

DEVE-008

Brussels, 9 December 2002

**OPINION**

of the

Committee of the Regions

20 November 2002

on the

**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council**

**adopting a multiannual programme for action in the field of energy:**

**"Intelligent Energy for Europe" Programme (2003-2006)**

**(COM(2002) 162 final - 2002/0082 COD)**

**The Committee of the Regions,**

**HAVING REGARD TO** the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council adopting a multiannual programme for action in the field of energy: "Intelligent Energy for Europe" Programme (2003-2006) (COM(2002) 162 final – 2002/0082 (COD));

**HAVING REGARD TO** the decision of the Council of 6 May 2002 under Article 175(1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult it on this matter;

**HAVING REGARD TO** the decision taken by its Bureau on 12 March 2002 to instruct the Commission for Sustainable Development to draw up an opinion on this subject;

**HAVING REGARD TO** its opinion of 15 November 2001 on the Commission Green Paper: Towards a European strategy for energy supply security, CdR 38/2001 fin<sup>1</sup>;

**HAVING REGARD TO** the draft opinion adopted on 3 October 2002 by the Commission for Sustainable Development (CdR 187/2002 rev. 1 - rapporteur: **Mrs Agnès Durdu**, Mayor of Wincrange, L/ELDR);

adopted this opinion at its 47<sup>th</sup> plenary session of 20/21 November 2002 (meeting of 20 November) by a majority.

## 1. Views and recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

1. The CoR notes with satisfaction that the Commission had the first framework programme analysed by independent experts, and that on the basis of their conclusions and the experience acquired, and on the basis of Community and international requirements, the second multiannual programme has been redirected towards the desired objectives.

2. The CoR congratulates the authors of the proposal on the way they have given better structure to the participants' activities by limiting the Community intervention to four specific fields of action:

- SAVE: rational use of energy and demand management;
- ALTENER: new and renewable energy sources;
- STEER: energy aspects of transport;
- COOPENER: promotion at international level, particularly with the developing countries, of cooperation in the fields of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

3. The CoR takes the view that implementing the specified actions in these four specific fields will help the Community and Member States to achieve the desired objectives with regard to security of energy supply, competition, protecting the environment and slowing climate change.

4. The CoR congratulates the European Union on the financial support given to the second multiannual programme. The increase from €175 million to €215 million represents a significant increase in the funds available to the various participants.

5. The CoR takes the view that, by combining this financial increase with a list of fields of action eligible for subsidy, the actions undertaken will have a targeted and precise effect of reducing energy needs and increase the use of renewable energy sources.

6. The CoR is pleased to note that the European Union, through the COOPENER programme, is continuing its efforts to promote renewable energy sources and energy efficiency in the developing countries. The European Community thus demonstrates the seriousness of its international commitment. The CoR hopes that the European Union will be able to guide the developing countries effectively, and particularly help them to avoid the errors which have been made in Europe.

7. In the context of the present programme, the Commission reserves the right to call upon an implementing agency. Certain management tasks of the programme would be delegated to it. The Commission explains that if such an agency were not used, human resources at the Commission would need to be significantly increased. The CoR does not intend to criticise this approach to management of this matter, provided that the tasks involving an element of assessment to interpret political choices will remain a matter for the Commission and that the latter ensures rapid, effective and smooth cooperation between itself, the agency and the **regional and local** actors on the ground, all in the interests of the energy objectives.

8. Under Article 1 of the proposal the programme would contribute to three general objectives: security of supply, competitiveness and environmental protection. The same article states that the programme seeks to promote "an effective link between these

measures and actions carried out under other Community policies". Efforts must continue to make private consumers, and investors in general, more aware of energy policy. It should be constantly explained to them that economic utility goes hand in hand with the environmental need for healthy and intelligent management of all energy resources.

9. The proposed programme must operate in harmony with the other Community policies. The desired objective is endorsed by the CoR.

The harmful effects of energy consumption include pollution of food-producing areas and the surroundings in which we live. As a consequence, the health and well-being of people are at risk. Solving environmental issues leads to the emergence of new innovations and technologies and boosts employment. This is of great importance for inhabitants, municipalities and regions.

Many community policies, including the Intelligent Energy for Europe programme contribute to the EU's goal of sustainable development. The CoR recommends that more overt linkages between policies must be introduced. For instance, policies on the promotion of biofuels should be linked to the STEER programme.

10. The CoR is in favour of the "key actions" expressly provided for in Article 3 of the proposed programme, combining several specific areas and/or relating to certain Community priorities, for example in remote and peripheral regions.

The CoR calls on the Commission to consider whether targets for the consumption of renewable energies should be agreed for each programme. Targets could provide an effective measure of the contribution the programmes are making to meeting the EU's goal of 15% of total energy consumption to be renewable by 2010. Targets are an important mechanism to demonstrate the commitment of the EU to boosting the use of renewable energy in the light of the failure of the World Summit to agree such targets.

11. The CoR takes the view that local and regional authorities play a very important part in these key actions. As they are closest to the citizens, they will be able to serve as an example in the practical achievement of the objectives laid down for the proposed programme.
12. The Commission proposes to make an annual assessment of progress with the multiannual programme. The CoR endorses this initiative, as it will be the ideal way of recognising the imperfections in the system and adapting the necessary measures to achieve the desired results.

Brussels, 20 November 2002.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

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**Albert Bore**

**Vincenzo Falcone**

<sup>1</sup> OJ C 107, 3.5.2002, p. 13

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