Marine pollution: disused offshore oil and gas installations, removal

1998/2044(COS) - 04/05/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Without debate, the European Parliament adopted the resolution by Françoise Grossetête (PPE,FR) on the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the removal and disposal of disused offshore oil and gas installations. The report welcomes the fact that the reuse, recycling and final disposal on land of disused offshore installations is regarded as the preferred option. The Parliament remains concerned, however, that the implementation of the derogations provided for under the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic means that major installations can still be disposed of at sea, thereby causing marine pollution by dangerous substances and natural low-activity radioactive waste. The Parliament regrets that OSPAR decision 98/3 does not cover steel installations and neither the cleaning-up nor the removal of offshore installations, but solely their disposal. It also regrets that the decision makes no distinction between existing installations and future ones. Furthermore, the Parliament considers that derogations under the decision should only be granted on a case-by-case basis, in situations where removal could put the safety of workers at risk or might create adverse effects on the environment. It also considers that the cost of removing offshore installations is generally limited compared to the revenues generated by their operation and should be integrated within the investment plans, in accordance with the polluter-pays principle. Fiscal incentives may, according to the report, be used after decommissioning in order to promote the most sustainable use of material recovered. Finally, stressing that the consultation process has been launched too late by the Commission to allow the European Parliament any influence on the Community position during the OSPAR conference, the report calls on the Commission to: 1) take stock of European experience, in Europe including the EEA, with removing installations and to collate it with experience in the rest of the world, particularly the US; 2) produce a comparative study into existing liability arrangements concerning removal and disposal operations and the maintenance of any parts left on the seabed, in the EU, the EEA and the rest of the world; 3) study exisiting possibilities for removing installations and, at the same time, conduct a cost/benefit study for all scenarios (deep water, shallow water, dismantling ashore, towing etc.), whilst assessing and taking full account of the dangers to workers carrying out these operations. Before 2002, the Commission is called upon to submit a proposal based on these studies to prepare the Community's position with a view to the future review of OSPAR decision 98/3 scheduled for 2003.