Air quality: arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air

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The committee adopted the report by Hans KRONBERGER (IND, A) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. In a tight vote, MEPs decided that limit values and long-term objectives, rather than just monitoring requirements, were needed to regulate arsenic, cadmium and nickel in ambient air. They also said that limit values and long-term objectives, rather than just target values as proposed, should be laid down for benzo(a)pyrene as a marker for the carcinogenic risk of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air. In addition, the committee stipulated that the aim was to avoid, prevent or reduce harmful effects not only on human health but also on the environment as a whole, and introduced a number of amendments to ensure that greater emphasis was put on environmental protection in the directive. The limit values proposed in the report were based on the findings of the Commission's scientific working group on heavy metals. In principle, they would have to be met by 2010, although Member States were given the possibility of extending this deadline under certain conditions. The committee also adopted a number of technical amendments which took account of the requirements for the assessment of air quality laid down in Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air quality assessment and management. Lastly, it introduced a new article providing for targeted strategies to reduce mercury deposition and for a standard monitoring system.