European Union energy policy. Green Paper

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The ESC noted, first and foremost, that the Commission’s Green Paper had not called into question the relevance of the Own-initiative Opinion it had adopted in September 1994. Overall, the ESC was quite critical of the Commission’s document. It considered that the Commission had not presented any clear considerations as a first step towards a Community energy policy, over and above the policies of individual states and their convergence. The Green Paper could have provided an opportunity to illustrate why it was necessary to have a longer-term strategy for a Community energy policy that was complementary to national energy policies and that pinpointed responsibilities on the basis of subsidiarity. In this context, the ESC regretted that the Commission only made very general comments, which made it impossible to evaluate whether or not the European Union should play a more active role in the energy sector. In any event, the ESC stressed that the energy policy objectives could not be restricted to the three mentioned by the Commission and that it was essential to include in this list the objectives of economic and social cohesion and job creation. The practical implementation of these objectives was crucial for energy policy, as were the economic and regulatory instruments required to implement them. When applying these instruments it was particularly important to define the responsibilities and powers of the Community and the Member States as clearly as possible. As far as the ESC was concerned, the Green Paper was lacking in this respect: the Commission emphasised the need to limit as far as possible intervention by public authorities and saw economic and regulatory instruments playing a central role, without defining responsibilities and powers.