

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on:

- the 'Green Paper on greenhouse gas emissions trading within the European Union', and
- the 'Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on EU policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: Towards a European Climate Change Programme (ECCP)'

(2001/C 22/09)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the Green Paper on greenhouse gas emissions trading within the European Union and the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on EU policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions: Towards a European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) (COM(2000) 87 final and COM(2000) 88 final);

having regard to the decision of its Bureau of 12 April 2000 which directs Commission 4 — Spatial Planning, Urban Issues, Energy and Environment — to draw up the relevant opinion;

the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on Climate change and energy, 18 September 1997, CdR 104/97 fin⁽¹⁾;

having regard to the Protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions adopted at the 3rd Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP3) held in Kyoto on 1-10 December 1997;

having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Commission White Paper: 'Energy for the future: renewable sources of energy' (COM(97) 599 final), 16 July 1998, CdR 57/98 fin⁽²⁾;

having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on Transport and CO₂ — Developing a Community approach, 11 March 1999, CdR 230/98 fin⁽³⁾;

having regard to the opinion on Preparing for Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, adopted on 18 November 1999, CdR 295/99 fin⁽⁴⁾;

having regard to the draft opinion (CdR 189/2000 rev 1) adopted by Commission 4 on 7 July 2000, for which the rapporteur was Mr Penttilä (FIN, PES),

adopted the following opinion at its 35th plenary session on 20 and 21 September 2000 (meeting of 21 September).

Views and recommendations of the Committee of the Regions**1. The Communication entitled Towards a European Climate Change Programme**

1.1. All relevant stakeholders must be consulted and included in the planning and implementation of climate programmes and strategies.

1.2. The EU's new climate change programme should consider local and regional authorities as a category of their own, particularly with regard to energy and transport issues.

1.3. The European Union must initiate a dialogue with local and regional authorities on greenhouse gas emissions and provide support for their climate protection efforts. With regard to the bodies proposed by the Commission, the Committee of the Regions proposes that:

- the Steering Committee maintain close contact with the Committee of the Regions while carrying out its work on the European climate change programme;

- regional and local authorities are represented on the energy working groups (groups 2 and 3) and the transport working group (group 4);

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 379, 15.12.1997, p. 11.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 315, 13.10.1998, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 198, 14.7.1999, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 57, 29.2.2000, p. 81.

- a local and regional authority working group is included among the coordination working groups to be set up at a later date.

1.4. The Community's Member States should quickly reach agreement on a minimum level for energy taxation. This is of crucial importance to the implementation of national climate strategies.

1.5. After the Hague Conference the European Community and its Member States must ratify the Kyoto Protocol and help to ensure that a sufficient number of countries sign up to it, both in terms of the actual number of signatory countries and the quantity of greenhouse gases they produce.

1.6. Increasing the proportion of renewables in motor fuels and energy production as well as promoting combined heat and electricity generation is essential. Such measures also help to increase the Community's energy self-sufficiency and support other Community policies, such as agriculture, employment and structural policy.

1.7. Increasing energy saving and improving energy efficiency are often more cost effective ways of reducing emissions. Regional and local authorities have a significant role to play in this respect, as they are responsible for construction and infrastructure planning and the granting of permits as well as public procurement. Regional and local authorities are also responsible for public transport provision, waste-water treatment and waste management.

1.8. The Community and its Member States must make determined efforts to support voluntary arrangements and provide information on emissions reduction at the local and regional level. These might include climate protection campaigns and energy audits, both of which are crucial to achieving the emissions reduction objectives.

2. **The Green Paper on greenhouse gas emissions trading within the European Union**

2.1. Trading emission rights or joint projects between industrialised and developing countries may be a useful

complement to the national measures of industrialised countries, helping them to achieve their national climate protection targets, but they must not be a substitute for national efforts. Efforts at home must be the main means of achieving reduction obligations in the industrialised countries. The Commission proposal on launching an emissions trading scheme within the Community on an experimental basis in anticipation of the Kyoto Protocol deadline of 2008 is sensible. An experimental approach would be appropriate as the trading rules are still incomplete and there has been no experience to date of international emissions trading.

2.2. Participation in emissions trading trials should not be restricted to certain sectors or gases. The most important requirement for the emissions trading objectives is reliable information on operators' greenhouse gas emissions and their development. This involves laying down criteria to ensure that emissions balance sheets are comparable and comprehensible.

2.3. During the trial efforts need to be made to ensure that sufficient quantities of emissions are placed on the market for both purchase and sale.

2.4. Consideration should be given to including incineration of waste by municipalities or regions as part of the emissions trading trials.

2.5. Municipal energy efficiency, particularly with regard to the reduction of transport-related carbon dioxide emissions, should also be included among the emissions trading objectives.

2.6. Emissions trading can only work if strict sanctions are applied for non-compliance with the rules.

2.7. Emissions trading should be developed further so as to increase public and business awareness of climate protection and to create an incentive for innovative business strategies in pursuit of cost-effective ideas.

Brussels, 21 September 2000.

*The President
of the Committee of the Regions*
Jos CHABERT