

Limitation of emissions of volatile organic compounds due to the use of organic solvents in decorative paints and varnishes and vehicle refinishing products

2002/0301(COD) - 09/09/2003

The committee adopted the report by Giorgio LISI (EPP-ED, I) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. The main amendments were as follows: - decorative paints and varnishes and vehicle refinishing products should not contain substances that have been classified as carcinogens, mutagens or toxic to reproduction (CMR) under Directive 67/548/EEC; - the proposed definition of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) should be widened: whereas the Commission defines VOCs as having a boiling point of 250° C or less, MEPs wanted to include substances with a boiling point up to 280°C. This would mean that harmful solvents such as Texanol would now be covered by the directive; - product labels should indicate the potential risks of exposure to solvents and how to use the products wisely, taking into account the distinction between products for indoor and outdoor use. The label should specify the quantity of solvent per volume of product in grammes/litre, provide a graded colour and/or numeric scaling based on existing best practice in the sector and give a clear warning about the potential direct and indirect effects on human health and the environment due to emissions of VOCs. Moreover, products should be labelled to prevent cleaning of products into waterways and drains; - to avoid any watering-down of existing stringent national legislation following harmonisation at Community level, Member States should not be prevented from taking measures to protect workers and consumers by prohibiting or restricting the use of certain high VOC-containing products. However, to prevent any deliberate and unjustified restraint on trade, Member States should inform the Commission of any measures they have adopted which go beyond the requirements of the directive and the grounds for maintaining them; - exemptions to the directive should be allowed for coatings for certain "old and treasured vehicles" as well as for special paints for the restoration and maintenance of designated historic buildings; - there should be an obligation for Member States to exchange information on the use of organic solvents and their potential substitutes. The information should be made publicly available on the Commission's website and the Commission should publish updated guidance for each product category every two years.