Trans-European energy networks: guidelines

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The rapporteur stated that he broadly accepted the Commission proposal, which laid down new guidelines for the development of trans-European energy networks, in accordance with the Maastricht Treaty and the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment. The measures, including those under procedure SYN940010, designed to cover the period from 1995 to 1999, related to around 70 projects on the transport of electricity and natural gas, costing a total of approximately ECU 105 million. Connecting the network with countries outside the Union would improve the political understanding and cooperation with Norway, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Mediterranean countries. The proposed amendments sought to give priority to the energy networks that promoted economic and social cohesion and called for Parliament to be consulted on any changes to the priority projects adopted by the Commission. The rapporteur also proposed that the Commission should be assisted by an advisory committee. The Commissioner responsible for energy, Mr PAPOUTSIS, indicated that the Commission could take over most of the 24 amendments of the Committee on Energy: Amendments Nos 1, 3, 5, 6 and 10 in full; and the substance of Amendments Nos 4, 7 to 9, 11 and 13, subject to a slight change to the wording (to include, for example, the countries that would sign the European Energy Charter). Amendments Nos 12 and 14 to 16 could not be taken over as they related to projects that were not yet developed. Mr PAPOUTSIS confirmed that the Commission would keep Parliament informed of the implementation of the projects and that it did not agree with the Council, which was in favour of establishing a regulatory committee.