Nuclear industries in the Union

1996/2193(COS) - 15/05/1997

Parliament rejected the report by Mr André SOULIER (PPE, F) on the communication from the Commission on the nuclear industries in the European Union (Illustrative nuclear programme according to Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty). The rapporteur himself recommended that the whole of the motion for a resolution be rejected as its substance had been altered by the amendments that had been adopted. At the outset, Mr Soulier generally supported the Commission communication, though made criticisms on a number of points. He recognized that, as long as there was no alternative to nuclear power, it would be necessary to continue with investment, which is also a source of long-term jobs and contributes to local economies. Given the continuing trend for uranium ore prices to rise, he felt the EU should ensure autonomy of supply. The rapporteur mentioned three main challenges posed by nuclear power: - gaining public confidence: the nuclear industries must 'enlighten' and aim to establish common standards for the manufacture of equipment and for the operation of installations, - dismantling or replacement of ageing power stations: the Commission's illustrative programme unfortunately does not address the problem of power stations having reached the end of their life, - waste management and disposal: decisions have to be taken about the final disposal of high-level radioactive waste. During the vote, a number of amendments were adopted which resulted in the deletion of the references to continued investment in the nuclear sector. Other amendments called for a stop to uranium enrichment or for the costing of nuclear energy to include all the costs of research, production, transport and waste reprocessing and storage and for all such costs to be borne by the undertakings concerned, EU contributions being allowed only in respect of the safety of currently operational reactors. Parliament would thus have argued that other types of energy, such as renewable varieties, had greater job-creation potential. Taking the view that his report had been totally altered, Mr Soulier himself recommended that it be rejected. The motion for a resolution was thus rejected by 211 votes to 129, with 13 abstentions.