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Disappointing Spring Summit

EU leaders make limited progress on European energy policy

Following the **adoption of weak conclusions on EU energy policy** at the Spring European Council, **Claude Turmes, vice-president of the Green group** in the European Parliament and former draftsman of the EU electricity liberalisation directive, said:

"It is a damning indictment of the European Council that EU leaders have chosen to pass the buck on the issue of Europe's malfunctioning energy markets. **EU consumers were cheated out of at least 15 billion euro in 2005 alone because of a lack of competitive energy markets**, yet the Summit has completely avoided the current energy market mess. All the benefits from the supposed liberalisation of gas and electricity markets are going to the pockets of a handful of energy companies and their shareholders.

"Given renewables targets were under fire from certain Member States, it is positive that the European Council acknowledged the need for concrete mid- and long-term commitments and agreed to a 15% target by 2015. However, **a more ambitious target of 20% for overall renewables use by 2020 would have helped** boost investor confidence in the upcoming technologies at this crucial time, with a number of large projects in the pipeline.

"It is seriously **regrettable that the Austrian Presidency has caved in to the pro-nuclear lobby**, spearheaded by France and the EU Commission. By **introducing conclusions on 'low emission technologies'**, the Summit is opening the door to sizeable funding for nuclear technology in the forthcoming research framework programme (FP7). Despite the hyperbole surrounding renewables, **most of the cash will go to nuclear energy** (1).

"We **welcome the call for a 20% rise in energy efficiency** and hope that the Commission and the Member States will match the rhetoric with real action in the EU energy efficiency action plan in 2006 and the national energy efficiency action plans in June 2007."

Linked to the discussion on EU energy policy, the main EU leaders declared:

J. M. Barroso, head of the European Commission: "I am delighted the leaders are backing our calls for an Energy policy, it makes sense to have a common strategy for Europe"

J. Chirac, France's President: "The construction of a Europe of energy (sic) cannot be confined to the liberalisation of markets. We must do everything to encourage the development of 'European champions', based on solid industrial ambition and not on a purely financial approach"

W. Schuessel, Austrian Chancellor and holder of the rotating EU presidency: "It is quite clear there is a general consensus ... that each country has the right to choose her energy mix, but nobody can be forced to use nuclear power plants"

A. Merkel, German Chancellor: "We can only have an internal market when electricity flows freely and

when we accept European champions and don't just think nationally"

Note:

(1) Yearly spending under the forthcoming FP7 2007-13 for nuclear research could be as high as 500 million euro/year whereas the total budget for efficiency and renewables might not even be 200 million euro/year.

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