End-of-life vehicles. ELV Directive

1997/0194(COD) - 02/02/1999

In adopting a report on the disposal of cars and vans which have reached the end of the road, the Committee attempted to tread a fine line between protecting the environment and allowing manufacturers enough time to retool. The report by Karl-Heinz FLORENZ (EPP,D) on a Commission proposal for a directive on end-of-life vehicles was approved by a large majority. However, of the 137 amendments tabled, some were adopted with very slender majorities. The aim of the proposal is to prevent the dispersal of pollutants from end-of-life vehicles into the environment while encouraging the re-use and recovery (including recycling) of the vehicles and their components. This should be achieved, inter alia, through clear waste treatment regulations, the award of a certificate of destruction before a vehicle can be deregistered, the establishment of environmentally friendly disposal facilities, and larger markets for re-usable components and recyclable materials. In addition, the committee urged producers to take immediate steps to design and manufacture vehicles in such a way as to allow increased re-use and recovery. Every year end-of-life vehicles in the Community generate between 8 and 9 million tonnes of waste. Up to 75% of this - the metallic component - is already recycled as scrap. The proposal is focused, therefore, on improving disposal of the remaining non-metallic component (plastics, rubber, glass, textiles, paint, oils, paper and cardboard), which accounts for ten per cent of the hazardous waste produced annually in the EU. A key amendment adopted by the committee provides for re-use and recovery to be increased to at least 85% of vehicle weight for vehicles authorized for production before 1 January 2005, rising to at least 95% by 2015. For vehicles authorized for production after 1 January 2005 (by which time manufacturers will be deemed to have had enough time to redesign their models), the 95% figure comes into force immediately and at least 85% must involve actual re-use and recycling (not simply recovering energy through incineration). Voluntary agreements involving Member States and industry, members thought, should be allowed for the collection of end-of-life vehicles. Another key amendment provides that as from 1 July 2001 certain highly pollutant heavy metals used in vehicle construction (mercury, lead, cadmium and hexavalent chromium) may not be disposed of in landfill sites. In addition, mercury may not be incinerated. Moreover, vehicles authorized for production after 1 January 2005 must not contain any cadmium or PVC and may only contain limited amounts of lead, mercury or hexavalent chromium. Another amendment obliges Member States to ensure that the last owner of an end-of-life vehicle does not incur any costs when he delivers it to a treatment centre for disposal. Members also want two or three wheel vehicles to be covered, to a limited extent, by the proposal but adopted an amendment excluding historic "veteran" vehicles. The committee thought that Member States should have until 30 June 2001 to transpose the directive into their national legislation (instead of 31 March 1999, as proposed by the Commission).