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Delors tables energy community plan, slams EU leaders

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05.05.2010 @ 18:03 CET

EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS – Former European Commission president Jacques Delors on Wednesday (5 April) tabled proposals for a new EU treaty establishing an energy community and criticised the lack of political will in dealing with the eurozone's problems, saying Europe needed "architects" just as much as "firefighters."

The 84-year-old French economist presided over the European Commission between 1985 and 1994 and is considered one of the architects of European integration following the end of the Cold War and Germany's reunification.

The report he presented on Wednesday, drafted by a group of lawyers and academics, makes the case for an "EU energy community" based on a new treaty. It draws its inspiration from the European Coal and Steel Community founded in 1950, which set the ground for what later became the EU.

Sixty years on, Mr Delors made the case for a unified energy community, which would also include the leap to "green technologies" needed to reach the climate change mitigation targets.

The proposal includes concrete measures ranging from an EU energy fund to "purchasing groups" of countries, so as to give them greater negotiation leverage in relations with suppliers like Russia.

Although recognising the "difficult circumstances for our economies and finances," in reference to the Greek bail-out and market speculation concerning other troubled euro-countries, Mr Delors emphasised the need for EU "architects" just as much as "firefighters."

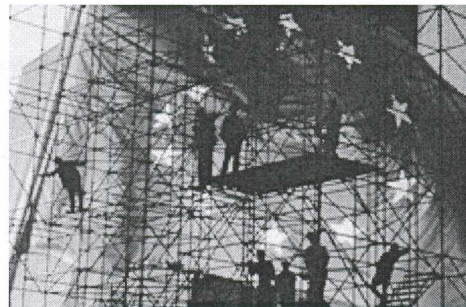
"We need blueprints during this period of time," he said, criticising the lack of co-operation at the EU level.

The report sees three ways of achieving this energy community: via a new EU treaty, via "common actions" or via "reinforced co-operation," pooling together countries who want the same things and gradually attracting more members – similar to the eurozone or the border-free Schengen area.

"I know there is a certain fatigue of some governments to draw up another treaty, but one should value the power of treaties, which helped a lot in terms of growth of our countries, mutual understanding and peace. A treaty also implies a common set of rules everybody respects. A treaty is an element of EU architecture," Mr Delors argued.

He also noted a certain "allergy" when it comes to reinforced co-operation, but stressed that this was the only solution in a union of 27, "where some want to go faster than others."

Mr Delors' proposals were received rather coolly by EU energy commissioner Guenther Oettinger, who said that the Lisbon Treaty actually has a specific article on energy matters, allowing for EU legislation in this field.



Jacques Delors says an energy community could foster greater EU integration (Photo: EU Commission)

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"My duty is to use article 194 of the Lisbon Treaty for legislative proposals. If after analysis, this article is not enough, your proposals will come back on the table," Mr Oettinger said.

A former regional politician in Germany, Mr Oettinger also stressed the principle of "subsidiarity" enshrined in the EU treaty, meaning that rules and regulations have to be drafted as closely to the citizen as possible – by regional or national assemblies and appeal to the EU level only when absolutely needed.

No leadership from Germany

Asked in a later press conference how he saw Germany's reluctance to help out the Greeks, Mr Delors said that "weeks of tergiversation, of discussions, even if some may argue there were serious discussions, only incited market speculations and fuelled euro-scepticism."

"But EU's economic and monetary union has the means to face the events of yesterday, today or tomorrow. It simply lacks the will to and the spirit of co-operation," he added.



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