

# **Industrial pollution: reduction of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC)**

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House-painters and home decorators should be included within the scope of a proposed directive to limit the emission of industrial solvents which can damage people's health, the Committee insisted when it adopted a recommendation for a second reading of the measure. Such solvents contribute to the formation of ozone at ground level, causing asthma, respiratory illnesses, eye problems and even the death of vulnerable individuals. The directive, as proposed in the common position, deals with industrial and craft activities accounting for 70% of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). However, the committee has retabled an amendment so that the measure will also cover paint used by house builders and DIY home decorators, which accounts for the remaining 30% of VOC emissions. Another amendment includes a requirement that Member States take appropriate measures to promote development of the best available techniques to minimize the emission of organic solvents and compounds into the environment. The committee retabled an amendment stressing the need for preventive measures for workers who regularly come into contact with organic solvents. Solvents are used in a wide range of industries, including dry cleaning, pharmaceutical manufacture, wood impregnation, rubber processing and printing. The industries involved include over 400 000 firms, many of them SMEs, accounting for nearly 10 million jobs in some 20 economic sectors. The estimated cost of implementing the directive varies from around ECU 4 billion (according to the Commission) to ECU 80 billion (according to a Franco-German academic study).