Public access to environmental information (repeal. Directive 90/313/EEC)

2000/0169(COD) - 30/05/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

The European Parliament adopted the report drafted by Anneli KORHOLA (EPP-ED, Finland) and adopted several amendments to the Council's common position. (Please refer to the document dated 23/04 /02.) Parliament stipulated that public authorities may be permitted to refuse a request for environmental information only in exceptional cases. The public interest served by disclosure should be weighed against the interest served by the refusal to disclose, and access to the information requested should be granted if the public interest served by disclosure outweighs the specific interest protected by non-disclosure. Information on emissions, discharges and other releases into the environment should not be withheld by virtue of the protection of commercial, industrial or other interests. Parliament wants free access to the information requested. Examination in situ of the information requested is also to be free of charge. Public authorities may, however, make a charge for supplying information, so long as the charge does not exceed the actual cost of reproducing the material requested. It should not include the cost of staff time spent on searches. Parliament went on to emphasise the importance of improving the quality of information made available upon request, in the interest of making that information comprehensible, accurate and comparable. The method used in compiling the information should be disclosed, as this is an important factor in assessing the quality of the information supplied and determining whether it is misleading. Finally, the European Parliament wants the Directive to be evaluated every four years after submission of the relevant reports by the Member States.