Energy: organisation of cooperation around agreed Community objectives

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The committee adopted by 14 votes to 13 the draft legislative resolution on the Community's energy objectives. Mr Stockmann (PSE, D) noted that the legal basis used by the Commission (Article 130.3) was not the appropriate legal basis for the proposal as energy policy gave priority to environmental aspects, not the industry. Furthermore, several of the objectives set out in article 1 of the proposal, such as environmental protection, promotion of rational use of sources of energy and improved security of supply came under environmental policy, which is why the rapporteur preferred the decision to be based on Article 130 S.1, which involves application of the cooperation procedure. Generally, the proposal appears to support Council's tendency to back pedal on a common energy policy which would require a special chapter in the Treaty and financial support for energy programmes (Thermie II has been stagnating for several years and there appears to be no agreement in the offing for Synergie), reducing the Commission's role to that of a national policy coordination centre. The rapporteur also highlighted several contradictions in the objectives set out in the Annex and regretted that too much importance had been attached to free competition and deregulation of the market. As a result, no thought had been given to long-term consequences such as the greenhouse effect, which had not been taken into account when pricing the fossil energy vectors. Finally, Mr Stockmann hoped that the Commission would rapidly harmonize taxation on energy products on the basis of an integrated, environmentally-friendly programme accompanied by a timetable and reiterated the importance of the project to introduce Community excise on energy consumption, with regard to which the Commission risked irreparable failure.