Trans-European energy networks: guidelines

2001/0311(COD) - 06/02/2003 - Council position

The main changes introduced by the Council are as follows: - Priorities : the Council divided priorities on the basis of their relevance to the electricity, or gas network or to both types of network, described clearly the character of projects of common interest and the additional criteria that a project need to fill in order to be eligible for Community financial aid provided under Council Regulation 2236/95; - The Council specified that results of environmental impact assessments, where requested in accordance with relevant Community legislation, have to be taken into consideration before actually taking a decision on carrying out projects in accordance with Community legislation; - The Council clarified the structure of the Annexes as follows: Annex I contains the Axes for the priority projects; Annex II contains (additional) criteria for projects of common interest. In doing so the Council endeavoured to provide some of the detailed information originally in the Annex III, thus trying to meet the European Parliament request; Annex III contains the projects of common interest, together with a description of their specifications. Of the 24 EP amendments, the Council accepted the following 15 which concern the following points: - underscores the importance of renewable energy sources in this context; - construction and maintenance of energy infrastructure should be subject to market principles; - energy infrastructure should allow the internal energy market to operate efficiently; - reference top the involvement of candidate countries' networks; - underlines that the objective should encourage effective operation of the internal market while also encouraging rational production and use of energy resources; - the aim should facilitate development in isolated regions, thus improving social and economic cohesion; - evaluation aspects, security of supply and contribution to economic and social cohesion; - specify the content of Annex I as priority axes; - modifications to Annex I are to be decided by co-decision; - special attention should be given to transborder projects; - an effort should be made to take effects on competition into account; - extending electricity to include integration of offshore wind energy; - stresses the importance of enhancing the use of renewable energies. Concerning the amendments not integrated into the common position, the Council considered that these were either not in coherence with the Decision, too restrictive or not within the scope of this Decision or were already covered by existing provisions and decided therefore not to integrate them in its common position. On the other hand, the common position does not incorporate the European Parliament amendments proposing: - preferential financial treatment for priority projects; - the requirement for a detailed evaluation of projects as a pre-condition for identifying them in the guidelines; - setting of a deadline for the Commission with regard to theinclusion of the new Member States in the guidelines; - refusal of committee procedure for updating the detailed project descriptions.