Energy: rules for the internal market in natural gas. 'Gas Directive'

2001/0077A(COD) - 24/04/2003

The committee adopted the report by Bernhard RAPKAY (PES, D) amending the Council's common position under the 2nd reading of the codecision procedure. The committee reinstated, sometimes in modified form, a number of amendments adopted by Parliament at 1st reading which sought to: - ensure secure and environmentally sustainable supplies and sales of natural gas. - ensure optimal usage of transmission and storage resources for gas; - require Member States to ensure that the regulatory authorities have the power to require the release of gas or gas transportation capacity from long-term contracts where the regulatory authority deems that this is necessary for the development of sustainable competition. MEPs also called for close cooperation between the Commission and national supervisory bodies to ensure a level playing field as regards security of supply and said that the Commission should launch a comprehensive survey of demand satisfaction across the whole of the internal market. Other amendments provided for an annual external audit to ensure that no cross-subsidies were being paid and also sought to ensure that the supervisory authorities were made responsible for monitoring the level of transparency and competition. One amendment stressed the need to guarantee equality of access for EU gas companies to national consumers, with the aim of ensuring that public service undertakings did not impose conditions which could only be met by national companies, amounting in practice to unfair competition. Lastly, the committee modified Article 29 relating to a Member State's application for exemption from the provisions of the directive so as to make it clear that the exemption applies only to legal unbundling of distribution operators.