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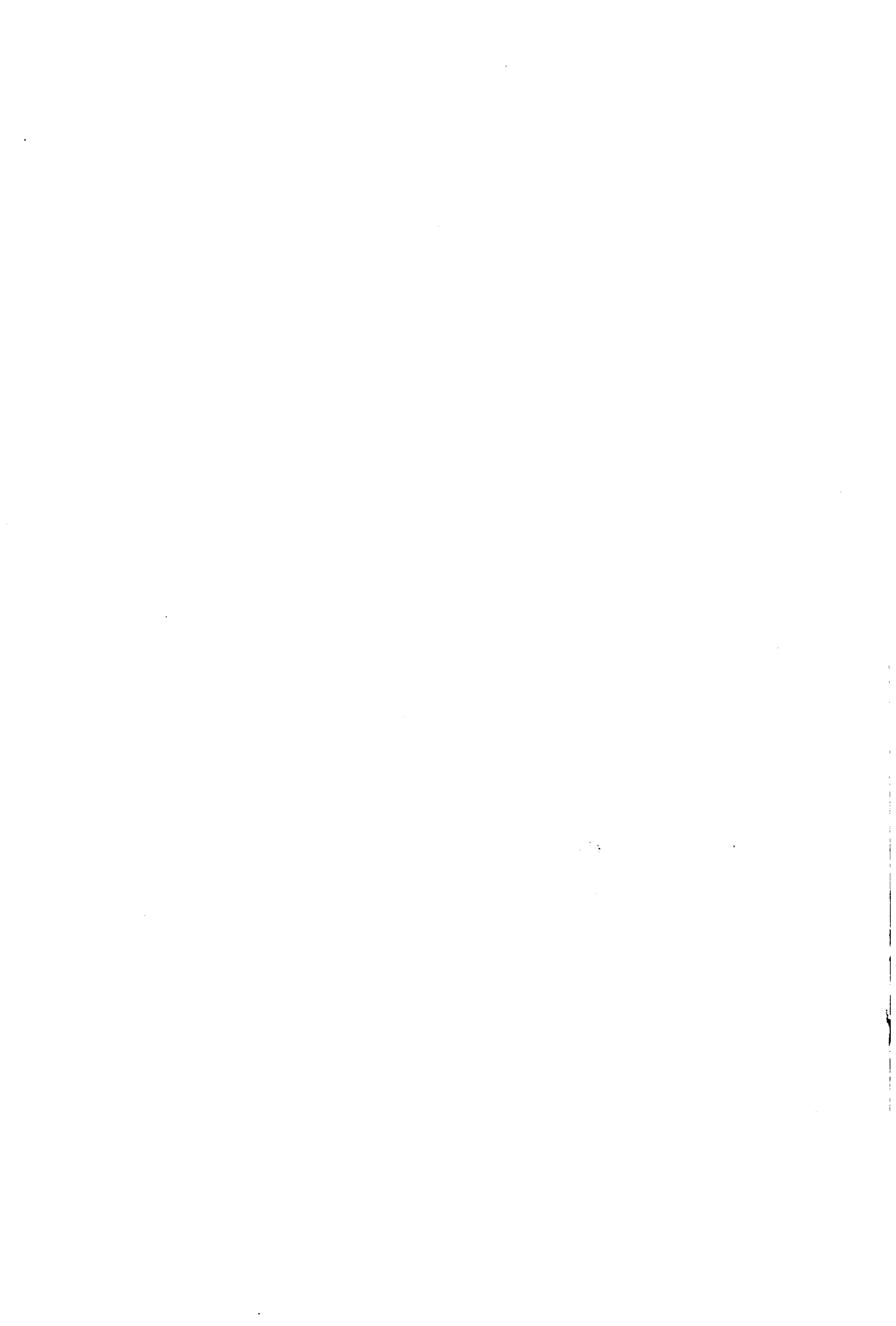
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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 472/74) for a directive on the reduction of water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States

Rapporteur : Mr A. PREMOLI



By letter of 29 January 1975 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 100 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a Directive on the reduction of water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States.

On 17 February 1975, the President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Public Health and the Environment as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs for its opinion.

On 24 February 1975, the Committee on Public Health and the Environment appointed Mr Premoli rapporteur.

It considered this proposal at its meeting of 21 March 1975.

At its meeting of 21 March the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Della Briotta, chairman; Mr Jahn and Mr Jakobsen, vice-chairmen; Mr Premoli, rapporteur; Mr Herbert, Mr Liogier, Mr Martens, Mr Meintz, Mr Noè, Mr Rosati and Mr Springorum.

The opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs will be issued separately.

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A

The Committee on Public Health and the Environment hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a Directive on the reduction of water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (COM(74) 2256 final);
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 100 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 472/74);
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment and the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (Doc.28/75);
1. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for a directive as a first step towards the control of environmental pollution caused by specific branches of industry;
 2. Regrets that this proposal was only published on 14 January 1975, despite the assurance given in the Environmental Action Programme that it would be submitted by 1 July 1974;
 3. Regrets the fact that this proposal is confined to water pollution, and requests the Commission to submit proposals as soon as possible on soil and air pollution by the wood pulp industry;
 4. Shares the Commission's view that certain derogations may be permitted for a limited period provided that they do not result in an appreciable deterioration in the quality of the water which receives the discharge, but at the same time urges the Commission to exercise strict control over these derogations;
 5. Urges the Commission to take into account, when applying the 'polluter pays' principle, the possible economic and social consequences, especially for small or old plants;

6. Asks the Commission, therefore, to submit to the Council as soon as possible a communication on support for wood pulp mills;
7. Requests the Commission to begin, at an early date, a Community-wide study on research and development in the field of techniques to reduce pollution caused by wood pulp mills;
8. Confirms its position on the procedure of the 'Committees on Implementing Provisions' which encroaches on the Commission's responsibilities, and intends to establish its position on this matter definitively in the near future.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT1. General remarks

1. In the European Communities' Programme of Action on the Environment (OJ No. C 112, 20 December 1973) the Commission undertook to submit the present proposal to the Council by 1 July 1974. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment regrets that the proposal was not presented until 14 January 1975.

2. As stated in the action programme (p. 21), the paper and paper materials industry, together with the iron and steel industry and the titanium dioxide industry, is one of the branches of industry which causes the greatest pollution.

3. Wood pulp mills pollute the natural environment with their waste water and gas discharges. These products are formed naturally in the manufacture of wood pulp on a scale which varies as a function of the manufacturing processes used and the size of the plants.

4. The highly polluting nature of the pulp industry influenced the Commission to give this sector priority. Although paper and pulp factories also pollute the soil and air, this proposed directive is confined to water pollution; the pollution of surface water is in fact particularly serious because of the highly polluting nature of the manufacturing processes used.

5. The situation may be summarized as follows:

(i) Water pollution depends on:

- the type of pulp producing process employed,
- the volume and type of discharge,
- the environmental characteristics of the receiving medium,
- legislation in the Member States.

(ii) The waste products of paper pulp mills are liable to result in:

- the creation of suspended solids and toxic substances,
- a change in the oxygen content,
- discoloration of the receiving watercourses,
- the creation of foam.

6. This proposal for a directive was preceded by a communication from the Commission to the Council on problems relating to the pulp, paper and paperboard industry (Doc. 48/74), in which some of the broad lines for effective action against environmental pollution in this sector were laid down.

In the opinion which he drew up on behalf of this committee, Mr Petersen then urged the Commission to submit detailed proposals on this matter without delay (PE 37.481/fin.).

7. In the explanatory memorandum accompanying its proposal, the Commission undertakes to submit to the Council in the near future a communication on special support for wood pulp mills and at the same time to examine the need for a study on research and development in the field of techniques to reduce pollution by wood pulp mills.

II. Consideration of the directive

8. The purpose of the directive is the harmonization of national legislation and the implementation of administrative action on the basis of the environmental action programme (OJ No. C 112, 20 December 1973).

9. Only a few Member States, particularly Belgium, France and Germany, have legislation specifically intended to reduce pollution by wood pulp mills. Most other countries employ guidelines which are part of the general environmental legislation. These differences may lead to varying financial burdens on the industry concerned, which could result in a distortion of competition affecting the functioning of the Common Market.

10. There are internal and external measures to limit pollution. The internal measures are aimed at limiting pollution by altering the manufacturing processes, while external measures are concerned with the treatment of waste substances during and after the manufacture of the pulp.

These techniques make it possible to eliminate 95% of existing pollution, but their use will result in extremely high costs for the industry concerned.

11. In drawing up this proposal for a directive, the Commission has worked on the assumption that the coordination and harmonization of policies in the wood pulp sector should be reflected in a fixed minimum limit for the discharge of waste substances, as laid down in Article 2 of the proposal.

To make this technically and economically feasible, the Commission proposes the approval at Community level of standard minimum emission limits which can be adapted to the individual manufacturing processes.

12. Since there may be differences in the assimilative capacity of the receiving water, application of the proposed standards should be flexible.

Existing plants must achieve the specified standards within not more than ten years of the entry into force of the directive, whereas new plants and new capacity which is added to existing plants must respect the fixed emission limits twelve months at the latest after the date the plant comes into operation.

13. On the subject of the possible social or economic difficulties which might arise from the obligation to meet within ten years the minimum emission standards laid down by the Commission, the Committee on Public Health and the Environment would refer to the opinion by Mr Petersen (PE 37.481/fin.).

In this opinion, it is stated that an efficient anti-pollution policy can only be introduced if the measures are financed, at any rate for small or older enterprises, at least partly from public funds.

Your committee notes with satisfaction that the Commission of the European Communities has taken account of these difficulties and is preparing a communication on special aid.

14. Articles 5, 6 and 7 state that a committee is to be set up for the adaptation of the directive to technical progress; this committee is to deliver its opinion to the Commission according to the procedures of the Committees on Implementing Procedures.

The fact that the Committee on Public Health and the Environment is not proposing the usual amendments to the text does not mean that it is in agreement with the procedures of the new committee.

Your committee intends, however, to establish a definitive position on this question, which has been outstanding for some considerable time, very shortly after a full debate (see also the draft report by Mr Jahn on ceramic products - PE 39.982).

15. The reduction of pollution is to be effected primarily by a reduction in the discharge of suspended solids (SS) and oxidizable substances (BOD).

The levels which plants must respect are given in a table annexed to this directive.

It is difficult for your committee to pronounce on the suitability of these standards; it therefore places its trust in the Commission of the European Communities which laid down these norms after consulting government experts and experts from the wood pulp industry in the Member States.

16. Finally, it should be mentioned that the Commission has annexed to its proposal a study of pollution by the pulp manufacturing industry in the EEC.

In this study, the principal problems concerning the nature of the pollution, the techniques and economic aspects of controlling pollution caused by the pulp manufacturing industry are discussed in great detail.

III. Conclusion

17. The Committee on Public Health and the Environment welcomes any step taken towards achieving a less polluted environment.

Despite the delay, this proposal for a directive is the first of a series of measures aimed at reducing pollution caused by a number of industries.

Your committee urges the Commission of the European Communities to continue its efforts in this field in order to make good the delay in implementing this part of the environmental action programme, and to complete this part of the programme as soon as possible.