

The total energy consumption of the European Community in 1972, expressed in units of oil-equivalent, was 815 million tons. During the same year, Canada consumed 139 million tons of oil-equivalent. Since Canada is a large producer of energy in various forms, it is less dependent on imports than the Community. The economic importance of energy and the Community's vulnerability to shifts in sources of supply have made energy policy a Community priority.

An energy policy has been slow to develop, partly because the Community treaties split up responsibility for energy. The ECSC Treaty covered coal and coke, the Euratom Treaty nuclear energy, and the EEC Treaty oil, natural gas and petroleum. The merger of the three Communities' executive institutions in 1967 ended this inconvenience by a single Commission and a single Council of Ministers, which could discuss every type of energy at the same time. Today wide differences in the needs, policies and policy administration of member countries still impede progress towards a common policy. Different authorities handle prices, taxation, investment and commercial policies. Different types of fuel are of greater or lesser importance in various member states' consumption patterns. Denmark, for example, relies on petroleum for 95 per cent of its consumption, while Luxembourg consumes 31 per cent of its energy in the form of petroleum and 53 per cent in the form of coal. Government involvement in energy administration also differs. In France, for example, the state controls oil imports, while other member countries leave import-management to private enterprise.

