EU development cooperation in support of access to energy in developing countries

2023/2073(INI) - 17/01/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 366 votes to 41, with 220 abstentions, a resolution on EU development cooperation to promote access to energy in developing countries.

Energy is at the heart of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but the conclusions of the 2023 report on the Sustainable Development Goals show that the world is still not on track to achieve universal access to energy.

Promote universal access to clean energy

Parliament recalled that access to universal, affordable and sustainable energy is a **basic human right and a precondition for achieving the SDGs** and attaining the objective of leaving no one behind. It called for the EU to foster access to renewable energy in developing countries through **policy, regulatory and administrative support**, including capacity-building and transfers of technology.

The resolution encouraged partnerships that move away from the exploitation of fossil resources and focus on clean energy use. It stressed the need to make sure that green investments contribute to socio-economic development and greater participation by developing countries in the new net-zero energy geopolitical landscape.

Parliament strongly encouraged developing countries to commit to energy justice through their regulatory frameworks, which should ensure local acceptance, community participation, land rights protection and adherence to internationally recognised human rights standards, with the aim of securing access and affordable energy for all.

Members called for people to be better informed about the health risks posed by indoor air pollution caused by traditional cooking practices, and about the benefits of alternative solutions. They urged the EU to financially support, defend and encourage national actions in partner countries. They also asked the EU to make **access to clean cooking** a priority in its energy partnerships and multi-annual indicative programmes with developing countries.

Support the energy transition in line with the principle of policy coherence for development

Parliament urged the EU and its Member States to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development across the EU external energy agenda, which should be **tailored to local specificities and needs**. Reiterating their commitment towards energy justice, Members called on the EU to support developing countries in implementing rights-based renewable energy regimes that effectively contribute to their sustainable development. The principle of **free, prior and informed consent** for affected communities is a precondition for a successful green and just energy transition.

Parliament stressed the need for the EU to support developing countries, where required, in establishing or reinforcing regulatory frameworks that guarantee energy distribution and universal service across their territories, as well as good governance capacity and transparency in any energy transition projects.

The resolution stated that any **planning of dams** should be evaluated according to five values: equity, efficiency, participatory decision-making, sustainability and accountability. The decision-making process

with regard to dams should fully take into account the notion of human rights, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the related covenants adopted thereafter.

Noting with concern, that **Africa** hosts an increasing number of fossil fuel projects, Parliament insisted on the need to prioritise investment in sustainable renewable energy infrastructure in Africa. It denounced the double standards whereby private and public financial institutions in developed countries are increasingly making pledges to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 while financing the development and expansion of fossil fuels. Members underlined that calls for low- and middle-income countries to reduce their dependence on coal will not be effective as long as developed countries continue to rely decisively on other fossil fuel.

Green hydrogen

Parliament stated that the green hydrogen industry can play a **crucial role** in the development of resource-rich developing countries if certain factors are present, such as good governance, the implementation and monitoring of a sound legal framework, corruption prevention, functioning rule of law, and transparency with regard to financial flows. However, it warned against the potential risk of a new 'green hydrogen curse' that would foster developing countries' reliance on exports and could crowd out investments in the development of local energy markets.

The resolution urged the EU to support the development of a green hydrogen value chain where this brings equal social and economic benefits to exporting countries.

Members stressed the need to **regulate water** as a resource for green hydrogen production in a sustainable way, particularly in arid regions, including by implementing regulations that mandate sustainable water sourcing techniques, efficient water usage, and the minimisation of wastewater discharge, so that it does not jeopardise local populations' access to water or drive up water costs. They insisted that green hydrogen strategies must follow **strong social and sustainability standards**.

Scale up funding for a just energy transition

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to increase the amount of Official Development Assistance devoted to the energy sector, especially under Heading 6 of the next multiannual financial framework, and particularly in Africa, while prioritising grants over loans and reorienting financing towards countries with lower rates of access to electricity with the aim of supporting their clean and renewable energy transitions.

Members called for the EU and its Member States to increase the funding devoted to helping developing countries to adapt to climate change. They also called on the Commission to increase the number of programmes under the Global Gateway initiative that prioritise basic access to electricity and clean cooking, particularly in the countries most in need.

Lastly, they urged the EU to support developing countries in gradually phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and to focus on efficient, modern and affordable cooking technologies.