

European Environment Agency, European information and observation (amend. Regulation (EEC) No 1210/90)

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The ESC approves the activities of the Agency and agrees that its tasks should be consolidated along the lines set out by the Commission. The ESC, however, also hopes that the Agency's work on gathering and disseminating information will be expanded - and not only for the benefit of the Commission and the Member States but for all other community and social interests in the EU. The ESC considers that the Agency should have a distinct role within this cross-frontier context, namely that of establishing forms of cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) preparing to join the EU so that it is easier for them to acquire the information needed to update their environmental legislation. According to the latest Commission studies, this is of fundamental importance for their integration into the EU. It is necessary to make the Agency a vehicle for the integration of all policies with environmental repercussions and to this end it needs to work together not only with the Commission, but also with all bodies active in the environment. Its advisory function can similarly be put to use with the enlargement of the EU in mind. As far as the Agency's functions are concerned, we would urge that it be given responsibilities for carrying out a "strategic or integrated environmental assessment" and for performing the task, in conjunction with the Commission, of monitoring implementation of the Community's environmental legislation. All this will only be possible if the Agency receives funding commensurate with its functions. We should therefore look into the possibility of the Agency being given its own budget so that future budget increases do not have to be borne by DG XI.