

Incineration of waste

1998/0289(COD) - 23/02/2000

The committee adopted the recommendation for second reading (codecision procedure) by Hans BLOKLAND (EDD, NL) amending the Council's common position on the directive on waste incineration. The Council and Commission had accepted Parliament's suggestion made at first reading in April 1999 that the two proposed directives on the incineration of hazardous and non-hazardous waste be merged. The committee felt that the common position provided a good framework for legislation. However, if the objectives of improving air quality and health were to be met, it was necessary to amend the scope of the directive and the definitions, measurement requirements and emission standards proposed. The rapporteur stressed the importance of this - very technical - issue because of the effects of incineration on public health and air quality throughout the Community. Constant emission standards and clear rules for outputs were needed. The same rules should apply to all incineration plants. The committee adopted an important compromise amendment demanding that a number of incineration plants be excluded from the directive, namely those treating only vegetable waste from agriculture and forestry, vegetable waste from the food processing industry and fibrous waste from sorting, screening and washing of virgin pulp and paper production. Wood waste, it said, should also be excluded but with the exception of waste that might contain halogenated organic compounds or heavy metals as result of coating. Also excluded were cork waste, radio-active waste and waste from off-shore oil and gas installations. As regards the combined incineration of waste in cement kilns, the committee wanted a stricter limit for nitrogen oxides for new plants (500 mg/m³ instead of 800 mg/m³). The same amendment called for a longer deadline for exceptions, saying that the period for which authorities should allow a nitrogen oxide limit of 1200 mg/m³ for small plants that incinerate less than 3t of waste per hour should run up to 2010 rather than 2008 as envisaged by the Council. Other important amendments called for plans for incineration plants to be better publicised and for dioxin samples to be taken more frequently. Whereas the Council wanted at least two measurements of dioxins to be taken per year, the committee wanted even tougher controls. If categories of waste were used which were more likely to produce dioxins, or if the periodic dioxin measurements justified more extensive monitoring, samples should be taken at least every three months. The committee also called for mercury and ammonia levels to be constantly monitored, as already happened in Germany and Denmark.