

Environment: public participation in plans and programmes

2000/0331(COD) - 09/10/2001

The committee adopted the report by Eija-Riitta Anneli KORHOLA (EPP-ED, FIN) broadly approving the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading), subject to a number of amendments. It endorsed the Commission's moves to strengthen the public's involvement in decisions affecting the environment but wanted it to go further and implement the Aarhus Convention more fully and more precisely. The committee wanted to give members of the public the chance to take part in the formulation of environmental policies, as provided for in the Convention. It said that the public should be given information about its rights to participate and how to go about it and the authorities should provide explanations in response to the concerns raised by the public. The committee inserted provisions giving the public access to a review procedure, as part of public involvement in planning and programming in specific areas of environmental legislation, so that it could challenge the legality of decisions taken. However, it sought to ensure that the review procedure was not abused by limiting it to the stage at which the actual decision had been made so that only one review per decision would be possible. It also inserted provisions corresponding to part of the Convention not incorporated by the draft directive which gives the public a role in preparing statutory rules and regulations. The report said that the new directive should include all projects serving defence purposes, which were covered by the Aarhus Convention but excluded from the current EIA directive. The committee also wanted an explicit statement in the directive, as in the Aarhus Convention, that due account must be taken of the results of the public participation in decisions on granting development consent. Lastly, it amended the draft directive to implement the principle enshrined in the EC Treaty and Article 3(5) of the Aarhus Convention whereby environmental considerations are integrated into all Community policies and activities.