Implementation of the directive on urban waste water

2000/2318(INI) - 14/03/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Maria Sornosa Martinez (PES, Spain) on urban waste-water treatment. The Directive on urban waste water, when implemented, has led to significant improvements in the water quality of many European rivers, lakes and coastal waters. The failure by certain Member States to implement the Directive is not an isolated incident, since the Court of Justice has already found nine Member States guilty of failing to comply with Community water legislation. Parliament deplored the fact that several Member States have been restrictive and unhurried in their designation of sensitive areas and have not taken due account of the fact that discharged waste water migrates and contributes to an increase in the pollution level of downstream waters, which in turn leads to an underestimation of the impact of waste water and the treatment targets needed to minimise it. The Commission should initiate infringement proceedings in cases where criteria for designating sensitive areas have not been respected. Parliament considers it scandalous that Member States generally fulfil their obligations on the provision of information so inadequately that even now, it is not possible to verify compliance with the first deadline (the end of 1998). The dilatory Member States must fulfil immediately all information obligations, particularly in view of the fact that the deadline for the second stage (the end of 2000) has also expired. The Commission's initiative of linking financial aid to stringent compliance with the urban waste water Directive is commended, as is its initiative in organising a "name, fame and shame" seminar on implementation. This could serve as an example for identifying problems and improving implementation of other environmental directives. The Commission, together with the Environmental Agency, should improve the gathering of data on the pressure, situations, and trends in the different basins and draw up assessments of the environmental improvements in them which will result from the application of the Directive.