

Public access to environmental information: European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register. Protocol to the 1998 EEC-UN Convention

2004/0232(CNS) - 06/10/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : the Conclusion of a Protocol between the EC and the UN-ECE on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTNET : this Decision is being proposed in tandem with a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (refer to COD /2004/0231). The main purpose of the Register is to enhance public access to environmental information through the establishment of a coherent, integrated, European-wide "Pollutant Release and Transfer Register". It is also being proposed within the context of the Aarhus Convention. The Protocol itself requires each Party to establish a PRTR, which:

- Is publicly accessible through Internet, free of charge;
- Is searchable according to separate parameters (facility, pollutant, location, medium, etc.);
- Is user-friendly in its structure and provide links to other relevant registers;
- Presents standardised, timely data on a structured, computerised database;
- Covers releases and transfers of at least 86 pollutants covered by the Protocol, such as greenhouses gases, acid rain pollutants, ozone-depleting substances, heavy metals, and certain carcinogens, such as dioxins;
- Covers releases and transfers from certain types of major point sources (e.g. thermal power stations, mining and metallurgical industries, chemical plants, waste and waste-water treatment plants, paper and timber industries);
- Accommodates available data on releases from diffuse sources (e.g. transport and agriculture);
- Has limited confidentiality provisions;
- Allows for public participation in its development and modification.

In addition, a PRTR should be based on a reporting scheme which is mandatory; annual; multimedia (air, water, land); facility-specific; pollutant-specific for releases and pollutant-specific or waste-specific for transfers.

The proposal contains provisions granting a general mandate to the Commission to participate, on behalf of the Community, in the negotiation of amendments to the annexes, as well as in cases where the Community has to notify non-acceptance. Based on the multi-lateral environmental nature of the Protocol

the European Commission calls on the Council to approve the Protocol through the adoption of the proposed Decision.