

Ambient air quality: limit values for sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead

1997/0266(SYN) - 25/11/1998

The "great car culture" was fingered as the principal villain by rapporteur Mrs Anita POLLACK (PES, UK) as her recommendation for a second reading of a measure to combat air pollution was adopted unanimously by the Committee. While industry bore some responsibility, she said, it was traffic that was mainly to blame. Under the cooperation procedure, the committee amended the common position of Council on a Commission proposal for a directive on limit values for four air pollutants: sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead. The proposal is part of an integrated package of measures (including the auto/oil programme) envisaged by Commission to fight air pollution. Of the 28 amendments adopted by Parliament at first reading last May, 20 had largely been accepted by the Council and some of the rest were accepted in part. The 11 amendments adopted yesterday by the committee were designed, inter alia, to improve the flow of information to the public and reinstate some of the original parameters which had been weakened by Council. The committee was also anxious that a derogation (from the parameters set) applicable in the event of high winds should not be abused to cover, as the rapporteur described it, "any old wind that blows". Hence members restricted the derogation to "exceptional" high winds. While accepting some of the committee's amendments, the Commission representative said that, recognizing the difficulties posed for many Member States by the limits it had originally proposed, her institution had reluctantly agreed to the weakened specifications wanted by Council. Member States have until the end of next year to transpose the directive into national law. By the end of 2003 the Commission must submit a report reviewing its application.