Combating acidification and air pollutants: Community strategy

1997/2107(COS) - 13/05/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Anneli HULTHÉN (PSE, S) on a strategy to combat acidification Parliament supported the Commission proposal to reduce by a half by 2010 the critical loads of acidification on the Union's ecosystems but wished to go further by proposing the setting of a new ambitious objective for 2015 whereby the critical loads should not be reached in any part of the area. Considering that the national emission ceilings method gave the Member States more flexibility to take the appropriate measures, it encouraged the Commission to support the Member States in making greater use of economic management measures geared towards the reduction of sulphur and nitrogen emissions. It considered that the EU's acidification strategy should be compatible with the work of the UN Economic Commission for Europe which dealt simultaneously with acidification, formation of ozone and eutrophication. The effectiveness of the strategy would also be improved if consideration were extended to the other European countries. It also called on the Commission to support Parliament's position on the Auto-Oil proposal for lower sulphur content for motor vehicle fuels from 2005. It also advocated full application of the polluter pays principle in particular in the transport sector. In this sector in particular Parliament called on the Commission to propose specific measures to reduce emissions of acidifying air pollutants from shipping by: - the introduction of differentiated port and fairway charges based on environmental considerations, - the laying down of rules on emissions from shipping linking EU ports, - voluntary emission-reduction agreements for ferries, - designation under the Marpol Convention of the North Sea, the Irish Sea and the English Channel as sensitive areas, - use of low-sulphur bunker oil. Measures should also be taken to reduce these emissions in the applicant countries. It also called on the Commission to propose a ceiling on the sulphur content of aviation fuel. It called for a strengthening of current legislation on emissions from large combustion plants (coal-fired power stations, cement plants and large waste incinerators) which were responsible for over 60% of SO2 emissions. However the plenary rejected the request put forward in the report for abolition of the coal subsidy. Aid to applicant countries should be subject to strict requirements concerning the steps taken to reduce emissions of acidifying substances. Parliament also called on the Commission to put forward a strategy for reducing the adverse effects of farming on the environment, in particular with regard to emissions of ammonia, methane and nitrates into the air, soil and water. The granting of agricultural subsidies should be linked to more stringent measures to combat ammonia emissions from farming.