

Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers" COM (2015) 339 final;

Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Launching the public consultation process on a new energy market design" COM (2015) 340 final

FINAL DOCUMENT

The Committee on Economic Activities of Italy's Chamber of Deputies,

having examined, pursuant to Rule of Procedure 127 of the Chamber of Deputies, the two Communications of the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Launching the public consultation process on a new energy market design" (COM (2015) 340); and "Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers" (COM (2015) 339),

Whereas:

both Communications are consistent with the objective of the Energy Union, which is to adopt a comprehensive, cohesive and cross-sectoral European-level strategy to address certain elements that have often hitherto been addressed separately and by Member States acting alone;

one of the main objectives that the Energy Union has set out to achieve is to strengthen consumer rights by promoting the self-consumption of renewable energy (which can result in significant savings on energy bills), greater disclosure regarding terms and conditions, and the streamlining of the procedures for switching suppliers;

lower costs for end-users may also be obtained by affording them direct access to real-time information on consumption through the introduction of so-called "smart" meters. With information on their consumption to hand, end-users can then modify their behaviour to their own significant economic benefit. In this regard, Italy is in a position of advantage, which should be leveraged at a European level. On the other hand, an increase in decentralised energy production from small-scale renewable sources will also require work for the adaptation of power grids;

we are therefore fully supportive of the Commission's goal of enhancing and modernising the grids, also for the sake of greater energy security, improving interconnections, and establishing an effective EU-wide system of cross-border intra-day trading;

conscious that the present final document needs to be transmitted promptly to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue, as well as to the European Parliament and the Council;

does hereby express a favourable opinion, with the following observations:

- a) All available resources, including those from the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Fund for Strategic Investment, and those released by the EIB, must be appropriated to the

modernisation and interconnection of grids and to their adaptation to receiving energy generated from decentralised renewable sources, and this must apply in particular to Italy;

- b)* The European Union should accelerate the process of harmonising the energy balancing markets, also with a view to mitigating the discontinuity that characterises the production of energy from renewable sources, possibly through the adoption of specific legal measures;
- c)* As the European Commission has indicated, work needs to be done to simplify the complex and onerous administrative and authorisation procedures that continue to act as a significant barrier both to the uptake of small-scale projects for self-consumption and to the rewarding of flexible consumption through dynamic pricing that varies according to time of day and peaks in overall demand;
- d)* Every possible step must be taken to put consumers in a position to make informed and proactive choices by providing them with as much information as possible, by encouraging the use of technologies such as smart meters, and by supporting non-discriminatory access to data and information on consumer energy consumption, which will encourage a more active type of demand and refine the system for matching supply and demand on retail markets;
- e)* With respect to pricing, we welcome the balanced approach taken so far to changing the enhanced protection system, an approach that allows for a longer phase-in period that will, at the same time, extend opportunities for users to pick and choose;
- f)* All coordinating initiatives for regional energy security must be strengthened and applied through policies for the integration and interconnection of infrastructure. In furtherance of this, particular attention needs to be dedicated to the Mediterranean area, which is inadequately represented in the Commission's proposals, but is of strategic importance for Italy;
- g)* In particular, Member States need to coordinate their approach to revising their subsidy schemes for renewable energy to avoid market distortion, and promote increasingly unified policies to encourage research and technological innovation within the EU, including the setting up of innovative systems for the storage of energy produced from renewable sources;
- h)* The scope of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) should be extended so that its role is no longer limited to merely coordinating national authorities, and its legal and financial independence should be broadened;
- i)* It is to be hoped that the waiting times for the activation of electricity supplies and for switching between providers may be shortened further so that customers may change operator in a matter of days. This would have the additional advantage of imparting greater flexibility to the management of customer-provider relations, which would boost competition and restore confidence to the market;
- j)* Enabling end-users to know their consumption data and making the data accessible in real time is a desirable outcome, as it is only with this information to hand that consumers who are increasingly attentive to questions of sustainability can make responsible use of electricity. Increased awareness of consumption patterns will also enable customers to

choose the service that best fits their life habits. At the same time, this information, if also available to the energy suppliers, could be used by them to create customised products for individual users;

- k) The digitisation of services is essential to ensuring greater clarity and transparency in the relationship between operators and end-users, and to passing on the potential cost-savings to the latter. It is therefore to be hoped that the supplier/customer relationship can be digitised further as this would considerably streamline the processing of customer requests and shorten the time taken to fulfil them.