Trans-European energy networks: guidelines

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The committee adopted the report by Nicholas CLEGG (ELDR, UK) amending the Council's common position under the 2nd reading of the codecision procedure. It reinstated a few amendments adopted by Parliament at 1st reading, albeit in slightly modified form. These included a clause stipulating that Member States should report to the Commission every two years on the implementation and progress of priority transborder projects. As a compromise between Parliament's position at 1st reading and the Council's common position, the committee also tabled another amendment dealing with the question of updating Annex III (detailed project specifications) using the commitology procedure. Parliament had originally deleted the clause providing for the specifications to be updated by means of this procedure (regulatory committee), arguing that they should be modified through the codecision procedure in order to guarantee proper legislative supervision. The Commission, however, had pointed out that greater flexibility was needed in order to react to new developments. After careful consideration, the committee therefore proposed that the revision of Annex III by commitology procedure be limited to modifications of a purely technical nature (for example, modifying a particular part of a specified route) but should not include "substantial changes such as entirely new projects nor new country destinations not listed in Annex III", which would therefore remain subject to the codecision procedure. The committee also said that the reporting period proposed by the Council for the Commission's implementation report (4 years) was too long and should be shortened to 2 years. In addition, it reinstated the provisions from the Commission text stipulating that priority projects should be compatible with sustainable development, should have a significant impact on the competitive operation of the internal market and/or should strengthen security of supply in the Community. Lastly, MEPs specified that any support exceeding 10% of the total project cost must be justified, given that such funding should only be provided "if it is clearly in the interests of the European economy and general public interest".