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EU energy & climate policy

Greens energy & climate declaration following Commission's "Energy package"

Proposed energy package would undermine efforts to combat climate change

Statement of the Greens on the energy package proposed by the EU Commission
Berlin, 11 January 2007

The 'energy package', proposed by the European Commission, is a huge disappointment. The Commission acknowledges both climate change and security of supply as crucial challenges for our society but the package of weak measures it has proposed in response fails to offer a solution to these urgent problems. There is a big gap between the aim of the EU to take the leadership on climate protection issues and the measures it proposes. Other energy related problems, such as the scarcity of resources or the risks of nuclear power, are inadequately discussed or not mentioned at all.

The proposal is also a failure for the German presidency. The German government, which claims that energy and climate are priorities for its term, was significantly involved in the preparation of this energy package. The German government now has to use the next half year to push for a stronger EU climate and energy security policy to make up for this inauspicious start.

- The EU fails to live up to its claims to be a leader on climate change. **The greenhouse gas reduction target** of a mere 20% by 2020 is not enough. To limit global warming to 2°C a reduction **target of 30% is imperative**. Making EU targets conditional on the reductions in other countries is a cop out.
- The most important and, at the same time, most cost-effective contribution to climate protection is **saving energy.** There is no shortage of rhetoric from the Commission on energy efficiency and energy saving, however, the concrete measures on this key area are lacking in the proposed strategy. Failure to reach the target of a 20% reduction in energy consumption by 2020 would make it impossible to achieve all other climate targets. The efficiency action plan has to be complemented by concrete binding measures (such as labelling, TopRunner) and binding national targets for improving efficiency. We must improve efficiency by 3-4% annually.
- In many EU countries, **renewable energies** already make a substantial contribution to climate protection and energy security. Renewables developed from being a niche technology in the electricity sector to become an important economic sector in their own right and this development has the potential to continue. There is a strong need for sectoral targets to broaden the growth of renewables across all Member States and to the other energy sectors, such as heating and transport. The EU Commission must further develop the directive on renewable electricity and adopt the promised directive on heating and cooling. 25% of electricity, heating and fuel should come from renewable sources by 2020.

- The proposals for the development of the energy market represent a serious weakening of the Commission's stance to date. **Ownership unbundling is crucial** to enable new companies to enter the market, which is key for the proper functioning of the market. The idea to leave grid management up to an 'independent system operator' will enable the big energy companies to defend their oligopolies. A third directive on market liberalisation is needed.
- This strategy is another **attempt of the EU Commission to greenwash nuclear energy**. The chapter on nuclear is typically imbalanced, with no mention of the risks of nuclear power, despite the stark reminders from the Forsmark reactor in Sweden last year. The threat of nuclear proliferation and the growing danger of international terrorism are similarly ignored. Instead, the Commission has set out unrealistic economic estimates on Generation IV nuclear reactor technology. Europe does not need more nuclear propaganda or new nuclear subsidies. Instead a conference of the Member States should be convened to end the privileges for nuclear energy through EURATOM.
- The Commission tries to commit Europe to an energy mix of fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Following this path would jeopardise European energy security, increasing Europe's dependency on politically instable regions will grow. The proposal to construct new coal power plants runs counter to the goal of combating climate change. No new coal power plants without carbon capture technology should be allowed. Taking into account the variety of open questions regarding the technology of sequestration and the long-term storage of CO2, the Commission cannot assume as a fact that CO2-free power plants will be at a market stage by 2020. This technology cannot be a part of current investment plans.
- Despite the high dependency on oil imports in **the transport sector** and its importance in terms of climate change 70% of the oil imports are used in the transport sector, which also accounts for 30% of the CO2 emissions the Commission proposes no alternative to our oil. There is still no binding target for the energy consumption of cars even though the voluntary commitment of the car industry has obviously failed. It is wrong to say that biofuels are the only way to reduce oil dependency in the transport sector. We need measures in different areas: fuel efficiency of engines and alternative technologies have to be improved; the external costs of transport must be internalised, for example by harmonised taxation (kerosene tax for airlines); there should be an expansion of road tolls for all trucks (>3,5 t) on all streets; aviation and shipping should be brought into the Kyoto protocol and the European emission trading scheme. A massive development of the environmentally friendly railway transport could save a lot of energy and emissions.

The Greens are convinced that Europe will only be able to fulfil its promise of leadership on climate policy if it gets tougher on targets. **Europe has to focus its efforts on improving energy efficiency and savings and promoting renewables instead of relying on nuclear energy and fossil fuels,** as the Commission proposes.

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MEP=Member European Parliament
MdL=Member regional Parliament

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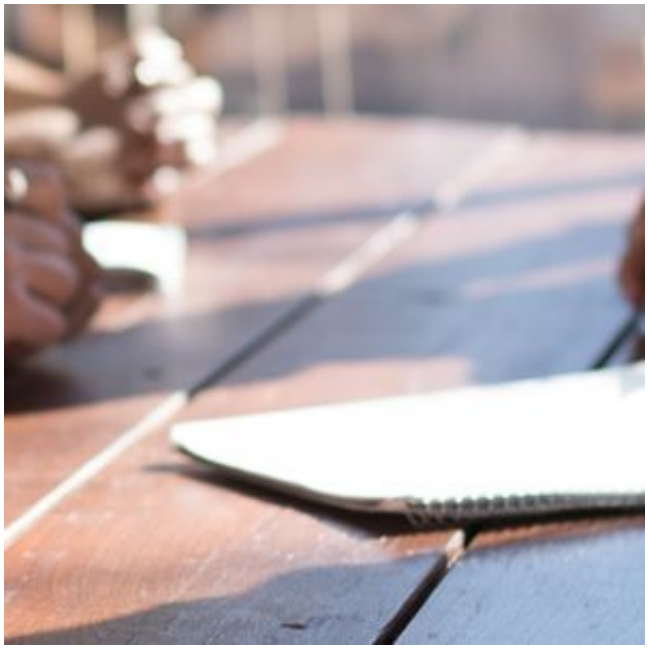
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Heads of national delegations in the GREENS/EFA Group

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