Convention (1979) on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution: amendment to the 1998 Aarhus Protocol on heavy metals

2014/0359(NLE) - 07/01/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Giovanni LA VIA (EPP, IT) on the draft Council decision on the acceptance of the Amendments to the 1998 Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Heavy Metals.

The committee recommended the European Parliament to **give its consent** to acceptance of the Amendments to the Protocol.

To recall, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution is intended to protect the human environment against air pollution. Signed in 1979 and entering into force in 1983, the Convention was the first international legally binding instrument in this area.

The 1998 Aarhus Protocol on Heavy Metals aims to **reduce and control anthropogenic emission into the air of lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd) and mercury (Hg).** It requires Parties to reduce their total annual emissions for these three metals below their levels in 1990 or an alternative year between 1985 and 1995.

The accession of the Community to the 1998 Protocol was approved on behalf of the Community by Council Decision 2001/379/EC. The Protocol, which entered into force on 29 December 2003, has been transposed into EU law through several instruments.

In December 2012, the Protocol was amended by Decisions 2012/5, 2012/6 and 2012/7.

The amended Protocol sets out, in particular, stricter limit values for dust emissions from certain major stationary sources, as well as flexible transitional arrangements that shall benefit those Parties that will accede the amended Protocol before the end of 2019, including countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

As set out in the short justification in the recommendation, the amendment to the Protocol is already largely covered by EU legislation, and will be further transposed via a new Directive setting updated national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants and providing for annual national emission inventories that shall cover, among others, emissions of lead, cadmium and mercury.

The draft Council Decision lists the text of the amendment to the Protocol via Decision 2012/5 in its Annex. The amendment is fully consistent with existing EU legislation.

The ratification of the amendment will be an important step towards a higher level of protection of human health and the environment from transboundary air pollution. Members therefore welcomed the draft Council Decision and proposed that Parliament gives its consent.