

ARCHIVES HISTORIQUES DE LA COMMISSION

COLLECTION RELIEE DES
DOCUMENTS "COM"

COM (83) 721

Vol. 1983/0258

Historical Archives of the European Commission

Disclaimer

Conformément au règlement (CEE, Euratom) n° 354/83 du Conseil du 1er février 1983 concernant l'ouverture au public des archives historiques de la Communauté économique européenne et de la Communauté européenne de l'énergie atomique (JO L 43 du 15.2.1983, p. 1), tel que modifié par le règlement (CE, Euratom) n° 1700/2003 du 22 septembre 2003 (JO L 243 du 27.9.2003, p. 1), ce dossier est ouvert au public. Le cas échéant, les documents classifiés présents dans ce dossier ont été déclassifiés conformément à l'article 5 dudit règlement.

In accordance with Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No 354/83 of 1 February 1983 concerning the opening to the public of the historical archives of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (OJ L 43, 15.2.1983, p. 1), as amended by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1700/2003 of 22 September 2003 (OJ L 243, 27.9.2003, p. 1), this file is open to the public. Where necessary, classified documents in this file have been declassified in conformity with Article 5 of the aforementioned regulation.

In Übereinstimmung mit der Verordnung (EWG, Euratom) Nr. 354/83 des Rates vom 1. Februar 1983 über die Freigabe der historischen Archive der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft und der Europäischen Atomgemeinschaft (ABl. L 43 vom 15.2.1983, S. 1), geändert durch die Verordnung (EG, Euratom) Nr. 1700/2003 vom 22. September 2003 (ABl. L 243 vom 27.9.2003, S. 1), ist diese Datei der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich. Soweit erforderlich, wurden die Verschlussachen in dieser Datei in Übereinstimmung mit Artikel 5 der genannten Verordnung freigegeben.

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(83) 721 final.

Brussels, 25 November 1983.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN THE FIELD OF COMBATTING
AIR POLLUTION



COM(83) 721 final.

Con 702

COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN THE
FIELD OF COMBATING AIR POLLUTION

INTRODUCTION

1. Over the past ten years there have been great strides under the Community's three successive environmental action programmes in the protection of human health and the environment from the effects of atmospheric pollution. In the First and Second Environmental Action Programmes the emphasis was on remedial measures essentially aimed at the protection of human health.

2. The Third Action Programme adopted in February 1983 represents a change to new orientations and emphases. In particular this Programme reflects the recognition of the vital need, in future, to adopt a preventive approach. The Third Action Programme also lays great stress on the need to integrate protection of the environment in the development of policy in all other important areas - especially energy, industry, agriculture and transport.

3. This Communication: outlines the measures that have already been adopted under the First and Second Environmental Action Programmes; describes the current political and scientific context of policy, and sets out the proposed programme of work.

POLICIES INTRODUCED UNDER THE FIRST AND SECOND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION
PROGRAMMES

4. Measures to combat air pollution are of three types - air quality objectives, emission controls and product controls. These three types of measure are interrelated but they each attack the problem of air pollution in a different way:

***/**

- i) in the context of air quality objectives directives have been adopted establishing limit and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulate matter, and for lead (80/779/EEC (1) and 82/884/EEC (2) respectively). A draft directive setting air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide has been transmitted to the Council (C 258 27 September 1983);
- ii) emission controls adopted to date cover only vehicle exhaust emissions. A directive was adopted in 1970 implementing the norms established by the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (UN-ECE) for carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons (70/220/EEC (3)). This directive has already undergone four modifications to tighten up controls progressively and to extend the range of vehicles covered in line with UN-ECE (74/290/EEC (4), 77/102/EEC (5), 78/665/EEC (6), and 83/351/EEC (7); nitrogen oxides were added to the controlled pollutants by the 1977 amendment;
- iii) product controls established at Community level include directives dealing with the sulphur content of gas-oil and the lead content of petrol (75/716/EEC (8) and 78/611/EEC (9) respectively). The directive dealing with the disposal of waste oils allows, *inter alia*, for controls on the processing of waste oils in a manner such as to avoid the generation of air pollution (75/439/EEC (10)).

-
- (1) OJ L 229, 30/08/1980
(2) OJ L 378, 31/12/1982
(3) OJ L 76, 06/04/1970
(4) OJ L 159, 15/06/1974
(5) OJ L 32, 03/02/1977
(6) OJ L 223, 14/08/1978
(7) OJ L 197, 20/07/1983
(8) OJ L 307, 27/11/1975
(9) OJ L 197, 22/07/1978
(10) OJ L 194, 25/07/1975

5. The Exchange of Information decisions (75/441/EEC (1) and 82/459/EEC (2) concerning the concentrations in the atmosphere of sulphur dioxide and particulates (and other important pollutants, including oxides of nitrogen and heavy metals) are designed to provide a framework within which data can be compared and exchanged between Member States as well as providing a legal basis for further intercomparisons. Specific intercomparison programmes have been, or are being undertaken for sulphur dioxide, suspended particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and lead.

6. At the international level the most important Community activity has been in connection with the development and finalisation of the UN-ECE Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution. The Community, alongside the Member States, is a participating member of the Convention. The Convention focusses on the exchange of information and the encouragement of research as means of supporting policy formulation.

7. The Community has also participated actively in the on-going work, under the aegis of UNEP, on the development of an international Convention to protect the ozone layer. At Community level, action to date in this context has focussed on reducing the production and use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) (80/372/EEC (3)).

THE CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT

8. There can be no doubt that air pollution issues - and in particular those connected with the acid deposition problem - are now a subject of increasing public interest. Areas of particular concern are:

- i) damage to forests - die back;
- ii) acidification of lakes and rivers;
- iii) damage to buildings and monuments;
- iv) losses of productivity in agriculture and horticulture, and
- v) long term effects on human health.

(1) OJ L 194, 25/07/1975
(2) OJ L 210, 19/07/1982
(3) OJ L 90, 03/04/1980

9. Air pollution issues will remain high on national and international political agendas; and will accordingly be a priority area for Community action. In this connection, it is of the highest significance that the European Council, meeting at Stuttgart in June 1983, put a whole section on the environment into the conclusions of the meeting - and in very strong terms. They referred to "the urgent necessity of accelerating, and reinforcing action at national, Community and international level aimed at combatting the pollution of the environment". They referred in particular to "the acute danger threatening the European forests areas" and called for "immediate action" to avoid "an irreversible situation"; in particular they called upon the Council of Environment Ministers to "examine relevant initiatives proposed by the Commission, with a view to rapid, significant progress". The European Council also "emphasised the importance of reducing the amount of lead in the environment and called for progress which may lead to the use of leadless petrol".

10. An immediate response to the Stuttgart declaration was the organisation at Karlsruhe in September this year of a Symposium on acid deposition aimed at establishing the state of scientific knowledge on the phenomenon and on technologies for reducing emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxides. It was recognised that the challenge posed by acid deposition is a real, serious and urgent one, and that early action must be taken to reduce emissions, in particular of sulphur and nitrogen oxides. The Symposium strongly endorsed the need for increased research and monitoring efforts in particular to obtain a clearer insight into the underlying cause/effect relationships and to develop more effective abatement technologies. But the need for further research was not a legitimate reason for delaying action.

THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK

11. Two relevant proposals, covering completely new areas, have already been made. The first, a proposal for a directive on the combatting of air pollution from industrial plants, through the prior authorisation of plants and the use of advanced technology according to the "state of the art", has already been submitted to the Council of Ministers (1). After several preparatory discussions in the Working Group of the Council, this proposal will be submitted to the Council for adoption at its meeting on 28 November 1983.

12. The second, a draft directive designed to control and reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulates from large combustion installations, will be transmitted to the Council very shortly. This directive will fix emission limit values for new plants and will establish overall targets for the reduction of total emissions of these pollutants from all plants.

13. These two proposals can be expected to have a significant impact in reducing air pollution but they do not represent all that can and must be done now to tackle the problem in a comprehensive way.

14. Further action on 5 points is proposed to reinforce existing legislation:

- (i) Member States are already able to control the impact of local sources of pollution in areas in need of special environmental protection by laying down values lower than those specified in the directive establishing air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates (80/779/EEC, Article 4.2 (2)). But no advantage has been taken up to now of the opportunities this power confers; there is therefore a need to stimulate and to harmonise Member States' action in this respect. Accordingly the Commission will need to appeal to Member States to make full and appropriate use of the existing legislation;

(1) OJ C 139/5, 27/05/1983
 (2) OJ L 229, 30/08/1980

- (ii) Directive 75/716/EEC (1) lays down limit values for the sulphur content of gas-oil. The Commission will, by the end of the first half of 1984, initiate the necessary procedures to review these limit values;
- (iii) A Commission proposal (Proposal for a directive concerning the use of fuel oils with a view to the reduction of sulphur emissions (2)) for a product standard for the sulphur content of fuels oil was not agreed by the Council because it did not cover all fuels. For this reason the Commission withdrew this proposal in 1981. The Commission will now examine the possibilities for a revised and extended proposal.
- (iv) A proposal to limit the emission of pollutants from the burning of used oils is being prepared and will be presented early in 1984. As well as reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen this proposal will have the advantages that it will reduce emissions of toxic and dangerous substances (such as heavy metals - the presence of which distinguishes used oils from other oil fuels) and will also, indirectly, promote the recycling of used oils;
- (v) The Commission is now working on a comprehensive package of measures to reduce emissions from certain categories of motor vehicle. Part of this package will be proposals related to the lead content of petrol, taking into account the call from the Stuttgart European Council for "progress which may lead to the use of leadless petrol". The Second ERGA Working Group will report to the Commission before 1 March 1984 and, as requested by the Council at their meeting on 16 June 1983, the Commission will submit proposals before 15 April 1984. The Commission will at the same time make proposals for tighter emission standards.

(1) OJ L 307, 27/11/1975

(2) OJ C 54, 08/03/1976

15. These measures will be a substantial first step - but it will only be a first step. In order to provide a solid scientific foundation for further developments in policy the Commission will, in parallel with these measures, initiate a major research and monitoring effort.

16. In the research field particular attention will be devoted to endeavouring to improve:

- (i) the data base on pollutant depositions;
- (ii) the understanding of cause/effect relationships;
- (iii) abatement technologies; and
- (iv) relevant systems studies.

The current COST 61a concerted action, which has already contributed substantially to our knowledge of acid precipitation, will be extended. In addition, increased attention will be given to research on air pollution questions through work at ISPRA which will assume a central data collection and assessment function and through research undertaken under contract with competent institutions in Member States.

17. In the field of monitoring, the Commission has already made proposals (included in the proposal concerning the protection of forests (COM (83) 375 Final)) for the establishment of a forestry monitoring network which will provide data on both deposition and effects. The Commission hopes for a positive decision on this proposal from the Council in the near future.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

18. The 5 points for action listed at paragraph 14 are not set out in order of priority and in the future, particularly as the results of research and new technological developments become available, the Commission's comprehensive strategy will need to be further developed. Some tentative ideas on how the Commission might extend its strategy, in particular through new ways and means of using market mechanisms to assist in the implementation of legislation, include the "global" approach to the setting of emission ceilings; and concepts such as emissions trading and banking.

19. It has to be recognised that implementation of these proposals will have cost implications, for example in investments in cleaner technologies, but there will be significant benefits from reductions in damages and possibly from increases in employment. Because it is not possible to put an economic value on all aspects of the environment which are at risk, in particular on forests and on the cultural heritage, and because cause/effect relationships are not fully understood, there is a great difficulty in making satisfactory cost-benefit analyses. A recent study undertaken for the Commission (1) suggests that the benefits of a stringent programme of emissions reduction may be of the same order as the costs; but, the Commission intends to pursue further the whole cost benefit issue.

20. The Commission will also seek to identify ~~in~~ which measures are likely to be more, and which less, cost effective in the long run and will examine new opportunities to finance pollution control. In this context the possibilities offered by the ECSC loans will be considered (2).

21. It is of course essential that, in the development of policy to combat air pollution, full account is taken of the objectives of, and cost implications for, other Community policies. In this context the objectives of avoiding technical barriers to trade and distortions of competition, of the energy strategy, of employment policies and of maintaining the competitiveness of European industry are especially significant.

CONCLUSION

22. The Council is invited to take note of this programme of work.

(1) "Acid Rain - A Review of the Phenomenon in the EEC and Europe", Environmental Resources Limited, June 1983.

(2) O.J. C 146 of 25.11.74