



Resolution 1977 (2014)¹

Final version

Energy diversification as a fundamental contribution to sustainable development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Clean, secure and affordable energy is central to sustainable development and quality of life. It is part of a society's broader ambition to embrace a more balanced development model that better respects our planet's capacity and resources. In the light of their commitments under the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, European countries face a wealth of opportunities, but also challenges, in the transition to a more sustainable energy future.
2. To preserve and enhance national prosperity in a global context, public authorities, businesses and consumers in Europe must unite their efforts towards optimising energy production, delivery and use. Although a single European vision for a clean energy future remains elusive, the Parliamentary Assembly notes a growing political consensus on the need to cut energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and various risks, while enhancing competitiveness and making better use of existing resources.
3. The Assembly therefore strongly supports the European Union goals for climate and energy that aim, by 2020, to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below the 1990 level, to cover 20% of energy needs from renewable sources and to shrink energy consumption by 20%. It believes that the non-European Union States should adopt similar or more ambitious targets when shaping their national energy choices.
4. Moreover, the Assembly is convinced that European society must decouple its energy consumption from economic and demographic growth and should moderate its energy needs by investing in energy efficiency and savings. This need is particularly pressing for heating, cooling, mobility and transportation in both industry and households, where the diversification of energy sources, technologies and consumption patterns can lead to huge efficiency gains and can create jobs.
5. The Assembly welcomes a growing emphasis on the use of the cleanest energy sources across all of Europe. Provided that they are produced in a sustainable manner, natural gas and renewable energy sources take on a strategic dimension in this respect. However, tapping the full potential of clean energy requires strong political leadership to secure adequate investment, regional co-ordination of networks and a more integrated European energy market.
6. The Assembly notes a wide variety of national positions and public anxiety across Europe regarding the exploration and exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels, in particular shale gas and oil. It shares the concern about the environmental, public health and seismic risks inherent in the use of hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking", technology. Robust precautions are necessary to protect surface and underground water resources, as well as air quality and the landscape. Cleaner technologies therefore need to be developed for the commercial exploitation of shale gas and oil.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2014 (8th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13366](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Doris Barnett). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2014 (8th Sitting).



7. The advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy continue to polarise the opinions of policy makers in Europe. While nuclear energy is perceived by many as clean and affordable, it worries others because of safety and long-term waste disposal challenges. The Assembly considers that nuclear energy will remain part of Europe's energy landscape for reasons of security of supply, competitiveness, low carbon emissions and a global growth potential, but requires stricter safety risk policies and long-term solutions for nuclear waste management.

8. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the problem of energy poverty: at least 1.5 billion people worldwide have no access to electricity and up to 32% of the population of some European countries face more or less severe energy deprivation. In this context, the Assembly emphasises the responsibility of governments to employ targeted assistance to help the poorest countries move to a more dynamic, but also more sustainable, development model and to protect the most vulnerable populations.

9. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly recommends that the Council of Europe member States:

9.1. as regards regional, pan-European and international co-operation in favour of sustainable energy:

9.1.1. strengthen the European Union Emissions Trading System and seek its expansion to non-European Union countries;

9.1.2. improve market and regulatory frameworks for cross-border clean energy investment (in both networks and technologies) and nuclear safety;

9.1.3. foster the consolidation of regional energy markets and fair competition among all energy market players;

9.1.4. develop cross-border electricity transmission, interconnection and storage capacities, including the development of the Mediterranean solar plan;

9.1.5. work towards the gradual de-indexing of natural gas prices from oil prices for supply contracts so as to take advantage of lower prices in the international market;

9.1.6. exploit options for pooling means of national energy production (covering infrastructure, imports, back-up capacity and supply-demand management) and enhancing the co-ordination of transmission networks on a regional basis so as to better tap the potential of the European market;

9.1.7. adequately inform, consult and involve citizens in the preparation of clean energy projects;

9.1.8. promote the exchange of best practice in the field of energy technologies, research, legislation and regulation;

9.2. concerning national and European macroeconomic policies for underpinning transition to a more sustainable energy future:

9.2.1. seek structural changes that promote balanced economic, environmental and social development with less energy from fossil fuels;

9.2.2. give priority to better exploiting the most abundant, clean, cost-efficient and locally present energy sources, in particular renewables such as biomass;

9.2.3. foster investment in enhancing energy efficiency throughout different sectors, notably buildings, transport and industry, including by tightening emissions standards and certification requirements;

9.2.4. use the transition to cleaner and more efficient energy to create or preserve jobs;

9.2.5. set up coherent and specific legislative frameworks, fiscal incentives and pricing signals to encourage investment in clean energy;

9.2.6. discourage wasteful and polluting energy consumption through carbon or environmental taxes and provide targeted support to the most vulnerable consumers;

9.2.7. rationalise and phase out inefficient subsidies to fossil fuels over the medium term and consider temporary financial support for the shift to the cleanest technologies, the modernisation of energy infrastructure and efforts to reduce energy intensity;

9.2.8. apply the highest environmental, legal and technological standards and introduce strong measures to protect public health and the environment in any cases of exploration or exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels (in particular shale gas and oil) and step up research on cleaner alternatives to fracking;

9.2.9. continue the integration of local electricity and heat markets;

9.2.10. actively support the deployment of smart grids, waste-to-energy technologies and fuel storage facilities, as well as the use of solar, wind and biomass energy sources, clean coal and carbon storage technologies, and innovative developments such as service networks for alternative vehicles;

9.2.11. continue to diversify energy supply routes, sources and suppliers so as to reduce dependence on imports and minimise supply disruptions and costs.