Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1483 (2000)[1]

Basis of an energy strategy for Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Although the goal of economically competitive European energy industries is apparently being achieved, in particular through the liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets, consideration must be given to three other key objectives for Europe when formulating energy policy:

1.1. reducing energy dependence and ensuring a secure, sustainable supply;

1.2. working for a slow-down of the growth in world emission of greenhouse gases through a vigorous pursuit of the possibilities embodied in the provisions of the Joint Implementation and Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol as well as by honouring the commitments entered into in that protocol;

1.3. protecting the environment and public health.

2. Recent economic and energy trends do not encourage operators to achieve these objectives of their own accord. A combination of current low fuel prices, the development of road and air transport and the growing use of natural gas to generate electricity is resulting in increased consumption of oil and natural gas, thus jeopardising future European energy security and the Kyoto undertakings. Liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets is also influencing energy companies' behaviour: in a highly competitive climate, they are seeking to recover invested capital more quickly and avoiding sectors conducive to environmental protection, which require a higher initial investment. In view of this, it is imperative that ways be found to reconcile the aims and interests of energy markets on the one hand and those of sustainability, security of supply and environmental protection on the other.

3. National governments and Europe as a whole must therefore pursue an integrated energy policy designed to promote rational energy use by industrial operators, greater use of renewables and improvements in nuclear technology (new generations of reactors, fuel cycles and solutions to the problem of waste). The Assembly specially recalls in this regard its Resolution 1157 (1998) on radioactive waste management.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly consequently recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage the member states of the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to:

4.1. investigate more fully the impact of each type of energy on the environment and health, develop a common yardstick to enable them to be compared and accordingly inform those responsible for planning production facilities and distribution networks as well as the general public;

4.2. co-ordinate their action to ensure that energy prices better reflect the environmental costs to society of producing and distributing energy;

4.3. eliminate indiscriminate energy subsidies, which are resulting in end-use prices below the true costs in some central and east European countries;

4.4. focus, in their general research effort, on the development of clean and renewable energies with the view of considerably increasing their contribution to the future energy supply;

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1. See Doc. 8653, report of the Committee on Science and Technology, rapporteur: Mr Olrich. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf ofthe Assembly, on 9 November 2000.

4.5. invest more heavily in the necessary research and development in order to achieve systematic lowering of the costs of renewable energy technologies and to ensure safe, sustainable and efficient energy storage;

4.6. support technological innovations that may reduce emissions from the traditional combustion engine, and promote research and development of alternative technology for the transport sector;

4.7. devise incentive measures, such as guaranteed markets for initial output, in order to attract private investment in renewables;

4.8. take effective measures to support the needs of the central and east European countries to enhance their energy efficiency, safety and industrial restructuring;

4.9. replace existing nuclear reactors with advanced, evolutionary European Pressurised Reactors (EPR), which combine economic competitiveness with the highest safety standards, encouraging the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to upgrade the nuclear reactors in its region;

4.10. encourage new designs such as direct-cycle, high-temperature modular reactors, which are energy-efficient and have inherent safety features, and hybrid reactors such as the “Rubbiatron”, which can be used in actinide transmutation (reducing the volume and radioactivity of long-life nuclear waste), and develop rapid-neutron technology in view of its energy potential;

4.11. encourage successful management and elimination of nuclear waste in safe, economic conditions acceptable to the populations concerned, inter alia, by harmonising regulatory frameworks and providing accurate information to the public;

4.12. raise public awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of each type of energy and of the need for an optimum combination of them, in order to satisfy objectives such as price, supply security and environmental conservation.

5. The Assembly also invites the governments of member states to consider calling for an international conference on energy and the environment, of which the main objectives would be to co-ordinate policy-making in the two sectors, to promote environmentally positive energy sources and practices and to combine efforts to curb pollutive emissions generating from energy production.