Air quality: improvement of comparability and transparency at European level (reduction of emissions)

1994/0194(SYN) - 22/02/1995 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The ESC endorsed this proposal in that it represented an important step both in establishing effective and comparable checks on ambient air quality and in making more information available to the EU citizen. It would, however, like to make a number of observations intended to improve the drafting of the proposal for a decision. Firstly, the list of pollutants in Annex 1 was far longer than that in the proposed directive on air quality, which covered only 14 of these 34 pollutants. Furthermore, the sheer quantity of exchangeable data, especially in those Member States with a dense network of air quality measurement stations, could be enormous and make this exchange unworkable. Consequently, the Member States should operate a ‘pyramidal’ selection of measuring stations so that the exchange and assessment would be carried out first at local and regional level prior to the Community dimension. On this basis the Member States should facilitate the exchange of data between a sufficient number of stations that were representative of the different geographical situations and regions in that Member State; this would be the most cost-effective way to achieve the objective. By the same token the ESC considered it more advisable to draw up separate annexes. The first would set out those substances that had to be measured under Community Directives; the second the rest of the pollutants not covered by Community Directives on air quality. The ESC considered that the technical committee set up under the Directive on ambient air quality assessment and management should be responsible for approving, jointly with the Commission, the adaptation of the present decision to scientific and technical progress. The European Environment Agency, as part of its remit, would have to assist the Commission in formulating the proposals to be submitted to the technical committee. Finally, the ESC considered that, in the sectoral programmes for 1993-1997 of the Joint Research Centre in Ispra, in the section ‘measuring and testing’ (1.1.1.), with a budget of ECU 105 million, and in the actual sectoral programme ‘Standardisation, measurement and testing’, a specific budget line should be established for improving and standardising the measuring and testing methods for some of those pollutants contained in Annex 1, the measurement of which at the moment was very expensive and in some cases not sufficiently reliable.