



Resolution 1413 (2004)¹

Avoiding electricity blackouts in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Europe needs an efficient and reliable electricity supply for the well-being of its citizens and for its economic development. The blackouts that struck Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain, Denmark, Sweden and other countries in 2003 – and the city of Athens in the summer of 2004 – were brief but costly and served to draw attention to the weak links in Europe's electricity supply networks, insufficient co-ordination between national or regional electricity markets and, occasionally, insufficient production capacity. It is important to prevent any reoccurrence of such breakdowns.

2. The ongoing reforms in Europe's electricity industry are challenging the traditional organisation of the industry, whereby the main entities responsible for investment were state-owned and where the priority has been to ensure ample spare capacity to cover needs at all times. The present opening of markets, which is a result of, inter alia, the completion of the European Union's Internal Market, weakens the position of monopolies in electricity production and supply, while facilitating market entry by new operators and cross-border exchanges. This welcome development, however, will at the same time require a more coherent regulatory framework at national and European level, not least in order to prevent undue price increases by power suppliers.

3. Although it may be impossible to attain perfect reliability, much could be done to increase it through efforts to stabilise electricity consumption, achieve energy savings, improve network co-ordination, increase production capacity via new investment and facilitate the financing of energy infrastructure, while paying due heed to the protection of the environment.

4. As electricity cannot be efficiently stored over time or transported over large distances without substantial energy loss, strong and unpredictable fluctuations in demand – owing to weather conditions for example – can cause major disruptions. Measures to better monitor and predict energy demand are therefore particularly needed. Potential energy savings that can be made without affecting living standards or output are estimated at between 15% and 35% in the European Union, with even higher savings possible in non-EU countries in central and eastern Europe.

5. As regards Council of Europe member states, the Parliamentary Assembly:

5.1. recommends that efforts be undertaken to improve electricity interconnections between Council of Europe member states and co-operation among transmission system operators as regards the sharing of data in real time, in order to fulfil the economic potential of the networks involved and enhance their security;

5.2. believes that greater overall co-ordination of network and power-generation investment is needed so as to permit a more rational use of resources and reduce the uncertainty surrounding long-term projects, and in this context welcomes the 2003 commitment to realising the Regional Electricity Market (REM) for South-Eastern Europe under the region's Stability Pact;

5.3. asks Council of Europe member states to make better use of taxation, pricing and regulatory policies in order to:

a. promote energy efficiency;

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 23 November 2004 (see [Doc. 10350](#), report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Melčák).



- b. ensure an adequate framework for maintenance of, and new investment in, electricity networks and power-generation capacity;
 - c. ensure efficient reserve capacity for electricity production and supply to cover peaks in demand;
 - d. remove existing distortions resulting from tariff and other trade barriers;
 - e. encourage the use of new sources of energy such as solar and wind power, and the application of new procedures, such as laying electricity lines underground in special circumstances, especially in urban and environmentally sensitive areas or in regions exposed to adverse weather conditions.
6. As regards the European Union and its member states, the Parliamentary Assembly:
- 6.1. calls for the speedy implementation of the relevant directives of the European Union and supports its latest proposals in this field, especially those regarding energy efficiency, electricity infrastructure and the security of supply;
 - 6.2. invites the European Union to review its guidelines for its trans-European energy networks, so as to promote the integration into the wider European energy market of the electricity systems in its ten new member states as well as in those of neighbouring countries outside the Union.
7. The Assembly fully supports the Union for the Co-ordination of Transmission of Electricity (UCTE) in its efforts to harmonise technical and administrative rules for interconnecting the networks of its twenty-three participating countries, on the basis of existing security and reliability standards.
8. Finally, the Assembly believes that the creation of a new European centre for technical co-ordination of European transmission systems and cross-border electricity trading is necessary for the proper co-ordination of the above measures.