

Energy: natural gas, security of supply

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The committee adopted the report by Peter MOMBUR (EPP-ED, D) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. MEPs' prime concern was to ensure that the proposal took due account of the subsidiarity principle. Determination of the energy policy framework for security of supply was therefore a matter for the Member States, "in the light of their particular national circumstances". Many of the committee's amendments accordingly sought to delete large chunks of the Commission's text which were over-prescriptive. The committee also pointed out that the security of supply directive should not be confused with the directive on the internal market in gas. A number of the proposed measures and requirements in the proposal (i.e. gas storage, reporting requirements, etc.) were already adequately dealt with in the EU's Gas Directive and should therefore be deleted. In line with the subsidiarity principle, MEPs also amended the text to ensure that a crisis reaction mechanism at European level for dealing with interruptions of gas supplies should only come into operation in restricted, clearly defined cases, and then only when the Member States concerned so request. Moreover, since the proposed mechanism might be tantamount to an interference in property rights, a compensation scheme, geared to current market rates, should be provided for. Other amendments stressed the importance of diversifying gas supply sources, including biogas, and amended the Commission's definition of "long-term gas supply contracts" so that this would be taken to mean contracts with a minimum duration of 15 years rather than simply "of more than one year". The committee also introduced a new definition, that of "vulnerable consumers", meaning private households and other end users who are not able to switch to other fuels at short notice and for whom Member States must guarantee security of supply. Lastly, MEPs wanted to allow a longer period of implementation of the directive before it was reviewed and further measures proposed (5 years after its entry into force, rather than 1 January 2004 as proposed by the Commission).