Trans-European energy networks: the external dimension

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OBJECTIVE: to analyse possible natural gas and electricity interconnections with third countries and the development of these networks on the scale of the European continent, the Mediterranean basin and, where appropriate, Central Asia and the Middle East. SUBSTANCE: Four main considerations emerged from the Commission analysis: - there is a good initial level of energy interconnection with third countries of Europe and of the Mediterranean Basin, but with some missing links, in particular with the Balkan and Baltic regions; - identification of trans-European energy network projects of mutual interest (TENs) is well advanced under the Community guidelines for trans-European networks in the energy sector (28 such projects, each one involving both Community and non-Community countries, have been identified so far and are being implemented). At the same time, identification of energy network projects of regional interest in the third countries concerned has started. The Commission points out that the natural gas projects are at the construction stage (e.g. Algeria, Morocco and Spain pipeline), but that the electricity projects are generally less advanced (study or authorization stage). However, this is part of a process of longer term cooperation which the Community will continue to support within the SYNERGY energy programme and the PHARE, TACIS and MEDA programmes; - a framework is in place for Community actions of a political nature for the implementation of trans-European and regional energy network projects in the third countries concerned (EC Treaty, TEN guidelines, European Energy Charter, association agreements) and for the implementation of coherent energy policies in these countries (through the SYNERGY and the PHARE, TACIS and MEDA programmes); - the Community financial intervention mechanisms are also in place for supporting: the studies related to TEN mutual interest projects (aid from the TEN energy budget line), the studies related to regional energy network projects in the third countries concerned (aid from the PHARE, TACIS and MEDA programmes), in specific cases, the investment related to the above projects in the third countries concerned (aid from PHARE, loans from the EIB or loan guarantees from the EIF). However, the Commission would wish the mobilization of the operators' own resources and of other sources of private financing (EBRD and World Bank) to be systemically sought. In conclusion, the Commission commits itself to making use of the available guidelines and political and financial instruments in order to support the development of trans-European and regional energy network projects in the third countries concerned and their interconnection with the networks of the Community. The interconnection of networks on a wider scale will effectively contribute to improving the security of the energy supplies, economic and social cohesion and the functioning of the internal market. It will also serve the competitivity, environmental protection, enlargement and external cooperation objectives of the Community.