Public access to environmental information (repeal. Directive 90/313/EEC)

2000/0169(COD) - 29/06/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive on public access to environmental information. CONTENT : this proposal for a Council Directive on access to environmental information, which upon adoption will replace Council Directive 90/313/EEC on the freedom of access to information on the environment has been prepared in accordance with Article 8 of that Directive, which calls upon the Commission to submit any proposal for revision it may consider appropriate in the light of experience gained in the operation of the Directive. The experience gained since 1 January 1993, the latest day of the transposition of Directive 90/313/EEC by Member States, shows that this Directive initiated a process of openness as regards public access to environmental information. It was a catalyst for change in the way that public authorities approach the process of openness and transparency. Individuals and organisations throughout the Community have made use of the possibilities. Improved access by the public to environmental information has contributed to an increase in public awareness of environmental matters. The objective of the proposal is two-fold. On the one hand, it aims at ensuring a right of access to environmental information held by or for public authorities and to set out the basic terms and conditions of its exercise. On the other hand, it also aims at ensuring that, as a matter of course, environmental information is made available and disseminated to the public, in particular, by means of available computer telecommunications and/or electronic technology. In contrast with Directive 90/313/EEC which only ensured freedom of access to environmental information, it was felt more appropriate to establish a right of access to environmental information. The establishment of such right will enable Community legislation to be aligned with the Aarhus Convention.