

Environment: Eco-management and audit scheme EMAS, voluntary participation by organisations (amend. regul. 1836/93/EEC)

1998/0303(COD) - 22/11/2000

The Conciliation Committee reached agreement on the joint text of the regulation. Under the compromise reached, four amendments were accepted by the Council without further change. These concerned: the ongoing training of the environmental verifiers; incentives for organisations to take part in EMAS; support for the applicant countries; and notification of the beginning of the verification process to the Member State in which it is carried out. Three amendments were withdrawn during the negotiations. These concerned: a protocol for an agreement on guidelines regarding penalties; determination of the recipients of notification of audit results; and the nature of the committee responsible for implementation. Concerning the last aspect, and in view of the criteria laid down in the recent decision on comitology and its provisions relating to Parliament, it was felt that the regulatory procedure was the right one. The remaining 20 amendments were accepted on the basis of compromise formulations. The main aspects concerned here were: - establishment and implementation on the part of organisations of eco-management systems, pursuant to Annex I (with particular reference to the need to respect existing law); - the active participation of workers and their representatives; - inclusion in the environmental statement of the results achieved and the organisation's performance, with the added provision that the statement must be made available to the public; - compliance with the relevant environmental legislation as a precondition for the acceptance and registration of an organisation in EMAS; - the obligation to submit (allowing for a number of exceptions) annual validated updates of the environmental statement as a condition for continued registration in EMAS; - creation of information exchange arrangements within a network of local delegated bodies; - forwarding of information received from the Member States to the European Parliament and the Council; - measures to encourage organisations to take part in EMAS: facilitation of access to public contracts and bodies; - insertion into the body of the Regulation of the complete text of section 4 of the European standard EN/ISO 14001:1996 (on environmental management systems); - a list of the requisites to be fulfilled by all environmental verifiers, especially as regards experience and technical qualifications; - the principle that Community legislation shall be taken into account in the process of determining the environmental aspects having a significant impact for the purpose of establishing an organisation's objectives and goals. The EP delegation considered the final outcome of the conciliation to be highly satisfactory, as the great majority of Parliament's amendments had been incorporated either in full or in revised form. It accordingly proposed that the joint text be adopted in plenary at third reading.