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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. 15/75) for a decision establishing a common procedure for the preparation and constant updating of a European inventory of sources of information on the environment

Rapporteur: Mr H.E. JAHN

PE 40.392/fin.

By letter of 6 March 1975 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the opinion of the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty, on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision establishing a common procedure for the preparation and constant updating of a European inventory of sources of information on the environment.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Public Health and the Environment as the committee responsible.

On 21 March 1975 the Committee on Public Health and the Environment appointed Mr Jahn rapporteur.

It considered the proposal at its meeting of 9 June 1975.

On 9 June 1975 the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Jahn, acting chairman and rapporteur; Mr Jakobsen, vice-chairman; Mr Adams, Mr Albertsen, Lord Bethell, Mr Brégégère, Mr Duval, Mr Martens, Mr Willi Müller, Mr Noè, Mr Petersen, Mr Rosati, Mr Spicer and Mr Springorum.

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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 decision establishing a common procedure for the preparation and constant updating of a European inventory of sources of information on the environment

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (COM(75) 73 final),
- having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 15/75),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment (Doc. 141 /75),

1. Welcomes the Commission proposal as a useful initiative, since the planned European inventory will facilitate access to the available sources for all users in the Community, in particular those responsible for the supervision, protection and management of the environment;
2. Notes that the requisites for choosing Article 235 of the EEC Treaty as the legal basis for this Commission proposal have been met;
3. Agrees with the procedure proposed, since it aims at making the best use of information on the environment at present available in the Community, and ensures that the various information sources will be identified and uniformly indexed;
4. Considers it desirable that the termination of research projects should also be included in the inventory and therefore requests the Commission to extend Article 1 of the proposal for a decision accordingly;
5. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the Member States meet their obligation to supply information punctually and in full;
6. Asks the Commission, where necessary, to inform it in January of each year which Member States are behindhand in supplying the information;

7. Stresses that, to ensure that those concerned are fully informed, the European inventory of sources of information on the environment must be published as soon as possible;

8. Urges the Commission, therefore, to call in staff from other bodies to help with the compilation of this inventory, which will indubitably mean an increased workload.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. General considerations

1. The Commission rightly bases its proposal for a Council decision for a European inventory of sources of information on the environment on Article 235 of the EEC Treaty. The European Communities' action programme on the environment of 22 November 1973 provides for a permanent inventory of sources of information on environment quality¹.

According to the environment programme, this inventory is to be integrated into a European contribution to the United Nations International Referral System and other appropriate international systems, and into the European documentation network provided for in the Council resolution of 24 June 1971².

The inventory is certainly necessary in order to attain, in the course of the operation of the common market, one of the objectives of the Community in the field of protection of the environment and quality of life. Since the Treaty does not provide the necessary powers for achieving this objective, the prerequisites for choosing Article 235 of the EEC Treaty as the basis for the Commission's proposal have indubitably been met.

2. In this connection, your committee stresses that the planned European inventory will facilitate access to existing sources of information for all users in the Community, particularly those responsible for the supervision, protection and management of the environment. Moreover it will make it possible

- to determine what coordination or harmonization of information sources should be effected,
- to propose the creation of new systems of information on the basis of requirements not yet covered, and
- to integrate such sources into a harmonized European network.

¹OJ No. C 112, 20.12.1973, p.15

²OJ No. C 122, 10.12.1971, p.7

The Commission proposal meets the request put forward by the European Parliament in paragraph 4 of its resolution¹ on the results of the Third International Parliamentary Conference on the Environment, held in Nairobi from 8 to 10 April 1974. This request, based on a report by Mr JAHN (Doc. 361/74), was as follows:

'The European Parliament stresses, in agreement with the parliamentary conference, the need for a rapid extension of the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) and the International Referral System for Sources of Environmental Information (IRS) and requests that:

- (a) the Commission should actively participate in the boards of GEMS and IRS in order to involve the European Community more closely in these important activities and
- (b) all members of the European Parliament should have access to these two systems for their information needs.'

3. At the end of its explanatory memorandum on the proposal, the Commission states that Article 235 'requires that the Assembly be consulted'. It goes on to say (in the German text) that 'the Economic and Social Committee must also be consulted'. (The English text states: 'the Economic and Social Committee should also be consulted').

Your committee points out that the statement (in the German text) is not in accord with the facts, since Article 235 provides for consultation only of the European Parliament, not of the Economic and Social Committee. This does not, however, mean that your committee has any objection to an optional consultation of the Economic and Social Committee on this Commission proposal.

¹OJ No. C 5, 8.1.1975, p. 60

II. Essential points of the Commission proposal

4. Article 1 provides for the establishment of a common procedure for the preparation and updating of a permanent inventory of sources of information on the environment. This inventory covers

- current and scheduled research projects,
- specialist centres and individual experts,
- scientific and technical information and documentation centres,

in each Member State.

Your committee calls for notification of the termination of research projects and the inclusion of such information in the inventory in addition to the data on current and scheduled projects. Article 1 of the proposal for a decision should therefore be extended accordingly.

The Commission representative has agreed to this request, which has been included in paragraph 4 of the motion for a resolution.

5. Article 2 requires the Member States to complete a questionnaire and forward it to the Commission before 31 December 1975. A copy of the questionnaire is set out in the Annex, which forms an integral part of the decision. After this initial information phase Member States will annually forward to the Commission by 31 December the information necessary to keep the inventory up to date.

6. The following observations should be made on Articles 1 and 2:

In principle, the procedure proposed is welcomed, since it aims at making the best use of information on the environment at present available in the Community. It ensures that the different sources of information will be identified and uniformly indexed.

If this objective is to be achieved, the Commission must strictly ensure that Member States meet their obligation to supply information punctually, i.e. by 31 December 1975 in the first instance and thereafter by 31 December of each year.

The committee therefore asks the Commission to inform the European Parliament each year in January, starting in January 1976, which Member

States, if any, have been behindhand in supplying their information.

7. Article 3 obliges each Member State to designate the authority which will be responsible for assembling and forwarding to the Commission the information referred to in Article 2. The Commission is to be informed of the name and address of this body without delay.

This provision will help the envisaged procedure to be organized in an orderly fashion and is therefore welcomed by your committee.

8. Article 4 provides that the Commission shall have the inventory published in a form which can be integrated into similar national and international systems, and especially into the United Nations Referral System. For this purpose, it will carry out the indexing of the sources and prepare the relevant keyword lists.

According to the Commission the first issue of the inventory (40,000 units) will probably appear in January 1976 on magnetic tape. The decision on whether to issue a written edition will depend on the number of users.

The Commission is asked to call in staff from other organizations on a temporary basis to help out with the initial compilation of the European inventory, which will indubitably involve a lot of work.

9. The annex contains a copy of a detailed questionnaire to be completed by Member States, as provided for in Article 2 of the decision.

The questionnaire includes (on p. 13) definitions of the following types of units into which information/documentation services have been subdivided:

- Library
- Referral Centre
- Clearinghouse
- Information Analysis Centre
- Data-bank
- Information Centre
- Translation Services
- Liaison/Advisory.