

Framework for Community action in the field of water policy. Water Framework Directive

1997/0067(COD) - 23/05/2000

The Conciliation Committee reached agreement on a joint text for the framework directive on water policy. The main compromises were as follows: (1) strengthening the legal enforceability of the directive. As regards the binding nature of the objectives of the Directive, the Council accepted a wording very close to Parliament's second reading amendments; (2) the elimination of hazardous substances from surface waters (which was not included in the Council common position). The directive now includes an obligation to eliminate hazardous substances according to a procedure of establishing priority lists of substances to be ceased or phased out at the latest within 20 years of their identification as hazardous substances; (3) protection of groundwater: Parliament achieved its aim of guaranteeing existing protection levels for groundwater. An obligation and mechanism to reverse the upward trend in pollution was included in the Directive; (4) water pricing - a derogation to the provisions on water-pricing policies was agreed in order to solve the 'Irish problem' (Ireland is the only Member State which does not charge households according to water and sewage volume but finances these services via taxation).