

Industrial pollution: reduction of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC)

1996/0276(SYN) - 06/11/1996 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: To limit emissions of volatile organic compounds due to the use of organic solvents in certain industrial activities **SUBSTANCE:** The proposed directive is one of the measures of the Fifth Action Programme on the Environment and forms part of a strategy comprising measures aimed at an overall reduction of volatile organic compound (VOC emissions) in the European Union, to exceed the reduction of 30% between 1990 and 1999 to which the Commission is committed under the Geneva Protocol on VOC reduction. The proposal relates to 24 main types of installations and procedures, some of them divided into a large number of subsectors. In specific terms it establishes a target for VOC reduction based on the technically and economically feasible reductions in each sector, and Member States are then required to achieve this by implementing emission limit values or by establishing national plans containing other measures which will achieve the same reduction. Moreover, for the individual operator, the Directive's emission limit values allow the achievement of the reduction in the most cost effective way. The proposal also covers solvents which are directly harmful to human health (e.g. carcinogens, mutagens or reprotoxic substances). The 'national plan' option cannot apply to such substances, and reduction measures for these substances must be defined for each installation. It should be noted that installations which, due to the processes they carry out or their small size, emit only small quantities of VOCs, or which would be very difficult to control because they are so large in number, are not covered by the proposal. The following general items apply to all the processes concerned: - general obligations for new and existing installations, those undergoing major modifications and those where several processes considered by the directive are carried out in parallel, - the laying down of general emission limitations and special provisions for toxic and environmentally relevant substances, including stringent emission limit values; - exchange of information on the possibilities for substitution; - general monitoring requirements; - detailed definition of the emission limits and the way they have to be calculated; - provisions on compliance with the given limitations; - obligations concerning the drafting of national programmes; - date of entry into force and timetable for application. The following items are regulated for each process or installation separately: - the size and type of the installations and processes for which specific requirements of the proposed directive apply; - limitations for emissions of organic solvents and /or compounds; - certain special provisions which take into account circumstances particular to a given sector.