

Environment: integrated pollution prevention and control

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The committee adopted a draft recommendation for a second reading by Mr David BOWE on the common position established by the Council with a view to the adopting of a Council Directive on integrated pollution control and prevention. The aim of the proposal is to prevent or reduce emissions into the air, water and soil from industrial and agricultural activities (listed in Annex I) so as to achieve a high level of protection for the environment as a whole. An integrated approach to pollution control involves minimizing emissions of pollution into all media (air, water or land) at the same time, thus avoiding the transfer of pollution from one medium to another. It considers all the emissions from an industrial plant and prevents companies from emitting into the air, for example, pollution which they have been prevented from emitting into water. While some Member States are already implementing integrated pollution control, the idea is to introduce it in all of them. The directive will apply to most industries in the Union as well as to intensive agricultural units. This would have two benefits: (1) it would ensure the widespread adoption throughout the Union of the most effective system for protecting the environment as a whole and (2) it would provide a level playing field by ensuring that industrial competitors in different Member States faced similar regulatory controls. Parliament adopted 57 amendments at the first reading on 14 December 1994 but only 13 of these were incorporated, wholly or in part, into the common position established by the Council on 27 November 1995. On 7 May 1996, in its recommendation for second reading, the committee adopted 57 amendments to the common position. However, the committee did amend the common position to include a passage referring to "the location, nature and extent" of an installation's activities. Another amendment adopted by the committee for second reading introduced a new passage to the effect that the directive "shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or introducing more stringent protective measures compatible with the Community legislation". The committee also called for the establishment of an advisory committee on the directive rather than a regulatory committee. Parliament has long taken the view that regulatory committees give too much influence to the Member States to the detriment of the Commission