

Industrial emissions - Integrated pollution prevention and control. Recast

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The Council held a public exchange of views on the recast of the directive on integrated pollution prevention and control. The discussion focused on four key issues:

The role of European Best Available Techniques reference documents (BREFs): many delegations supported strengthening the role of European BAT reference documents in determining permit conditions, particularly as regards emission limit values.

Many delegations also wished to keep the present procedures for preparing and adopting BREFs. Delegations were also in favour of more transparency in the setting of emission limit values. At the same time, many ministers stressed that competent authorities should be able to deviate from BREFs when justified due to specific local conditions.

Minimum requirements: the European Parliament might propose the introduction of minimum requirements for further activities covered by the proposed directive, but not yet subject to such obligations. Some ministers welcomed this idea, while others said that this could lead to negative effects on the environment.

As minimum requirements would represent higher emissions levels than BAT, the introduction of further minimum requirements could in fact increase divergence from BAT in permits. Others pointed out that the introduction of further minimum requirements could increase the administrative burden.

Large combustion plants: some delegations supported the Commission's proposals to bring emissions from existing large combustion plants (including power plants) into line with current BAT by 2016. A number of others underlined the cost of retrofitting existing installations and expressed concern that the investments involved could impact the security of energy supply.

Given that many Member States have recently upgraded their combustion plants to comply with current legislation, they asked for a longer phase-in of BAT. A third group of delegations could accept the implementation of BAT by 2016, provided that there is a certain transitional flexibility.

Scope of the directive: a large number of delegations stressed that they did not agree with the Commission's view that the benefits would justify the costs of extending the scope of the directive to include combustion plants with a rated thermal input of between 20 and 50 MW. They also pointed out that such plants are already subject to environmental regulation. Reservations on including certain types of waste and industrial farming were also voiced.

The views expressed by ministers will guide the preparation of a political agreement within the Council that could be obtained at the next Environment Council in June 2009.