Energy : European strategy for the security of supply. Green Paper

2001/2071(COS) - 01/12/2000 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to launch a debate during 2001 on the security of energy supply. CONTENT: The Green paper is based on the premise that the European Union (EU) is consuming more and more energy and importing more and more energy products. However, Community production is insufficient for the Union's energy requirements. As a result, external dependence for energy is constantly increasing. If no measures are taken, in the next 20 to 30 years, 70% of the Union's energy requirements, as opposed to the current 50%, will be covered by imported products. In particular, enlargement will exacerbate these trends. Environmental concerns, which are nowdays shared by the majority of the public, have highlighted the weakness of fossil fuels and the problems of atomic energy. As for the struggle against climate changes, this is a major challenge. The commitments made in the Kyoto Protocol are only a first step. The EU has reached its objective in 2000 but greenhouse gas emissions are on the rise in the Union as in the rest of the world. As regards consumption rates, the energy debate should take into account that current energy demand is covered by 14% oil, 22% gas, 16% coal (hard coal, lignite and peat), 15% nuclear and 6% renewables. If nothing is done, the total energy picture in 2030 will continue to be dominated by fossil fuels: 38% oils, 29% gas, 19% soild fuels, 8% renewables and barely 6% nuclear. Against this background, the Green Paper sketches out the bare bones of a long-term energy strategy according to which: - the Union must rebalance its supply policy by clear action in favour of a demand policy; - with regard to demand, the Green Paper is calling for a real change in consumer behaviour. It highlights the value of taxation measures to steer demand towards better-controlled consumption which is more respectful of the environment; - with regard to supply, priority must be given to the fight against global warming. The development of new and renewable energies (including biofuels) is the key to change. Doubling their share in the energy supply quota from 6 to 12% and raising their part in electricity production from 14 to 22% is an objective to be attained between now and 2010. If the current conditions apply, they will stagnate at around 7% in 10 years. Only financial measures (aids, tax deductions and financial support) would be able to buttress such an ambitious aim. One way which could be explored is that profitable energies such as oil, gas and nuclear could finance the development of renewable energies which, unlike traditional energy sources, have not benefited from substantial support. The contribution of atomic energy in the medium term must, in its turn, be analysed. Among the issues which will certainly form part of the debate will be the decision by most Member States to relinquish this sector, the fight against global warming, security of supply and sustainable development. Whatever the conclusions of this reflection, research on waste management technologies and their implementation in the best possible safety conditions must be actively pursued. As far as oil and gas are concerned, imports of which are increasing, a stronger mechanism ought to be provided to build up strategic stocks and to forsee new imports routes.