

# Electricity: common rules for the internal market

1991/0384(COD) - 19/11/1996

After voting on 90 amendments, the Committee on Research and Energy (chaired by Umberto SCAPAGNINI, UPE, I), adopted (by 13 votes to 2 with 15 abstentions) Mr DESAMA's report is on the directive on the liberalization of the internal market on electricity. The rapporteur Claude DESAMA (PES, B) said that Parliament had only a very narrow margin for manoeuvre in dealing with Council on this question. From the outset Council had shown itself very unreceptive to any further amendments that Parliament might adopt at second reading. The Council wanted to avoid reopening the debate on its fragile compromise on the common position adopted at the end of July after seven years of negotiations between the Member States. To change the text of the common position Parliament would need 314 votes for the adoption of amendments at second reading. Mustering these votes would be almost impossible since one of the two large groups, the European Peoples Party, was reluctant to go further, fearing that Parliament's negotiations with the Council might compromise an agreement that the Council had achieved with great difficulty. Furthermore the Commission thought the common position pragmatic and realistic and the fewer changes the better. In view of this, Mr DESAMA will be recommending the adoption at second reading of a limited number of amendments in priority areas. It was a question of making marginal improvements to the common position as the Council had accepted 80% of the amendments adopted by Parliament at first reading. However the questions dealt with were of some importance. After a number of very close votes, the committee adopted ten amendments on: - harmonization of environmental, tax and social protection standards for people working in the industry; - transparent accounting by companies in the electricity industry; - employment protection and, in conjunction with economic and social cohesion, land use planning; - the requirement to maintain a public service in order to ensure consumer protection and equal treatment of consumers; - the option for states not to apply the directive if it interferes with public service obligations imposed on companies; - long-term contracts between states and local or regional authorities; - cogeneration i.e. combined production of heat and electricity. Following the committee's vote, Mr DESAMA said he will again explore the possibilities of the Commission and Council taking up the amendments. He said it was a question of Parliament passing an important political messages.