Energy efficiency or doing more with less. Green Paper

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Alejo VIDAL-QUADRAS ROCA (EPP-ED, ES) in response to the Commission's Green Paper on energy efficiency. The report said that energy efficiency is the "largest, fastest and cheapest response to the challenges of energy security, rising and volatile energy prices and environmental concerns". It called for existing legislation in the field to be properly implemented and urged the Commission to pursue "a convincing enforcement policy". The Commission was also asked to provide clear and accessible information on the state of implementation of the EU energy directives and to produce monthly updates on its website.

The committee highlighted the many energy efficiency measures already in force, including directives on the energy performance of buildings, combined heat and power, eco-design, emissions trading and energy end-use efficiency. It pointed out that, if this EU legislation was fully implemented by the Member States, the EU would already be half way to meeting its target of saving 20% of energy-use by 2020, and therefore urged the Commission to speed up infringement procedures for Member States not yet complying.

The report called for the Commission's forthcoming Energy Efficiency Action Plan to set a reduction target based on the potential energy savings as evaluated in the Green Paper but taking into account the recent increase in energy prices. It drew attention to the fact that the oil price on which the energy savings target of 20% in the Green Paper was based is now significantly higher, resulting in a substantial increase in the cost-effectiveness of energy efficiency measures. The Action Plan should also set out differing energy efficiency scenarios in order to ascertain the implications for energy use, the energy mix and CO2 reduction.

The committee said that energy efficiency should be incorporated into EU agriculture policy as well as foreign policy. It also stressed the need for a framework directive for energy efficiency in transport, saying that the growth of transport, especially road transport, was one of the main obstacles to curbing Europe's energy demand. The Commission was urged inter alia to submit legislative proposals to achieve "(a) twice as fuel-efficient cars and vans, (b) a transfer of traffic from road and air to rail and water, and (c) more public transport".

Other recommendations included: the creation of an Energy Efficiency Fund to support energy efficiency products; new fiscal measures; the extension of energy efficiency labelling and other consumer information schemes; a European buildings initiative to coordinate upgrading energy standards for new buildings; the encouragement of investment in energy efficiency measures; and the replacement of old household appliances. Both Member States and EU institutions should set an example, with energy efficiency measures in the public sector - including a rethink of the multiple locations of Parliament itself. MEPs also believed that consumers must be clearly and adequately informed, and called for an EU-wide information and awareness-raising campaign on best practice in energy efficiency.