

Industrial major-accidents: hazard control, dangerous substances

2001/0257(COD) - 18/06/2002

The committee unanimously adopted the report by Giorgio LISI (EPP-ED, I) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). Whilst it welcomed the Commission's efforts to tighten up the Seveso II directive in response to subsequent major industrial accidents in Romania, the Netherlands, Spain and France, the committee felt that they did not go far enough and accordingly tabled a large number of amendments. It called for the directive's provisions on land-use planning to include guidelines for the harmonised assessment of the dangers presented by hazardous substances present at industrial plants in or near "sensitive areas". The Commission was urged, moreover, to develop a scheme of incentives and/or funding, in the context of regional policy, for the relocation of establishments which did not provide for the appropriate safety distance. The committee also wanted clearer definitions of and new thresholds for ammonium nitrate, the chemical that caused the explosion at the plant in Toulouse (France). While supporting the Commission's proposal to include mining operations in the scope of the legislation, it wanted to broaden the definition of them to ensure that plants such as Aznalcóllar in Spain, where there was a damburst in 1998, were not excluded. Pointing out that the AZF plant in Toulouse was covered by the current Seveso II directive but that its owners failed to comply with it, MEPs called for plants to be closed if the rules were broken. Other amendments were aimed at tightening up the provisions on safety reports, hazard studies and emergency plans. A number of amendments also sought to ensure that more information was made available to the public, in particular local populations. Lastly, the committee pointed to the large number of sub-contractors on the Toulouse site at the time of the accident and called for compulsory accident prevention and emergency training for employees, including sub-contracted workers.