

Waste management: landfill

1997/0085(SYN) - 20/01/1999

Landfill of waste is the option of last resort in the hierarchy of prevention, recovery, recycling, incineration and landfill, the Committee agreed when it adopted a recommendation for a second reading amending the Council's common position on a proposed landfill directive. The aim of the directive, which has major implications for waste disposal throughout the Union, is to prevent or reduce environmental damage (particularly water, soil and air pollution) and health risks caused by landfill. The recommendation, drafted by Caroline JACKSON (EPP, UK) under the cooperation procedure, contains 19 amendments to the common position. The committee maintained that it is ecologically more sensible to make compost and biogas from biodegradable waste than to landfill or incinerate it. It also insisted on a gradual reduction in the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going into landfills. Member States must report to the Commission on their success in achieving the targets set in this connection. The Commission must then report back to the European Parliament. Another amendment permits the Council to adopt economic measures, such as a tax on waste intended for landfill. The committee also felt that the price charged for waste disposal in a landfill should reflect the true costs for the whole life-time of the landfill: such costs should not be borne by the public purse. There should be no time limit on the liability of landfill site operators for damage caused by their activities. Operators are to be held responsible for monitoring a site for at least 30 years after its closure except where they can demonstrate that the landfill no longer constitutes an active danger to the environment. The committee also suggested guidelines for the distance between landfill sites and residential and recreational areas. Parliament adopted 29 amendments at first reading last February. This is the second stab at a landfill directive. The Commission first submitted a proposal in 1991 but this was withdrawn after Parliament rejected the Council's common position in 1996.