

Incineration of waste

1998/0289(COD) - 30/03/1999

A single directive will apply to the incineration of both hazardous and non-hazardous waste, as the result of the vote on a report by Hans BLOKLAND (I-EDN, NL) in the Committee. There was considerable disagreement over whether or not this merging of two Commission proposals should be welcomed. Two French MEPs, Marie-Noëlle LIENEMANN (PES) and Françoise GROSSETÊTE (EPP), were opposed to the move because they feared it would mean weaker emission standards for hazardous waste. But both the rapporteur and the Commission representative explained that merging the two proposals would lead to more transparent and consistent rules. Amendments had been tabled to ensure that hazardous waste would be properly processed. Twenty-two MEPs then voted for the first of the "merging" amendments, with 11 against and 3 abstentions. In the end, a clear majority was in favour of the draft legislative proposal and the draft report, although most members of the EPP were against it. The committee adopted a wide range of amendments: - the directive will now cover hazardous as well as non-hazardous waste; - hazardous waste will be described in detail so that the incineration and treatment process can be adapted; - the definition of a "co-incineration plant" has been improved to prevent any legalistic escape clause: this means that plants which treat waste thermally come under the directive, regardless of whether they only "reduce" the waste or not; - small plants (under 50 MWth) were excluded from emission limit values under the Commission proposal: the Environment Committee voted to include them; - a standard for ammonia was added as this is a substance that is often emitted by cement kilns; - new plants will have to use combined heat and power. The amendments of the Green Group seeking to reduce the emission limit values for dioxins by 90 percent were not accepted. The rapporteur pointed out that the Commission proposal would already lead to an enormous reduction - from 2400 g/year now to 10 g/year EU-wide two years after the directive has come into force.