



Resolution 1045 (1994)¹

Energy-environment interface

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is aware of the scale of the problems linked to the energy-environment interface, particularly in the present historical context. It views devising an energy policy that shows due regard for the environment of the whole continent as one of the keystones of future European integration.

2. Energy and environment are two major themes that are closely intertwined and go beyond the frontiers of Europe. The Third World will account for 85% of the over 8 thousand million strong world population in the year 2025. Efforts by the industrialised world to strike a balance between energy needs and the environment would be doomed to failure by a soaring increase in the needs of the Third World. There will have to be fairer relations between North and South before the economic and demographic situation in these countries can be stabilised and the conditions for sustainable development met.

3. Energy-related activities are at present the prime cause of our planet's environmental problems and many experts warn that the threshold beyond which the actual viability of our ecosystem is in jeopardy has almost been reached.

4. The inevitable future growth of energy consumption - in both industrialised and developing countries - therefore demands sweeping changes in current energy policies to ensure that they do not cause subsequent damage to the environment, but nonetheless afford people a satisfactory level of development.

5. This precondition of increased global interdependence should further encourage European leaders to act. A great number of steps can be taken at European level pending more harmonious and effective global co-operation. What is more, a change in mentalities is under way as attested to by the inclusion of the notion of "environment" in energy policies and by greater multidisciplinary in researching various developments.

6. In this respect, the Assembly notes that recent work enables the external costs of various energy projects to be internalised, thereby opening up new prospects for a more accurate assessment of their effects on the ecosystem as well as on the socio-economic situation of a region (for example, population movements) and health (such as serious illnesses, psychological effects).

7. The new policies which have to be devised cannot disregard the fact that current priorities are not the same in countries of western Europe and countries of central and eastern Europe. In the west, concern for security in the energy supply goes hand in hand with the desire for greater energy efficiency and a reduction in CO₂ emissions, while countries of central and eastern Europe are in a hurry to catch up economically and consequently lay greater emphasis on financing new technologies, using and marketing energy more rationally and certain immediate environmental problems (waste, etc.).

8. Before new energy policies can be drawn up, a broad consensus must be reached on common denominators which need to be carefully pinpointed. The Assembly firmly believes that the following three objectives might form a common basis for dialogue:

8.1. supporting the economy;

1. Assembly debate on 4 October 1994 (26th Sitting) (see [Doc. 7122](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology, Rapporteur: Mr Caccia; [Doc. 7138](#), opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Rapporteur: Mr Gjellerod; and [Doc. 7137](#), opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur: Mrs Graenitz). Text adopted by the Assembly on 4 October 1994 (26th Sitting).



- 8.2. reducing the impact on the environment, in particular by promoting a new technological strategy;
- 8.3. ensuring security of supplies. That certainly seems to be the thinking behind the European Energy Charter signed in December 1991 by over forty countries. Initial implementation in the form of an agreement for the opening up of energy markets was approved by fifty countries in Brussels at the beginning of June 1994. This should simplify and make for closer co-operation between OECD countries and the countries of central and eastern Europe. On rational use of energy and realistic pricing policies, implementation of the charter remains to be negotiated.
9. The challenges are daunting. The greenhouse effect alone, attributable in particular to the use of fossil fuels, points to an impending disaster of sufficient proportions to warrant immediate action. Although there is still some scientific disagreement as to its scale, average global warming of the planet is liable to affect sea levels, the socio-economic situation in coastal areas, soil fertility and the availability of fresh water.
10. In addition to this global challenge there are phenomena such as acid rain and particulate emission which may cause problems at continental or regional level.
11. We do not have much room for manoeuvre at the present time as there is unlikely to be any far-reaching change in energy production this decade. This being the case, the most reasonable approach would be to keep all options open and weigh up a variety of avenues without categorically rejecting any of them out of hand. Nevertheless, the keynotes in this approach will definitely have to be energy efficiency improvements and resource conservation.
12. Changes in the relative apportionment of different sources of energy will inevitably be slow and gradual. The use of coal in western Europe is now relatively stable (25%), while demand for oil (42%) and gas (16%) is going up and up. In countries of central and eastern Europe coal and gas continue to be the major energy sources. The relatively low prices of fossil fuels - often due to economic support measures - discourage more advanced research into new energies.
13. The proportion of renewable energies in national energy policies varies enormously. While it may be as great as 20% in some countries, it currently averages only 3% in the OECD countries. In the present energy situation, according to the most optimistic forecasts, the proportion of renewable energy sources will not exceed 10% by the year 2020.
14. However, the funds directly or indirectly released by improving energy efficiency and applying the real prices of fossil fuels could usefully be invested in the development of renewable energies.
15. Nuclear energy, which accounts for some 14% of the primary energy supply, is currently going through a period of reappraisal, even crisis. Its future is bound up with four conditions, namely significant technological progress, progress in management of and compliance with security regulations, particularly in countries of central and eastern Europe, reliable solutions to the serious problem of waste and better supply of information so that the public can form more enlightened judgments.
16. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly invites member states to:
 - 16.1. pursue a more realistic price policy which takes account of the social and environmental cost of any form of energy. Technological innovation can only lead to appreciable progress in an economic climate that favours its development. Subsidies and "political prices" should therefore be abolished;
 - 16.2. honour the undertakings made at the Rio Conference on sustainable development with regard to the gradual reduction in CO₂ emissions. Until it has been proved otherwise, the greenhouse effect should be viewed as one of the main threats to the environment and the well-being of the public. It may be tackled by:
 - a. carbon tax: carbon tax should be harmonised at European level and graduated according to the carbon content of energy sources. International agreements should be reached to ensure that the carbon tax does not distort world trade;
 - b. transport policies: forward-looking planning is becoming increasingly necessary at national level and within the ECMT (European Conference of Ministers of Transport). Priority must be given to high-speed rail networks over road transport. Cleaner, more energy-efficient cars are needed in towns. In addition, the river transport network (for example the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal) might help alleviate road traffic congestion. For long-distance freight transport the solutions are a restructured, standardised European rail network and use of containers;

- c. more rational use of energy: gas emissions could be reduced by energy savings in households and services but above all in industry and transport. Standard setting here (insulation of buildings, etc.) must go hand in hand with an upgrading of collective installations and household appliances. Thought also needs to be given to the introduction of district-heating systems;
- d. improvements in conventional technologies: new fossil fuel techniques (such as clean coal), new power plant design and the use of technologies such as the combined cycle are likely to reduce CO₂ emissions. Improved techniques for recovering energy from industrial waste used as fuel should become standard;
- e. perfecting and using renewable sources of energy: this sector can only be developed with public support, which would be justified in the medium and long term by both increased competitiveness of European technology on world markets and an improvement in the environmental impact of energy production. Increased co-operation on research is necessary together with an adequate strategy to publicise unfamiliar but promising techniques. Member states should encourage and actively participate in all schemes for international co-operation in this area, such as the "ALTENER" programme launched by the European Union to promote renewable energies and increase the proportion of these energy sources in national energy balances;

16.3. view nuclear energy as the only energy source, in addition to hydro power, which is, at present, able to produce large amounts of electricity without carbon dioxide emissions. Hence it can help in reducing the greenhouse effect. However, being potentially dangerous its use necessitates a high standard of scientific and technological infrastructure. States which use nuclear energy must step up research with a view to making reactors safer and radioactive waste less harmful. As regards central and eastern Europe the suggestions contained in Assembly [Recommendation 1209 \(1993\)](#) must be implemented;

16.4. work towards inter-state co-operation with respect to trans-European energy networks by including the countries of central and eastern Europe and improving their oil and gas pipeline networks;

16.5. encourage implementation of the agreement on the opening up of energy markets, which was signed in Brussels in June 1994 under the European Energy Charter, and promote negotiations towards meeting the other requirements set out in the charter;

16.6. diversify energy sources at local level - in particular through combined heat and power district systems, which could contribute considerably to greater local democracy by mobilising citizen initiative - and ensure that there is increased participation by regional and local authorities in major energy projects which might have an environmental impact;

16.7. continue discussions with a view to establishing an internationally auditable system of fixed maximum quotas for national emissions. This could at a later stage lead to the establishment of internationally negotiable emission rights.