II

(Preparatory Acts)

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Proposal for a Council decision adopting a multiannual framework programme for actions in the energy sector (1998-2002) and connected measures [Proposal for a Council decision adopting a multiannual framework programme for actions in the energy sector (1998-2002), Proposal for a Council decision adopting a multiannual framework programme for the promotion of renewable energy sources in the Community (1998-2002), Proposal for a Council decision adopting a multiannual programme for the promotion of energy efficiency (1998-2002), Proposal for a Council decision adopting a multiannual programme of technological actions promoting the clean and efficient use of solid fuels (1998-2002)]'

(98/C 315/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the proposal for Council decision adopting a multiannual framework programme for actions in the energy sector (1998-2002) and connected measures [1];

having regard to the decision taken by the Council on 4 February 1998 to consult the Committee of the Regions voluntarily on this matter, under the first paragraph of Article 198 C of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

having regard to the decision on 12 March 1998 by its Bureau to direct Commission 4 for spatial planning, urban issues, energy, the environment to prepare an opinion;

having regard to the draft opinion (CdR 56/98 rev.) adopted unanimously under the urgency procedure by Commission 4 on 22 April 1998 (rapporteur: Mr Loke Mernizka),

adopted by a majority the following Opinion at its 24th plenary session on 15 and 16 July 1998 (meeting of 16 July).

[1] COM(97) 550 final.

1. **Introduction**

1.1. The Council has asked the European Commission [1] to assess the coordination of all relevant programmes in the energy sector before the end of 1997 and by the end of 1997 to present a communication on all Community programmes with implications for energy policy.

1.2. The Council has also asked the Commission to present proposals for improving transparency and coordination, as well as a framework programme for energy policy.

1.3. The Commission communication 'An overall view of energy policy and actions' [2] is a first step in the requested comprehensive review of energy-related programmes.

1.4. The Commission adopted the present multiyear framework programme in November 1997 and presented it to the Energy Council on 8 December 1997. The Energy Ministers took note of the programme and referred it to the Council bodies for further examination.

2. **Content of the multiyear framework programme**

2.1. The Commission proposes that the framework programme should run from 1998-2002. This programme has three priority objectives:

— security of energy supplies;

— competitiveness;

— compatibility between trends on the energy market and environmental objectives.

2.2. The framework programme is to comprise six specific horizontal actions or thematic programmes, funded as follows.

	ECU million
— Energy markets: analyses and monitoring	7,8
— International cooperation in the energy sector (Synergy)	36,4
— Promotion of renewable energy sources (Alterner II)	81,1
— Encouragement of energy efficiency (SAVE II)	68,4
— Market penetration of clean technologies for solid fuels (Carnot)	4,1
— Nuclear safety	2,6
Total	200,4

The above are intended to be maximum allocations for the duration of the framework programme; they are to cover the cost of the actual measures, as well as staff and administrative costs.

2.3. The programme is to facilitate management and promote a transparent and cost-effective use of resources, thus permitting more effective use of the available budget.

2.4. The Commission is to be helped manage the framework programme by a single consultative committee comprising representatives of the Member States and chaired by a representative of the Commission. The Commission will take this committee's opinions into account as far as possible.

2.5. Every year the Commission is to assess the progress of the framework programme and related specific programmes, as well as its management, generally efficacy and contribution to the objectives of Community policy, priorities and adequacy of budget resources. The Commission is to propose any changes which may be necessary.

2.6. During the third year of the programme, the Commission is to ask independent external experts to carry out a full evaluation of the Community actions carried out under the framework programme. The Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will be informed of these experts' findings.

3. **General assessment of the multiyear framework programme**

3.1. The COR welcomes the introduction of a framework programme for energy measures. It expects a better integrated, more transparent and more efficient system to allow an appreciable rationalization of all activities and programmes, simplification of procedures and harnessing of synergistic effects.

[1] Council Resolution of 8 July 1996 on the White Paper 'An Energy Policy for the European Union' (OJ C 224, 1.8.1996) and Council Regulation (EC) 701/97 amending a programme to promote international cooperation in the energy sector — Synergy programme (OJ L 104, 22.4.1997).

[2] COM(97) 167 final of 23 April 1997.

3.2. The COR shares the view that an efficient energy policy requires integration of measures and a focus on secure supply, competitiveness and environmental protection. However, it is concerned to point out that the Commission does not have responsibility for energy policy under the European treaties, which means that all measures must be consistent with the principle of subsidiarity.

3.3. The COR endorses the objective of maximizing coherence, which requires that decision-making processes be very efficient. It therefore welcomes the plan to set up a single committee to support the implementation of the programme. However, it feels that this committee should also be given decision-taking powers and be assisted by technical committees (panels of experts) for the specific programmes, with clear division of responsibilities. The COR advocates involvement of regional and local authorities in these decision-making processes.

3.4. The COR fundamentally supports a higher level of funding for energy priorities. It sees renewables (Altener programme) and energy efficiency (SAVE programme) as priorities, since these provide the greatest potential for creating jobs and protecting the environment.

3.5. The COR also supports a regular (annual) evaluation of activities and comprehensive review by independent experts of the implementation of Community actions under the framework programme. This will permit prompt adjustment to new developments.

3.6. The COR welcomes the setting up of a network of the directors-general concerned. This will establish a link with programmes of other directorates-general that are also receiving funding for activities in the energy sector, thus further improving consistency and transparency (cf. 4.4.4).

4. Content and assessment of the different parts of the multiyear framework programme

4.1. *Multiyear programme of studies, analyses, forecasts and other related work in the energy sector*

4.1.1. A programme of regular monitoring of market and energy trends is to be developed in liaison with the Member States, so that energy policy decisions can be taken on the basis of a shared analysis.

4.1.2. The COR recognizes the importance of sound data for decisions about energy policy, and it therefore supports these initiatives as a matter of principle. However, it points in particular to the need to work closely with the Member States and use the abundant available data in order to maximize efficiency and avoid duplication of effort.

4.2. *Multiyear programme to promote international cooperation in the energy sector — Synergy*

4.2.1. This programme is to help define, formulate and implement the energy policy of third countries, to promote industrial cooperation between the Community and third countries and to improve coordination of the Community's external activities in the energy field.

4.2.2. This is an existing programme that the Commission has asked to be extended as part of the present framework programme, initially until 31 December 1998. The Energy Ministers have accepted the Commission's proposal and agreed to earmark ECU 5 million for 1998. ECU 7 million have been earmarked for the 1998 multiyear framework programme, increasing to ECU 7,57 million in 2002.

4.2.3. The COR welcomes the objectives of the Synergy programme and the extension of the programme to 31 December 2002. It considers an appropriation of ECU 5 million for 1998 and small increments for the years 1999 to 2002 to be adequate.

4.3. *Multiyear programme for the promotion of renewable energy sources in the Community — Altener II*

4.3.1. The Altener programme is designed to promote the use of environment-friendly energy sources. Altener II extends Altener I measures, and provides for new measures to facilitate the market penetration of renewables and the implementation, monitoring and supervision of these sources.

4.3.2. The COR sees this programme as a particularly important part of the multiyear framework programme for the future.

4.3.3. The COR refers to its opinion of 18 September 1997 [1] as regards the details of the programme.

4.4. *Multiyear programme for the promotion of energy efficiency — SAVE II*

4.4.1. The SAVE II programme was adopted by the European Council of December 1996 as one of the three

[1] OJ C 379, 15.12.1997, p. 63.

most important Union-wide programmes for promoting energy efficiency. It is the only Community programme that is exclusively devoted to improving energy efficiency.

As well as studies, measures to encourage exchanges of experience and specific measures to improve energy management, the programme supports sector-specific pilot projects to speed up investment in energy efficiency.

4.4.2. The COR welcomes the proposed extension of the SAVE II programme until the year 2002, since this programme is one of the most important Community instruments and can make a noticeable contribution to reducing CO_2 emissions.

4.4.3. The COR thinks it appropriate that the SAVE II programme — together with Altener II — should be a key part of the energy framework programme. In its view, this also justifies the substantial increase in funding.

4.4.4. The COR considers there to be a pressing need for close links with other Community programmes that directly promote improvements in energy efficiency (especially Joule and Thermie), in order to avoid overlaps and take advantage of synergistic effects (cf. 3.6).

4.5. *Multiyear programme of technological actions promoting the clean and efficient use of solid fuels — Carnot*

4.5.1. This programme provides for measures to promote the creation of an information network and foster strategic industrial cooperation. It does not provide for any specific RTD measures.

4.5.2. Owing to their long-term availability, solid fuels will continue to make an important contribution to covering future energy needs within and outside the Community. Worldwide efforts to reduce associated emissions of harmful substances hinge on the efficiency of the energy conversion techniques used.

4.5.3. The COR considers the promotion of clean and efficient technologies to be particularly important. It sees an urgent need for additional efforts to improve techniques, to step up cooperation and to obtain more information on markets and technologies. It therefore welcomes the multiyear programme and its incorporation into the energy framework programme.

4.6. *Multiyear actions concerning nuclear safeguards and transport of radioactive materials*

4.6.1. The purpose of this programme is to support industrial cooperation on the transport of radioactive materials and on training of safeguards experts in the central and eastern European countries and new independent states.

4.6.2. Different parts of the EU have diverging — and sometimes opposing — views on the use of nuclear energy. However, they agree on the need for very high safety standards worldwide in this sensitive area, in view of its global dimension. The COR therefore welcomes the incorporation of existing activities into a multiyear programme which will form part of the energy framework programme.

Brussels, 16 July 1998.

The Chairman

of the Committee of the Regions

Manfred DAMMEYER