue is mainly focused on high oil prices (which are not foreseen to decrease to the low levels of previous years). At the pure energy level the debate of experts is carried out in various fields. The main controversy lies in whether the production of argon already has touched upon maximum or if peak-oil will appear in the coming decade. This discussion has however relatively limited importance for a long-lasting planning. That is why the draftswoman considers it essential to create at least a common external energy policy. Europe should fight the energy wastefulness in all directions. In the beginning of the 80's, immediately after the second petroleum shock, Europe began a giant effort of energy saving that resulted at a roughly 10% decrease of oil consumption in OECD countries in 3 years, while maintaining simultaneously the increase of economic product. The restriction of wastefulness and the rational energy use constitute an imperative and universal need, if we want to make the transition in the new energy era as painless as possible while simultaneously protecting the environment. The high oil and gas prices underline the need for an effort to use energy rationally. An effort that in the short-term will create 1.000.000 posts in the EU (energy inspectors, electricians, work of insulation of buildings, work of renovation of residences etc.).

At the same time the EU could save up to 20% of its current energy consumption, in buildings, transport and industry. Half of this save emanates from the application from the member states of the existing European legal framework. The remaining half emanates from innovative solutions. This is the reason why we call the European Commission to demonstrate minimum tolerance in the non application from the member states of the regulation on building energy efficiency.

This objective of energy saving by 20% should, according to the draftswoman, be binding for the member states. At the same time the full transposition and application of the existing directives on buildings, co-production of electricity and heat, eco-design, energy efficiency, labelling of energy consumption in the electric appliances in the all member states remains imperative. The Commission is furthermore called to work on the labelling of air conditioning appliances in buildings.

Taking into account that public buildings also participate in the energy wastefulness, this issue should be faced with continuous annual energy inspections and the resulting data should be publicized so that public control is more feasible. The creation of an independent institution that will have the responsibility of overseeing the energy saving plan, attending and verifying the accomplishment of obligations that arise from the Community objective of a 20% reduction, is deemed necessary. Moreover, the draftswoman considers necessary the annual publication of an assessment of the above mentioned and the obligation to keep the European Commission and the European Parliament informed.

In the transport sector, the draftsman welcomes the efforts made to save fuel with the help of hybrid engines or STOP and START engines; she believes however that these efforts should also be extended to other elements of the car such as the air conditioning. She urges, therefore, the automobile industry to act on the subject after consulting the European Commission in the framework of “voluntary agreements”.

The EU however has at its power useful tools for the implementation of these policies in the European level and these tools are the structural funds. The draftsman considers that for all funding from the Regional Fund concerning construction of buildings or any intervention in the building sector the energy behaviour of the buildings as well as the possibility of using internal energy sources (geothermics - bioclimatic etc) should be taken into consideration.

The European Commission is therefore called to proceed in the mainstreaming not only of the general request of rational energy use but also of the promotion of renewable energy sources through the structural funds for all European regions.

In this way the Lisbon objectives are supported, Internal Energy Consumption Market is strengthened and at the same time the international competitive position of the EU is promoted through a sector where the EU plays a leading role.

PROCEDURE

Title	A European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy - Green paper	
Procedure number	2006/2113(INI)	
Committee responsible	ITRE	
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	ENVI 18.5.2006	
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary		
Draftsman Date appointed	Evangelia Tzampazi 16.5.2006	
Previous drafts(wo)man		
Discussed in committee	13.9.2006	10.10.2006
Date adopted	10.10.2006	
Result of final vote	+: 44	–: 1
	0: 0	
Members present for the final vote	Georgs Andrejevs, Liam Aylward, Irena Belohorská, Johannes Blokland, John Bowis, Frieda Brepoels, Dorette Corbey, Avril Doyle, Mojca Drčar Murko, Jill Evans, Anne Ferreira, Matthias Groote, Satu Hassi, Gyula Hegyi, Jens Holm, Mary Honeyball, Caroline Jackson, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Klauß, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Urszula Krupa, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, Peter Liese, Linda McAvan, Riitta Myller, Péter Olajos, Miroslav Ouzký, Karin Scheele, Horst Schnellhardt, Richard Seeber, Bogusław Sonik, María Sornosa Martínez, Antonios Trakatellis, Evangelia Tzampazi, Thomas Ulmer, Marcello Vernola, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund, Anders Wijkman	
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	María del Pilar Ayuso González, Hélène Goudin, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Caroline Lucas, Bart Staes	
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Fausto Correia	
Comments (available in one language only)	...	