Air quality: arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air

2003/0164(COD) - 20/04/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a compromise deal with the Council on this proposed directive. The rapporteur was Hans KRONBERGER (IND, A). In the Committee vote (please see the preceding summary) Members wanted to set limit values, rather than just monitoring requirements as proposed by the Commission, for air pollutants, including arsenic, cadmium and nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. The compromise adopted sets target values for these pollutants - neither just monitoring requirements nor binding limit values. "Target value" is defined as a concentration in the ambient air fixed with the aim of avoiding, preventing or reducing harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole, to be attained where possible over a given period. The target values will have to be met, where possible, by 2012. The agreed date is a compromise between 2010 as proposed by the Environment Committee and 2014 proposed earlier by the Council Presidency. Furthermore, Parliament also obtained a clause which requires the Commission to consider the possible merit in introducing limit values in a report that is due in 2010.In addition, the Commission report must deal with the following: - the secondary economic benefits for the environment and health in reducing the emissions of arsenic, cadmium, nickel, mercury and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons to the extent that these can be assessed; - the adequacy of the particle size fraction used for sampling in view of general particulate matter measurement requirements; - the suitability of benzo(a)pyrene as a marker for the total carcinogenic activity of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, having regard to predominantly gaseous forms of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons such as fluoranthene. - in the light of the latest scientific and technological developments the Commission shall also examine the effect of arsenic, cadmium and nickel on human health with a view to quantifying their genotoxic carcinogenicity. Taking account of measures adopted pursuant to the mercury strategy the Commission must also consider whether there would be merit in taking further action in relation to mercury, taking account of technical feasibility and cost-effectiveness and any significant additional health and environmental protection that this would provide. Finally, Parliament made amendments concerning the measurement of ambient air quality, and the geographical frequency of sampling sites.