Waste management: landfill

1997/0085(SYN) - 05/03/1997 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: To provide for measures, procedures and guidance to prevent or reduce as far as possible negative effects on the environment, in particular the pollution of surface water, ground water, soil and air, as well as the resulting risks to human health, from landfilling of waste. SUBSTANCE: The proposal for a directive sets high standards for the treatment of waste and seeks to discourage landfilling. The main points of the proposal are as follows: 1. A gradual reduction in the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfills. The proposal sets objectives for the reduction in the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfills, with target dates for their completion: by 2002, the amount must be 75% (by weight) of the total amount produced in 1993; by 2005, it must be down to 50%; and by 2010 to 25%. These last two stages are mandatory. It should be noted that the Member States will be allowed flexibility in choosing the means for achieving these objectives. 2. Pre-treatment of waste before landfilling: all waste must be treated before it is landfilled. Treatment is defined as 'the physical, chemical or biological processes, including sorting, that change the characteristics of the waste in order to reduce its volume or hazardous nature, facilitate its handling or enhance recovery'. 3. Ban on the disposal of used tyres. This ban applies both to whole and shredded tyres, and will encourage their recovery and at the same time reduce the risk of fire. 4. Increased cost of landfilling. The Member States must ensure that the price charged for the disposal of any type of waste in a landfill covers at a minimum all costs involved in the setting up and operation of the site, the cost of the financial security and the estimated costs of the closure and aftercare of the site for a period of at least 50 years. 5. Ban on joint disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous waste; it should be noted that in the majority of Member States this is no longer practised. 6. General requirements for landfills. The general environmental requirements for all classes of landfills (Annex I) have been improved by introducing a minimum distance from landfill to residential areas, by emphasising the surface sealing of the sites, by prohibiting the spreading of dirt from sites onto public roads and the surrounding land and finally by requiring fencing and control of access to the sites for security reasons in order to avoid illegal dumping. 7. Stricter provisions for existing landfills. A conditioning plan is to be presented within 3 years after the entry into force of the proposal and implemented five years after this date. 8. Remote areas: small islands with only one landfill and isolated settlements with difficult access may be exempted from some provisions of the directive.