WRITTEN QUESTION P-1271/04 by Robert Goodwill (PPE-DE) to the Commission

Subject: Synchronous interconnection of EU/Russia electricity grids

With reference to the statements made at the round table on electricity held as part of the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue on 16-17 October 2003 in Moscow, it was concluded that 'the synchronisation of the EU electricity systems with the United Power System of Russia and CIS countries can be one of the best solutions to ensure an efficient operation of the European competitive electricity market'. The round table agreed on the need for a feasibility study into the synchronous interconnection of the EU and Russia/CIS electricity grids. François Lamoureux stated that the Commission would co-finance 50% of this study, and RAO-UES has agreed to finance the remaining 50% of the study.

The Commission work programme for 2004 provides for adoption by the Commission in June 2004 of a proposal for a Council decision granting a mandate to the Commission to negotiate an agreement on trade in electricity with Russia. In the light of these considerations:

1. Could the Commission indicate when the decision will be taken to grant co-financing for the study into technical feasibility of the synchronous mode of interconnection?

2. Should the technical feasibility of the synchronous interconnection of the grids be established, would the Commission favour this option as the best solution for achieving a wider and stabler European electricity market, functioning under conditions of mutual access? Does the Commission intend to discuss and politically endorse the development of an enlarged electricity market via synchronous interconnection at the next EU-Russia Energy Dialogue meeting in May?

3. With regard to a formal agreement on trade in electricity with Russia, has the Commission considered other possible frameworks, such as Russian membership to WTO or the adoption of a Protocol to the Energy Charter? What are the terms and timing envisaged for the adoption of the proposal for a decision on a negotiating mandate from the Council and for the negotiations and conclusion of such a bilateral agreement with Russia?