

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

P R E S S R E L E A S E

5594/82 (Presse 29)

759th meeting of the Council

- Energy -

Brussels, 16 March 1982

President: Mr Etienne KNOOPS,
State Secretary for Energy
of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Etienne KNOOPS
State Secretary for Energy

Germany:

Mr Dieter von WURZEN
State Secretary,
Federal Ministry of Economic
Affairs

France:

Mr Edmond HERVE
Minister delegate to the
Ministry of Industry with
responsibility for Energy

Italy:

Mr Enrico NOVELLINI
State Secretary,
Ministry of Industry

Netherlands:

Mr J.C. TERLOUW
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister for Economic Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Poul NIELSEN
Minister for Energy

Greece:

Mr A. PEAPONIS
Minister for Industry and Energy

Ireland:

Mr Andrew O'ROURKE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Luxembourg:

Mr Josy BARTHEL
Minister for Energy

United Kingdom:

Mr John MOORE
Parliamentary
Under-Secretary of State
for Energy

Commission:

Viscount Etienne DAVIGNON
Vice-President

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SITUATION OF ENERGY SUPPLIES

The Council examined the current picture on the energy market. It found that, according to the Commission's figures, the 1980 falls in energy consumption (- 4.2%) and in the demand for petroleum products (- 8%) had continued in 1981 (- 3.9% and - 8.3% respectively) (*). It also noted the fall in the world market price for petroleum, and the level of stocks.

The Council agreed that the situation should not lead to any relaxation of the efforts to use energy more efficiently and to diversify supplies.

Although the fall in consumption was partly due to changes in the consumption structure and to more efficient use of energy, it was also partly due to a decline in economic activity and an economic up-turn could trigger an increase in the demand for energy.

The Council therefore remained convinced of the need not only for further progress towards attaining the objectives which the Community has set itself, which were to restructure demand in order to achieve more efficient use of energy, and to develop energy sources other than oil, and again to keep a constant watch on the results obtained by the Member States in these fields.

(*) provisional figures

ENCOURAGEMENT OF INVESTMENT IN THE RATIONAL USE OF ENERGY

The Council held an initial exchange of views on the Commission communication concerning investment in the rational use of energy.

The Council examined with interest the Commission document containing a useful analysis of the policies adopted and measures taken by the Member States in their efforts to attain the Community's objective, and of the difficulties and obstacles encountered in their attempts to use energy more rationally.

The Council agreed to encourage moves towards the attainment of the Community's objectives.

The Council accordingly instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine in detail the draft Council recommendation to the Member States which was appended to the Commission communication, giving due weight to the views expressed within the Council, in order that decisions could be taken at the next meeting of the Council.

The Council noted that the Commission was soon to submit specific proposals on the action which public authorities could take to encourage further progress on certain selected types of investment in the energy field, which the Commission considered to be especially urgent.

THE NUCLEAR ASPECTS

The Council examined with great interest the Commission's communication concerning the nuclear aspects of the energy strategy; this document offers a comprehensive approach which could serve as a basis for a more detailed analysis of the problems arising in this field.

The Council decided to make a more thorough examination of these issues at its next meeting and instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to prepare the ground.

ROLE FOR SOLID FUEL IN THE COMMUNITY'S ENERGY STRATEGY

The Council examined a Commission communication on the role solid fuel could play in a Community energy strategy.

The Council recognized the outstanding importance of solid fuel in the diversification of primary energy sources.

The Council asked the Commission to consider the matter further in order that at its next meeting, the Council could continue its discussion of the matter.

It instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine the Commission's proposals in the light of the day's discussions.

NATURAL GAS

The Council noted the growing contribution which natural gas was likely to make towards reducing the Community's dependence on oil and more broadly towards the diversification of supplies.

The Council also noted that the Commission was to carry out studies which would serve as a basis for appropriate proposals on the measures to be taken to strengthen the security of the Community's supplies of natural gas.

ENERGY PRICING

1. The Council is aware of the need for Member States to develop gradually a common approach on price formation in accordance with the Council's conclusions of 3 December 1981.
2. The Council considers that government policies must aim to reduce gradually the artificial obstacles which prevent reliable information from reaching the market.
3. The Council would encourage the Commission's efforts to improve price transparency, wherever necessary, and asks the Commission to report back on the results of these efforts.
4. The Council asks the Commission to examine pricing policies, sector by sector, for the purpose of ensuring that they conform to the principles adopted by the Council and, if appropriate, to submit to it proposals based on the results of that examination.

LIMITED SHORTAGE OF OIL

The Council noted that the other industrialized countries had adopted measures similar to those contemplated by the Community and had undertaken to implement, if circumstances so required, the procedure and measures to cope with a limited oil shortage, as agreed by the Council on 27 October 1981.

It also noted, in this connection, the Commission's intention to submit in due course, and as agreed on 27 October 1981, a report on the level and use of stocks.

The Council invited the Member States to endeavour to maintain, in 1982, stocks of each category of petroleum product specified in Council Directive 68/414/EEC at a level equal to at least 90 days of the average daily internal consumption recorded in 1980.

INFORMATION ON THE ENERGY CONSUMPTION OF HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

The Council looked at the last remaining reservations on the three draft Directives applying the Directive on the indication by labelling of the energy consumption of domestic appliances to:

- electric washing machines;
- electric dishwashers with cold water supply only;
- electric refrigerators, frozen food cabinets, freezers and their combinations.

The Council agreed that talks would be held with the delegations involved in order that an overall agreement could be reached and the Directives adopted swiftly.

Bruxelles, le 17 mars 1982
Note BIO(82)118 aux Bureaux Nationaux
cc. aux membres du Groupe du Porte-Parole

CONSEIL ENERGIE du 16.3.82 (W. Helin)

La situation sur le marche petrolier en particulier, qui se caracterise par une baisse sensible de la demande et des prix du petrole ne doit pas etre mal interpretee: la Communaute doit maintenir et poursuivre son effort de diversification en matiere d approvisionnement energetique et donc reduire sa dependance a l egard du petrole importe. Elle doit egalement continuer a etre plus economie en energie.

Tel est le principal message politique que le Vice-President Davignon a fait adopter mardi par les Ministres des Dix responsables de l energie.

"Nous nous trouvons dans une situation", a-t-il dit, "ou tous les signes exterieurs pourraient nous faire croire que tout va pour le mieux: il y a trop de petrole sur le marche et les prix suivent une courbe descendante". M. Davignon a cite deux raisons principales pour lesquelles cette apparente tranquillite est tout a fait trompeuse:

1. Nous ne savons pas, quelle est la part exacte des efforts de diversification et d economie d energie dans la chute de la consommation de petrole en particulier et quelle est la part qui revient en fait a la recession economique.

S il est vrai que la Communaute a fait un effort reel de diversification et d economie d energie, le probleme fondamental demeure, a savoir notre dependance a l egard du petrole importe.

2. La situation du marche petrolier en particulier est preoccupante. Les stocks petroliers sont en diminution et si cela se poursuit la Communaute dans son ensemble pourrait se trouver, au debut de l hiver, avec des stocks (117 jours de consommation) qui atteindraient un des niveaux les plus bas jamais enregistres. Or, ajoute M. Davignon, si dans une telle situation une legere reprise economique intervient, et que l hiver de 1982 soit rigoureux ou encore que les pays de l OPEP decident d une action quelconque sur le marche, le risque est grand que la Communaute connaisse une troisieme fois une flambee des prix petroliers.

Ce serait intolerable et donc, a conclu M. Davignon, il est plus que jamais essentiel que la Communaute reste vigilante et qu'elle ne relache pas son effort d investissement pour reduire sa dependance a l egard du petrole.

Attention: Nous vous envoyons par courrier deux fiches avec des donnees factuelles sur les stocks et les prix du petrole.

Les investissements dans le domaine de l utilisation rationnelle de l energie

Le debat d orientation que les Ministres ont mene mardi a ce sujet a ete tres positif: ils ont apprecie surtout le fait que la Commission Europeenne leur a presente un document qui contient une serie d actions concretes. Un premier "paquet" d actions sera tres certainement approuve a l occasion du Conseil du mois de juillet, c est l engagement que les Ministres ont pris hier. Rappelons dans les grandes lignes que la question des investissements constitue un des volets principaux de la strategie energetique que la Commission a elaboree. En effet ces investissements doivent permettre de reduire la pression qu exerce sur l economie europeenne une dependance excessive a l egard du pétrole. Que ce soit dans l industrie, dans les transports ou tout simplement dans l usage prive d energie, les experts jugent qu un important potentiel d economies et de meilleure utilisation d energie reste inexploite. Ils evaluent ce potentiel a quelque 15 a 20 % des besoins totaux en energie a l horizon de 1990. Cela implique bien entendu, un rythme plus soutenu d investissement que celui que nous avons connu jusqu a present.

Plus grande transparence des prix de l energie

Malgre certaines divergences de vues entre pays de la Communaute a ce sujet le Conseil partage le point de vue de la Commission que les Dix doivent progressivement aborder de maniere commune la politique en matiere de formation des prix de l energie. Dans une declaration a l issue du Conseil on peut lire notamment que "les politiques gouvernementales doivent viser a reduire a terme et de maniere progressive les obstacles artificiels qui empêchent le marche de recevoir des indications fiables". Les Dix ont demande a la Commission dans ce contexte d examiner les politiques des prix secteur par secteur et de lui soumettre eventuellement des propositions concretes. /

Gaz naturel

Politiquement important est l engagement des Dix par lequel ils reconnaissent l utilite du gaz naturel comme moyen de reduire la dependance petroliere et l existence d un interet commun a renforcer la securite des approvisionnements. A ce dernier sujet - ceci off the record - on notera que les Dix ont repris une serie de suggestions de la Commission en matiere de securite des approvisionnements:

- poursuite de l exploration de gaz naturel en vue d accroître les reserves connues et les possibilites nouvelles de production interieure
- accroissement de la diversification des sources d approvisionnement pour les importations en provenance de pays tiers

(suite gaz naturel)

- recherche et developpement dans le domaine de la production de gaz naturel de substitution
- utilisation optimale des contrats interruptibles avec les consommateurs interesses
- capacites de stockage de gaz naturel appropriees
- niveau satisfaisant de capacite de production
- mise en place, a l interieur de la Communaute, de reseaux de transport adequats entre les Etats membres.

Mesures en cas de penurie limitee de petrole

Les Dix ont principalement repris la proposition de la Commission a savoir, d imposer, pour 1982, le maintien de stocks, pour chaque categorie de produits, d au moins 90 jours de la consommation enregistree en 1980, annee ou la consommation etait nettement plus importante.

Volet nucleaire

Ici aussi on notera un element politique important: Les pays de la Communaute qui n ont pas opte pour le nucleaire a ce stade (Danemark, Irlande, Pays Bas et Grece) ont toutefois declare qu ils pouvaient partager les vues exprimees par la Commission europeenne. Le principal message de la Commission est qu il ne faut pas, comme on l a trop fait dans le passe, considerer que le "nucleaire" est un chapitre a part mais bien au contraire que le volet nucleaire s inscrit dans l ensemble de la strategie energetique de la Communaute. M. Davignon a souligne que pour eviter les malentendus, il est evident qu il considere, comme de nombreux pays membres, que la politique d information au public releve de l autorite nationale. Le role de la Commission, a-t-il dit, est d essayer de comprendre pourquoi certaines oppositions se manifestent a l egard du nucleaire et de mettre les donnees (sondages d opinion, ouvrages scientifiques etc.) a la disposition des Etats Membres. La Commission n a nullement l intention de mener une campagne ou une action de sensibilisation, a conclu M. Davignon.

Amities,
W. Helin COMEUR

