

Ambient air quality: common strategy for assessment and management

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The ESC endorsed the thrust of the proposal for a directive and the proposed rules, subject to the following proposed changes. It felt that the dangers and potential damage of atmospheric pollution made the issue and implementation of this directive a matter of urgency. It was pleased to note that the proposal for a directive provided for a programme for the adoption of air quality objectives at European level. It had recently called for a programme of this kind in its Opinion on the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive. It regretted that there was no reference in the draft Directive to the problems of cross-border atmospheric pollution. This applied particularly to cross-border atmospheric pollution within the European Union. Where bilateral or multilateral agreements existed on information, compensation or arbitration procedures, they should be applied in relation to the implementation of the draft Directive too. The Union's bodies should also work for the conclusion of such agreements. It might be appropriate for the information referred to in Article 3 to be exchanged between Member States as well as communicated to the Commission. It would also be right to require the Member States to make such communications public, subject to the relevant European and national laws. The extent to which the programme for the establishment of quality objectives provided for in the framework directive was compatible with the existing European ground-level concentration limits and the progress achieved in reducing concentrations of individual pollutants needed particular study. Article 5(2) of the draft was illogical: establishing which areas had poor or improving air quality required measurement. Initial measurements should therefore also be required outside the areas listed in Article 5(2). Subsequent measurements could then, in accordance with the proposal, be restricted. The Member States should be empowered and required to work for an improvement in air quality even where no Community limit values as yet existed. Such measures could be based on WHO values. In Article 7(3)(b) the proposal restricted itself to requiring that plans and programmes for the implementation of quality objectives be made available to the public. Participation in the preparation of these programmes and in the implementation of the air quality objectives in the Member States could also be of particular interest to the public. The ESC proposed that, in addition to the advisory committee of official representatives of the Member States, a 'committee of experts' be set up. Annex 1: the ESC suggested that carbon monoxide and benzene be included in the list for action in the short-term (31 December 1996) and thus that these pollutants be moved from Annex 1(2) to 1(1).