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Climate Change / Transport / Energy

Position paper: Europe should lead the fight against global warming

Our objective is to avoid dangerous effects of climate change and to end Europe's reliance on fossil fuels and, even sooner, its dependence on nuclear power. The necessary energy revolution based on energy saving, renewables and the efficient use of energy represent the future for European societies. To give a strong signal to the outside world that Europe takes the lead in sustainable development, we propose to close down the last nuclear power stations in the European Union by 2020, and withdraw completely from oldfashioned energy sources, i.e. coal, petroleum and natural gas by 2050.

Most European countries are not yet complying with the internationally agreed obligations on climate protection under the Kyoto Protocol, and even though the trend of greenhouse gas emissions is downwards – the EU objective is an 8% reduction in 2008-2012 compared to 1990 – the EU has shown slight increases in greenhouse gas and CO2 emissions since 1999. As the Kyoto Protocol can only be a first step, the EU must develop and implement an ambitious domestic implementation plan towards the Kyoto target as well as a 30% greenhouse gas emissions reduction in 2020 as critical steps towards a complete withdrawal from fossil fuel in 2050. In addition, the EU must set a long-term global threshold of the temperatures not raising more than two degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. In doing so, forests sinks and other carbon sequestration have to be banned from climate change measures.

The establishment of a renewable energy based economy together with strong public service obligations will secure - not only a sustainable environment and the creation of jobs but also - from a competition point of view, create export opportunities for the industry which will be the first to jump into this "revolution".

Greening the energy and transport policies

Clearly, if we want to achieve this long term sustainable development objective, the European Union needs a revolutionary Community demand side oriented policy that promotes renewables and energy efficiency in all sectors of the economy, including through EU foreign development aid and internal structural aid. For this reason, we want to see an effective decoupling of transport and energy growth from economic growth as part of real demand side scenarios.

The forthcoming EU-wide emissions trading system due to start in 2005 will tackle part of the problem of CO2 industrial emissions, at least in the short term, but will leave out household and transport emissions. To that end we are campaigning for the implementation of an EU energy tax and the weak agreement recently reached in Council can only be one first step. Part of the yield from this tax should be used to support environmental and climate protection policies having positive social implications. In this context, all modes of transport need to be priced in order to reflect their environmental and social costs, in particular by the realisation of road pricing, connected with the possibility of cross-subsidies in favour af

more sustainable transport modes. The Swiss model for charging road freight transport can be considered as a model for the entire Alpine sensitive region and inspires the EU common transport policy. An end to the tax exemption on aviation fuel and on VAT for flight tickets must be put throughout Europe.

In addition of decoupling transport growth from economic growth, a more rational use of cars and trucks and improving services for intermodal mobility chains (walking-cycling-carsharing-collective/public transport) can lead to a more efficient society for its safety, climate protection, energy economy and public health. Speedlimits for cars at 30km/h in urban areas and at 100km/h on highways would contribute to safer ,quieter and less polluting mobility. The EU must also conceive a policy of transport prevention and intensify its efforts for a shift towards more energy efficient modes of transport. Improving the transport system with safety and social provisions could lead to the win win effect of energy saving and climate protection in this sector.

The current revision of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) infrastructures scheme must be based on prior economic and environmental strategic assessments aiming to promote European added value, reduce congestion and traffic volume growth, minimise external costs, and speed up sustainable economy and long-term employment. To this end, we believe that the TENs Commission's proposal adopted on October 1, 2003 has to be reviewed so that investments are first of all focused on the renewal of the existing lines (drama for Central, Eastern and Southern countries) before planning new ones, on the development of rails and waterways in a sustainable manner, on the connection between TENs networks and regional networks, and on urban congestion reduction schemes. Boosting these schemes, and in particular rail infrastructures, requires also adequate funds. A new EU Fund mainly for railway of at least 5 billions ? a year should be set up. This Fund could be financed also through the cross subsidising between road and rail. Cross-subsidising rules should apply to all Europe and not only to sensitive areas along the same corridor on which road toll is paid (Alpine transits basically), as proposed by the Commission.

Furthermore, in order to make Europe credible in terms of enhancing sustainable economy and labour, big money should not be allocated only to big infrastructures, but complementarily to natural resources sustainable management, SME development, sustainable energy schemes, human resources training and research. Europe needs such a "Marshall Plan" which has the same dignity of a TENs Plan.

Nuclear phase-out

The development and promotion of nuclear energy is a dreadful mistake. We stand for a European strategy of abandoning nuclear power by 2020. In 2004, 12 of the future 25 states of the EU will have no nuclear power stations, and five others have agreed to abandon nuclear energy. Therefore, the Euratom Treaty must be abolished by 2007, 50 years after its creation, in the context of the debates in the Convention and subsequent IGC. Only those provisions of the current Euratom Treaty that are still necessary (safety, heath and environment protection; safeguards and non-proliferation) should be included in the new European Constitution. Short term action is also needed to stop the extension of the Euratom loan ceiling.

All direct and indirect subsidies for nuclear industry shall be immediately abolished. Funding for the decommissioning and waste disposal of nuclear installations must instead be paid into a disposal fund under independent control. Every form of aid to help nuclear fission (such as the EPR) and fusion (such as ITER) technology survive and expand, and all European support for the nuclear industry, must be halted. Specifically, nuclear energy should no longer have a separate research and development program in the EU budget. The launch of a wide European campaign to get "1 million signatures against Euratom" should be organised.

We are campaigning for the rapid closure of the environment-polluting reprocessing plants in La Hague and Sellafield and for an end to the transport of nuclear material in Europe. What concerns the problem of

nuclear waste, transparent procedures with the highest possible standards and for wide-ranging grass-roots participation to deal with the problem need to be developed and implemented. We are firmly opposed to "nuclear tourism" outside the EU and to any attempt to soften the obligation to find final storage places in the EU Member States. We are also firmly opposed to any fundings for the development of the plutonium economy.

Phase-in of renewables and decentralised energy sytems

The future of Europe is dependent on the rapid expansion of decentralised and new renewable energy systems. Although the EU does not seem to be on track for the agreed doubling of the share of renewable energy by 2010, there are no real technological, commercial or resource limits constraigning the development of renewables. A mandatory target of 25% clean renewable energy by 2020 must be adopted. Furthermore, the establishment of individual target around for new renewable by 2020 must be set. However, targets alone have little value if they are not accompagnied by policies which achieve a level playing field in energy markets, elimiminate barriers and create an environment which attracts investment capital. The EU must remove these barriers.

In addition to the phase-in of renewables, the EU must reduce its energy consumption by 1% annually. In particular, cogeneration can play a key role in the decentralisation of the energy systems and for this reason, we need a Community Directive establishing legally binding targets on combined heat and power generation. Both at European and national level, our aim is to at least double the share of cogeneration by 2012 compared to 1999.

No more high voltage lines should be built for conventional electricity if we really want a sustainable decentralized electricity system. Furthermore, every electricity consumer should be in a position to have the right to know and the right to choose the type of electricity s/he will consume. Electricity bills, promotion material and all energy intensive goods, building and services should therefore be correctly and environmentally labelled.

No more oil and nuclear, also in hydrogen economy

Alongside power production, much more use must be made of the potential of renewables in the heating and transport fuel sectors. Here too we propose a bolder and more ambitious Community policy, based on a renewables energy economy. Hydrogen might play a central role here, but only if it is produced with renewables and not with fossil fuels and nuclear energy. R&D budget must therefore be oriented accordingly. In this context, we will organised a forum on "solar hydrogen".

Getting rid of oil will have a number of positive side-effects, like sparing the world from oil tanker disasters like the Erika and Prestige disaters. Most of all, a strategy of lasting peacekeeping in the Middle-East has to be linked to the end of the oil economy. Last but not least, we must do everything to eliminate already now the increasing likelihood of wars on natural resources (and especially oil) in the 21st century.

Fighting climate change: a concrete example of European Leadership

Next to its implications for the future of Europe's energy and transport policies, the fight against global warming has also general geopolitical implications. Due to the high dependency of the U.S. economy on fossile fuels, the control of energy resources, and especially oil fields, has been a major argument for the U.S. military intervention in Irak. With the decision in 2001 by the Bush U.S. administration not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, climate change policies have evolved from a purely environmental problem to a high-level political issue. The decision by Europe and the rest of the world to continue the negotiations and implement the protocol without the major emitter of CO2 has been an important symbol. With this, the Kyoto Protocol has become, next to the International Criminal Court, a symbol for multilateral solutions to

global problems. It is now very crucial to convince Russia to ratify to secure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.

A Greens / EFA internal position paper
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