

Conventional energy sources and energy technology

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report of Mr. Herbert **REUL** (EPP-ED, DE) on conventional energy sources and energy technology drafted in response to the Commission's Communication entitled "Sustainable power generation from fossil fuels: aiming for near-zero emissions from coal after 2020".

Welcoming the Commission's communication on sustainable power production from fossil fuels, the Committee stresses that these forms of energy, like other conventional sources, make a major contribution to sustainability and security of supply, while at the same time improving export opportunities for EU producers;

Members stress the importance of diversifying energy sources in view of the increasing scarcity of resources, and believe that further improvements in the efficiency of fossil fuel power plant technology are essential, as are further improvements in the safety standards of nuclear power plants, the rapid development of nuclear fusion technology and corresponding increases in research funding;

They consider, furthermore, that the successful reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector can only be achieved on the basis of increased use of low-carbon technologies, such as nuclear energy, clean coal and renewables.

Energy technology: the draft report recommends strong investment in innovation and applied research and capital investment in intelligent energy networks and smart grid technologies. It calls on the EU, the Member States and businesses to redouble their efforts in R&D in the field of energy, particularly with a view to enhancing the efficiency of energy production and supply, reducing environmental consequences, improving the safety of existing technologies, developing storage techniques for renewables and developing new generations of nuclear reactors and new energy technologies, including nuclear fusion.

The Committee also recommends the forthcoming European Strategic Energy Technology Plan should favour technological developments that optimally exploit their potential in order to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. It also draws attention to the need to ensure that the most efficient available technology is used when new capacity is built and that greater use is made of cogeneration, district heating and cooling and industrial residual heat.

Fossil fuels: The Committee emphasises that fossil fuels will remain highly important to ensuring the EU's security of energy supply and stresses the value of natural gas as the fossil fuel with the lowest carbon content. It invites the Commission to submit rapidly a proposal for legislation on CCS so as to respond to the legal issues surrounding the storage and transportation of CO₂. The Commission is also called upon to lay down as soon as possible clear political guidelines for the further promotion of research into CCS technology, to explore ways in which CCS can be used in connection with commercial electricity generation and to submit proposals for avoiding inconsistencies between the application of CCS procedures and the emissions trading system.

The Committee also believes that it is important that CCS technology devices should be fitted to fossil fuel plants at the earliest practical opportunity. It has, however, noted that this technology is linked to losses of efficiency in power stations and thus calls for more research in this field.

Members also stress the significant impact of energy generation from biomass, the need for the EU to support synthetic fuels technologies and, with a view to the diversification of gas imports, the importance of natural gas.

The Commission is urged to carry out more extensive geological research aimed at finding new deposits of fossil fuels within the territory of the Member States and to launch information campaigns on CCS technologies.

Nuclear energy: the report emphasises that nuclear energy is indispensable if basic energy needs are to be met in Europe in the medium term. It also acknowledges the fact that nuclear energy is an important component of power supply in 15 of the 27 Member States, and thus for the Union as whole, providing one-third of the total EU electricity supply.

The report notes that nuclear energy is currently the largest low-carbon energy source in Europe and stresses its potential role in combating climate change. It also points out that nuclear energy generation is largely unaffected by any fluctuations in the price of uranium, since the cost of that fuel has little impact on the price of electricity. Lastly, it notes that the use of nuclear energy can create synergies with renewables, for example, by providing original methods for the effective and economic production of hydrogen or biofuels.

The Commission is invited to propose measures designed to maintain in the EU the high level of skills required if the nuclear energy option is to remain a viable one.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to make progress on the issue of final disposal in order to bring an end to the interim storage of waste close to the earth's surface and to support projects aimed at developing prototypes of fourth generation reactors. Lastly, Members recall that dozens of nuclear power plants are planned or being built worldwide, and that it is vital for the EU to be involved in their construction, both from the point of view of industrial strategy and in order to promote the most stringent possible safety principles throughout the world.