

Heating and cooling from renewable energy sources

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Mechthild ROTHE (PES, DE) on heating and cooling from renewable energy sources. Under a rarely-used procedure (Rule 39 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure), the committee requested the Commission to submit a legislative proposal on increasing the share of renewable energies used in Europe for heating and cooling. The request was accompanied by detailed recommendations on the content of the draft legislation.

MEPs wanted the present share of renewable energies used in heating and cooling in the EU (10%) to be doubled by 2020, with national binding targets being set. Benefits would include more secure energy supplies, reduced demand for conventional energy, a cleaner environment and the creation of jobs in new industries.

The legislation would provide a framework for national instruments and would fill a legislative gap, as EU strategies already exist for other areas of renewable energy. The committee specified that a clear definition should be provided for the forms of energy concerned. Member States would be required to agree on action plans, to be renewed every three years, to achieve their national targets. An EU-wide monitoring system, which would be valid in all Member States, should be developed in order to assess the EU's energy requirements for heating and cooling and to monitor the growth of the renewable share. Moreover, the Member States would have to ensure a clear legal framework for the authorisation, control and certification of the use of renewable forms of energy for heating and cooling, making sure that administrative charges are transparent, fair and non-discriminatory.

Financial incentives should be provided by the Member States, under the principle of subsidiarity, although national support schemes should in the end be phased out. Incentive mechanisms could include tax breaks, direct investment aid or regulatory measures (i.e. mandatory use of renewable energy systems for new buildings). MEPs stressed that such mechanisms should not result in any disproportionate increase in heating and cooling costs for the final consumer.

The committee also outlined a number of accompanying measures which the Member States should take: informing the public, inter alia by the publication of studies on the benefits to consumers; encouraging the public sector to give priority to heating and cooling from renewable energy sources as part of procurement policy; and giving due importance to renewable energy technologies in training. The EU, for its part, should encourage the use of the structural and cohesion funds to support and promote renewable energy for heating and cooling and ensure that eco-labels for heating and cooling systems are developed at European level.