



COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT



PRESS RELEASE

5467/86 (Presse 28)

1065th Council meeting

- Environment -

Brussels, 6 and 7 March 1986

President: Mr P. WINSEMIUS

Minister for Housing,
Regional Planning
and the Environment
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mrs M. SMET State Secretary for the Environment

Denmark:

Mr Mogens BUNDGAARD-NIELSEN State Secretary,
Ministry of the Environment

Germany:

Mr Carl-Dieter SPRANGER State Secretary,
Federal Ministry of the Interior

Greece:

Mr Constantin YITONAS State Secretary,
Ministry of Public Works,
Regional Planning and the Environment

Spain:

Mr Javier SAENZ COSCULLUELA Minister for Public Works and
Town Planning

France:

Mrs Huguette BOUCHARDEAU Minister for the Environment

Ireland:

Mr John BOLAND Minister for the Environment

Italy:

Mr Valerio ZANONE Minister for Ecology

Luxembourg:

Mr Robert KRIEPS

Minister for the Environment

Netherlands :

Mr P. WINSEMIUS

Minister for Housing, Regional
Planning and the Environment

Mr W.F. van EEKELEN

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Carlos PIMENTA

State Secretary for the Environment
and Natural Resources

United Kingdom:

Mr William WALDEGRAVE

Minister of State for the
Environment

o

o

o

Commission:

Mr Stanley CLINTON-DAVIS

Member

LIMIT VALUES AND QUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR DISCHARGES OF CERTAIN DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES INTO THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

Pending the Opinion of the European Parliament, the Council evolved a common approach on the proposal for a Directive on discharges of certain dangerous substances into the aquatic environment. This Directive lays down the main features and defines the basic principles which must be applied to the fixing of limit values and quality objectives for the substances in List I in Directive 76/464/EEC (particularly toxic substances). It also determines specific limit values and quality objectives for three substances, viz. carbon tetrachloride, DDT and pentachlorophenol.

The Council's final decision will be taken in the light of the European Parliament's Opinion.

SULPHUR CONTENT OF CERTAIN LIQUID FUELS (GAS OIL)

The Council resumed its examination of the proposal for a Directive amending Directive 75/716/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels (gas oil). At the close of its discussion, the Council noted that it was unable to reach agreement at that meeting. It therefore called upon the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue to seek a solution and to report back for its next meeting.

LIMITATION OF EMISSIONS OF POLLUTANTS INTO THE AIR FROM LARGE COMBUSTION PLANTS

1. Eleven delegations took the view that in the light of the request by the European Council of March 1985 there was a need for rapid progress in reducing air pollution caused by large combustion plants, and for early decisions on this proposal.

2. To this end the Council discussed a proposal made jointly by the Presidency and the Commission that future work should aim at solutions within the following framework:
 - the regulation of emissions from all new plant on the basis of standards related to best available technology not involving excessive cost;

 - a two-stage approach for overall reductions in emissions;

 - the setting of a Community target for an overall reduction in SO₂ emissions; this would need to be substantial where "substantial" means an improvement on the reduction envisaged by the Helsinki protocol;

 - the setting up of appropriate programmes, Member State by Member State, for achieving the overall reduction;

 - these programmes would take account of the scale of the emissions from different Member States, their contributions to overall pollution in Europe and the special situations (related to their stage of economic development the nature of locally available fuels and the overall effort involved); and other relevant criteria;

- comparable action in relation to emissions of NOx;
- decisions on a more specific framework in June 1986 and on detailed requirements not later than 31 December 1986.

3. The Council invited the Commission in consultation with the Presidency to make further suggestions in the light of the arguments put forward at this session for its session on 12 June 1986.

The United Kingdom delegation reserved its position pending consideration of these further suggestions.

USE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE IN AGRICULTURE

The Council resumed its discussions on the Directive on the use of sewage sludge in agriculture.

The aim of the proposal is firstly to promote the use of certain types of solid waste in agriculture by stressing the agronomic value of such products and secondly to specify the precautions necessary for their proper use in agriculture in order to avoid any risk to human beings or the environment.

To this end, the proposal provides for the fixing of limit values for concentrations of heavy metals in the soil and in sludge, and the maximum quantities of heavy metals which may be added to the soil. It also determines the specific conditions for use of sludge.

At the close of its discussions the Council noted that eleven delegations were in favour, while the German delegation requested additional time to consider the matter.

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TRANS-FRONTIER SHIPMENT OF HAZARDOUS WASTE

The Council reached agreement in principle on the proposal for a Directive amending Directive 84/631/EEC on the supervision and control within the European Community of the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste.

The purpose of this proposal is to supplement the provisions of the abovementioned Directive as regards the export of waste for disposal in a third State, particularly in the light of an OECD recommendation in this field. It amends the 1984 Directive by providing in particular:

- that the third country of destination must agree on the proposed transfer of waste;
- that the consignee of waste in the third country must have the capacity to dispose of such waste properly.

The text which will give effect to this agreement of principle will undergo technical, legal and linguistic editing at a later stage.

NEW FORMS OF CO-OPERATION IN THE SPHERE OF WATER

The Commission gave the Council an oral progress report concerning work on the implementation of the Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 3 October 1984 on new forms of co-operation in the sphere of water. The Council particularly expressed its satisfaction at the programmes already initiated in this sphere.

ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF THE ENVIRONMENT
(MARCH 1987 - MARCH 1988)

The Council then adopted the following Resolution adopting an action programme for the European Year of the Environment (March 1987 - March 1988) and listened to a statement by the Commission on the state of preparations for the action programme.

This Resolution reads as follows:

I. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the European Year of the Environment are to:

- make all Community citizens aware of the importance of environmental protection and, with that aim in view, carry out specific model environmental protection projects;
- promote better incorporation and integration of environmental protection policy in the different policies of the Community and its Member States, in particular economic, industrial, agricultural and social policies;
- emphasize the European dimension of environment policy;
- demonstrate the progress already made and the achievements realized by Community environment policy since its inception.

II. ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

From a Community viewpoint, and in order to achieve the objectives referred to in part I, the following activities will be undertaken, in conjunction with the Member States' national committees:

1. General awareness campaigns

The Community will launch awareness campaigns, preferably centred on a limited number of key topics and directed at various sectors of society, notably the worlds of education, science and industry, and national, regional and local authorities.

These activities will include information campaigns in the different media (TV, radio, films, press) and other networks (schools, arts centres for example), conferences, prizes, distribution of publicity material, etc.

2. Model environmental protection pilot projects

The Community will support the carrying out in the Member States of specific projects which can serve as examples and models in the field of environmental protection, the rational management of natural resources and the development of new technologies.

3. Pilot projects to improve monitoring of the quality of the environment

The Community will support model projects aimed at improving monitoring of the quality of the environment in the Member States and at determining whether the objectives of Community environment policy are being achieved. The projects will relate in particular to training and equipping staff to carry out the monitoring work.

III. ORGANIZATION

The European Year of the Environment will be organized with the help of the following committees:

1. Committee of Patrons

This Committee will consist of eminent public figures known in the Member States for their commitment to environmental protection.

2. Advisory Steering Committee

This Committee will be chaired by the Commission and will comprise the Chairmen of the national Committees and representative public figures from the fields concerned.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the general co-ordination of the programme and ensure coherence between all the various activities to be carried out, referred to in part II.

3. National Committees

A Committee will be set up in each Member State, composed of members representing the various fields concerned by environmental protection. Its chief task will be to promote, support and implement national projects organized for the European Year of the Environment in the State concerned.

It will also be able to collect and administer private or public funds made available to it by various groups and bodies.

In particular it will be required to identify projects as mentioned in part II that are suitable for Community financing and to suggest any appropriate event or activity within the framework of the European Year of the Environment.

IV. FINANCING

1. The action programme, which will last until March 1988, will be financed at Community level out of appropriations from the General Budget of the European Communities.

In pursuance of this, recourse will be had:

- in respect of activities referred to under part II(1) to the appropriations provided for in Article 666 of the General Budget of the European Communities;
- in respect of the pilot projects referred to under part II(2) and II(3) to the various funds already available to the Community (e.g. European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, Guidance Section); the use of appropriations from these funds will be in accordance with the fund rules applicable.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The Council held an initial exchange of views on the Commission's communication on new directions in environment policy.

The discussion gave the Commission an opportunity to discover the delegations' initial reactions on which it could base its proposals for the 4th environmental action programme.

MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONS

Other decisions in the environment sector

The Council adopted, in the official languages of the Communities, the Decision authorizing the Commission, on behalf of the Community, to negotiate an amendment to the Convention for the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources to include atmospheric inputs into the sea.

The aim of the negotiations will be to draft either the text of an amendment or the text of a Protocol to the Convention for the prevention of marine pollution from land-based sources such as will include atmospheric inputs into the sea, and to ensure that the said texts include appropriate provisions to enable the Community to become a Contracting Party.

The Council also adopted, in the official languages of the Communities, the Decision establishing a Community information system for the control and reduction of pollution caused by the spillage of hydrocarbons and other harmful substances at sea (see press release 10709/85 (Presse 181), p. 7 dated 28/29 November 1985).

Relations with the Mediterranean countries

The Council decided to sign and adopted, in the official languages of the Communities, the Regulations on the conclusion of the Agreements in the form of exchanges of letters (1986), negotiated with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Israel on fruit salads and with Algeria on tomato concentrates.

Relations with the EFTA countries

The Council adopted, as the joint Community position within the Joint Committees, draft Decisions

- No 2/85 of the EEC-Switzerland/Austria Joint Committees - Community transit - on the Spanish and Portuguese texts of the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation/Republic of Austria on the application of the Rules on Community transit, and amending the Appendices to the Agreement
- No 1/86 of the EEC-Switzerland/Austria Joint Committees - Community transit - amending the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Swiss Confederation/Republic of Austria on the application of the rules on Community transit following the accession of the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic to the European Communities.

Commercial policy

The Council adopted, in the official languages of the Communities, the Decision terminating the anti-dumping proceeding concerning imports of dead-burned (sintered) natural magnesite originating in the People's Republic of China and North Korea.

ECSC

The Council gave its assent under Article 54, second paragraph of the ECSC Treaty to the co-financing of an investment project of STEAG Aktiengesellschaft, Essen, relating to the construction of a new 410 MW coal-fired generating unit at Walsum.

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 17 March 1986
5467/86 (Presse 28) Corr. 2 (f, e)

C O R R I G E N D U M

to the 1065th meeting of the Council

- Environment -

Brussels, 6 and 7 March 1986

On page 5, read:

LIMITATION OF EMISSIONS OF POLLUTANTS INTO THE AIR FROM LARGE
COMBUSTION PLANTS

1. The greatest possible majority of Member States took the view that in the light of the request by the European Council of March 1985 there was a need for rapid progress in reducing air pollution caused by large combustion plants, and for early decisions on this proposal.

2.

Bruxelles, le 7 mars 1986
Note Bio(86)62 (suite 1 et fin) aux Bureaux nationaux
c.c. aux membres du Service du Porte-Parole

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL, MARCH 6, 1986 (M. BERENDT)

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Substantial progress was achieved at this Council on key environment issues. Ministers agreed in principle to the directive concerning DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES IN WATER. They adopted the text of rules on the export of dangerous wastes to non-Community countries, came close to a decision on the use of sewage sludge in agriculture and adopted measures extending to other dangerous products the information exchange system which already exists to help Member States combat hydrocarbon pollution at sea. Eleven ministers accepted new commitments on reducing air pollution from power stations. No decision was reached on sulphur in gasoil.

DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES IN WATER

Council reached agreements along the lines of the Presidency compromise. As envisaged, three substances are included : DDT, pentachlorophenol and carbon tetrachloride. Work continues on chloroform.

As well as setting strict limits for emissions of these substances from the factories producing them, the directive - on which the European Parliament has still to give its opinion - provides a new framework for the addition of further dangerous substances. A total of 129 chemicals has been identified as meeting the criteria; cadmium and mercury are already covered by existing legislation and the Commission will now be making proposals on other substances.

The decision marks important progress in limiting the emission to the environment of dangerous chemicals, especially those which are toxic, persistent and cumulative or which have carcinogenic properties.

EXPORT OF DANGEROUS WASTES

This directive will introduce into Community law a commitment already accepted in the OECD for controlling the export of dangerous wastes. This is achieved by extending the scope of the Seveso directive, which already lays down rules for shipping such waste between Member States.

The directive is based on three main principles :

- hazardous waste can only be exported with the prior consent of the importing country;
- transit countries may raise objections to wastes crossing their territory;
- the importing country must have adequate disposal facilities for dealing with the waste.

The Council also agreed that a Community country which was likely to be affected by the disposal of waste in a neighbouring non-Community country had a legal right to object if the waste had passed through another Community country.

SEWAGE SLUDGE

2.

This is the first Community directive concerning the environment and soil. Eleven Member States were able to agree to a Presidency compromise. The measure encourages the use of sewage sludge but lays down limits for the presence of heavy metals in the sludge and in the soil where it is to be spread. The text provides for a range of values for heavy metals in soil, taking account of the different levels at which certain elements naturally occur. The German delegation demanded stricter standards, in certain cases higher than the levels actually occurring in particular soils elsewhere in the Community. The German delegation will seek to resolve their objections within six weeks. The measure would be a minimum directive i.e. Member States would be free to adopt standards if they so decided.

LARGE COMBUSTION INSTALLATIONS

Ministers set out their various positions on the Commission's proposals for reducing emissions from power stations and later returned to discuss a Commission working paper. The Council then adopted a statement which began as follows : "The largest possible majority of Member States took the view that, in the light of the request of the European Council of March 1985, there was a need for rapid progress in reducing air pollution caused by large combustion plants and on the need for early decisions on this proposal".

The United Kingdom formally reserved its position "pending consideration of these further suggestions".

The further suggestions were outlined in the working paper. The Council invited the Presidency and the Commission to make further progress in the light of the arguments put forward for its session of June 12. The Commission is seeking decisions on a framework for action by June and on detailed requirements by the end of the year. Mr Clinton Davis welcomed this development. "Eleven Member States have accepted the need for real progress in cutting down pollution from power stations. Although the United Kingdom decided to stand on this occasion aside, I hope we can make real progress in June when we shall be putting forward further proposals".

SULPHUR IN GASOIL

There was a majority in favour of the Commission's proposals for reducing the maximum content of sulphur in gasoil from 0.5 to 0.3 per cent, with a further cut to 0.2 per cent in certain regions, but the German delegation was unable to accept this formulation, demanding rather that the lower level should be the Community norm with derogations to allow less strict standards in some areas. The issue has been referred back to COREPER.

SELLAFIELD

The Irish Minister raised the Sellafield question, and Mr Clinton Davis responded, outlining the steps taken by the Commission in asking the Euratom expert committee (the Article 31 committee) to examine Community policy standards in relation to the incidents at Sellafield and in convening an ad hoc committee to consider the feasibility of a Community nuclear installations inspectorate.

Amities,
H. Paemen

no GA

Bruxelles, le 5 mars 1986.

Note BIO (86) 62 aux Bureaux Nationaux
cc. aux Membres du Service du Porte-Parole

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ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL - 6 MARCH 1986 (M. Berendt)

This Council promises several decisions of importance for the Community's environment policy, although politically more contentious issues are not expected to make much time. Vehicle emissions are not on the agenda.

1. Dangerous substances in water

Ministers ~~will~~ be seeking a compromise agreement on this proposed directive. The legislation would lay down strict standards on emission of certain dangerous substances into water, the four substances in question being DDT, pentachlorophenol, carbon tetrachloride and chloroform. The British have refused to accept the inclusion of the second two substances, but may well agree a formula which includes the first three but refers chloroform for further discussion in COREPER. The British argue that there are not sufficient scientific grounds for including chloroform in the legislation - an argument which is not accepted by the Scientific Advisory Committee which advises the Commission.

2. Sulphur in gasoil

The purpose of this measure is to reduce the maximum level of sulphur in gasoil (diesel) from 0.5 to 0.3 per cent and to allow a further reduction to 0.2 per cent, in certain regions with special pollution problems. The measure is part of the Community's programme for reducing air pollution and may be adopted, although the Danish delegation may propose stricter norms on a national basis.

3. Transfrontier shipment of waste

This Commission proposal would control the shipment of dangerous wastes to third countries, ensuring that an importing country had agreed to accept a consignment of such waste and that it had the equipment and capability for eliminating it. All delegations accept the principle of the measure, an agreement on the detailed measure is not expected. The proposal marks an important step in protecting the environment, particularly in developing countries, from the export of substances which are subject to strict controls within the Community.

4. Sewage sludge in agriculture

This measure, which should be adopted by the Council, lays down specific standards for the concentration of heavy metals in the soil and in sewage sludge, while at the same time encouraging the recycling of waste. At present 4,2m tonnes dry weight of sewage is produced in the Community, of which 1.5m tonnes is spread on the land. The differing demands of member states concerning the acceptable limits for the heavy metals will be covered by a fourchette formula.

5. Large combustion installations

Progress on this problem is still slow, with continued resistance from the United Kingdom to agreeing the Commission proposals for a reduction in power station emissions and substantial difficulties for Italy, Spain, Ireland and Luxembourg.

6. European Year of the Environment

A resolution setting out the arrangements for this year will be adopted as an "A" point without discussion.

8. New directions

Commissioner Clinton Davis will introduce the Commission's document setting out new directions for the environment policy, and giving ministers the opportunity to give their first reactions to the priorities as seen by the Commission. This will help in preparing the fourth environment action programme later this year.

Amities,
H. Paemen. Comeur //X/

SEWAGE SLUDGE

THIS IS THE FIRST COMMUNITY DIRECTIVE CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENT AND SOIL. ELEVEN MEMBER STATES WERE ABLE TO AGREE TO A PRESIDENCY COMPROMISE. THE MEASURE ENCOURAGES THE USE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE BUT LAYS DOWN LIMITS FOR THE PRESENCE OF HEAVY METALS IN THE SLUDGE AND IN THE SOIL WHERE IT IS TO BE SPREAD. THE TEXT PROVIDES FOR A RANGE OF VALUES FOR HEAVY METALS IN SOIL, TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFERENT LEVELS AT WHICH CERTAIN ELEMENTS NATURALLY OCCUR. THE GERMAN DELEGATION DEMANDED STRICTER STANDARDS, IN CERTAIN CASES HIGHER THAN THE LEVELS ACTUALLY OCCURRING IN PARTICULAR SOILS ELSEWHERE IN THE COMMUNITY. THE GERMAN DELEGATION WILL SEEK TO RESOLVE THEIR OBJECTIONS WITHIN SIX WEEKS. THE MEASURE WOULD BE A MINIMUM DIRECTIVE I.E. MEMBER STATES WOULD BE FREE TO ADOPT STANDARDS IF THEY SO DECIDED.

LARGE COMBUSTION INSTALLATIONS

MINISTERS SET OUT THEIR VARIOUS POSITIONS ON THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS FOR REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM POWER STATIONS AND LATER RETURNED TO DISCUSS A COMMISSION WORKING PAPER. THE COUNCIL THEN ADOPTED A STATEMENT WHICH BEGAN AS FOLLOWS : 'THE LARGEST POSSIBLE MAJORITY OF MEMBER STATES TOOK THE VIEW THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF THE REQUEST OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF MARCH 1985, THERE WAS A NEED FOR RAPID PROGRESS IN REDUCING AIR POLLUTION CAUSED BY LARGE COMBUSTION PLANTS AND ON THE NEED FOR EARLY DECISIONS ON THIS PROPOSAL'.

THE UNITED KINGDOM FORMALLY RESERVED ITS POSITION 'PENDING CONSIDERATION OF THESE FUTURE SUGGESTIONS'.

THE FURTHER SUGGESTIONS WERE OUTLINED IN THE WORKING PAPER. THE COUNCIL INVITED THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION TO MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS IN THE LIGHT OF THE ARGUMENTS PUT FORWARD FOR ITS SESSION OF JUNE 12. THE COMMISSION IS SEEKING DECISIONS ON A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION BY JUNE AND ON DETAILED REQUIREMENTS BY THE END OF THE YEAR. MR CLINTON DAVIS WELCOMED THIS DEVELOPMENT. 'ELEVEN MEMBER STATES HAVE ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR REAL PROGRESS IN CUTTING DOWN POLLUTION FROM POWER STATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE UNITED KINGDOM DECIDED TO STAND ON THIS OCCASION ASIDE, I HOPE WE CAN MAKE REAL PROGRESS IN JUNE WHEN WE SHALL BE PUTTING FORWARD FUTURE PROPOSALS'.

SULPHUR IN GASOIL

THERE WAS A MAJORITY IN FAVOUR OF THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS FOR REDUCING THE MAXIMUM CONTENT OF SULPHUR IN GASOIL FROM 0.5 TO 0.3 PER CENT, WITH A FURTHER CUT TO 0.2 PER CENT IN CERTAIN REGIONS, BUT THE GERMAN DELEGATION WAS UNABLE TO ACCEPT THIS FORMULATION, DEMANDING RATHER THAT THE LOWER LEVEL SHOULD BE THE COMMUNITY NORM WITH DEROGATIONS TO ALLOW LESS STRICT STANDARDS IN SOME AREAS. THE ISSUE HAS BEEN REFERRED BACK TO COREPER.

SELLAFIELD

THE IRISH MINISTER RAISED THE SELLAFIELD QUESTION, AND MR CLINTON DAVIS RESPONDED, OUTLINING THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE COMMISSION IN ASKING THE EURATOM EXPERT COMMITTEE (THE ARTICLE 31 COMMITTEE) TO EXAMINE COMMUNITY POLICY STANDARDS IN RELATION TO THE INCIDENTS AT SELLAFIELD AND IN CONVENING AN AD HOC COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE FEASIBILITY OF A COMMUNITY NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS INSPECTORATE.

AMITIES,
H. PAEMEN+