

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1977 - 1978

10 January 1978

DOCUMENT 464/77

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Energy and Research

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the
Council (Doc. 254/77) for a multiannual programme of research and development
in the European Communities on paper and board recycling
(indirect action 1978 – 1980)

Rapporteur: Mr K. FUCHS

By letter of 26 August 1977 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a multiannual programme of research and development in the European Communities on paper and board recycling (1978-1980) (indirect action).

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Energy and Research as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection for their opinions.

On 28 September 1977 the Committee on Energy and Research appointed Mr Fuchs rapporteur.

It considered this proposal at its meetings of 20 October, 30 November and 21 December 1977 and at the last-mentioned meeting adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement unanimously.

Present: Mrs Walz, Chairman; Mr Flämig, Mr Normanton and Mr Veronesi, vice-chairmen; Mr Fuchs, rapporteur; Mr Brown, Mr Dalyell, Mr Edwards, Mr Fioret, Mr Holst, Mr Jensen, Mr H-W. Müller, Mr Noe', Mr Osborn, Mr Vandewiele (deputizing for Mr Ripamonti), Mr Verhaegen and Mr Zeyer.

The opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection are attached.

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The Committee on Energy and Research 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 multiannual programme of research and development in the European Communities on paper and board recycling (1978-1980) (indirect action)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council¹,
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 254/77),
 - having regard to its resolution on the proposal for an initial outline programme of the European Communities in the field of science and technology²,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy and Research and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. 464/77),
1. Welcomes the objectives of the proposed research programme because their achievement will mean for the Community reduced dependence on raw materials, energy savings, an improvement in Member States' balance of payments and protection of the environment; asks, therefore, that the public be kept constantly and adequately informed of the significance of such measures, and therefore feels that the Member States should support and offer tax incentives towards the collection of waste paper and waste board for recycling;
 2. Also welcomes the clear and well-arranged presentation of the proposals that make up the programme and asks the Commission to take this as a model for subsequent proposals;
 3. Calls on the Commission to give priority to the drawing up and submission of further projects designed to achieve energy savings in the industrial sector;

¹ OJ No. C 209, 1.9.1977, p.7.

² OJ No. C 108, 10.12.1973, p.58.

4. Criticizes, however, the delay in the forwarding of this document, tied as it is to specific dates, for Parliament's opinion, and urges the Community institution responsible to draw the appropriate conclusions when fixing its timetables;
5. Disclaims any responsibility should the delays in the consultation procedure be such that a start cannot be made on this welcome programme on time;
6. Would welcome, for environmental protection reasons, special priority being accorded to the research topic on de-inking in connection with the recycling of waste paper;
7. Calls on the Council finally to adopt in the form approved by Parliament, the proposals for directives encouraging forestry measures for the purpose of improving agrarian structures and reducing water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States, these proposals having been before the Council since February 1974 and January 1975 respectively, since the impact of this eminently desirable research programme will otherwise be lessened;
8. Approves the Commission's proposal with the proviso that the Commission, pursuant to the second paragraph of Article 149 of the EEC Treaty, incorporates the following amendment in its proposal while emphasizing that any information relating to financial implications and staff requirements can only be taken as indicative until the budgetary procedure for the financial year in question has been completed, and that such information in no way imposes on the European Parliament any obligation in the exercise of its budgetary powers.

Preamble unchanged

Recitals unchanged

Article 1 unchanged

Article 2

The upper limit for expenditure commitments and for staff necessary for the implementation of this programme is evaluated at 2.9 million units of account and 2 staff, the unit of account being defined in accordance with the financial regulations in force.

Article 2

unchanged

These figures can only be taken as indicative until the budgetary procedure for the financial year in question has been completed, and in no way imposes on the European Parliament any obligation in the exercise of its budgetary powers

Articles 3 and 4 unchanged

¹ For full text see OJ No. C 209, 1.9.1977, p.7.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. Introduction

1. This proposal concerns an indirect research action, the aim of which is to coordinate projects already being carried out at national level and to award research contracts to third parties, the intention being, depending on the financing situation at any given time, to award the bulk of such contracts to public institutions. Up to 50% of the cost is to be financed from Community resources, with the Community budget providing 2.9 million EUA for the 3-year period from 1978 to 1980.
2. The Committee on Energy and Research congratulates the Commission on the layout of the document and the presentation of the arguments advanced in favour of the proposed action, which even the layman finds clear and convincing. The account of the present state of research in the various fields is extremely well set out, the position in the individual Member States being described in a factual and informative manner.
3. The four research topics, viz. :
 - (a) characterization of reclaimed fibres, their upgrading by various processes, and the effects of multiple recycling on paper-making fibres;
 - (b) elimination of the detrimental effect of contaminants in waste-paper, including the dispersion of thermo-softening contaminants;
 - (c) de-inking, including the relationship between different types of ink and de-inking, and the treatment of effluent from waste-paper recycling plants;
 - (d) use of urban fibres, including technological characterization of solid urban waste and health problems caused by the use of recycled fibres;

are lucidly formulated and, as a result, every member of the committee was able to recognize without difficulty the urgency and necessity of these measures.

Less clear was the procedure the Commission intends to adopt for entering the necessary appropriations in the next annual budget, i.e., the 1978 budget. This point will be dealt with further in Chapter IV.

II. Objectives of the programme

4. The aim of the project as a whole is to improve recycling techniques for paper and board. This is of considerable importance as regards both the supply of raw materials to the paper and board industry and the improvement of the quality of recycled products. It will also have a positive effect on the Community's external trade balance, on energy policy and on the environment. Where the environment is concerned, reference is made to the attached opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection.

This general assessment clearly shows that the implementation of this project will be in the undoubted interests of consumers of paper and board products and of the economy as a whole.

5. The intention is to step up the rate of use (ratio between quantities of waste paper used and paper and board production) from 42% (1975) to approximately 58% by 1980 - 1985. This will be a major advantage for the Community's finances. At present, over 50% of the paper and board consumed in the Community is imported, resulting in a trade deficit in this sector of more than 3,000 million EUA a year. As the trend is still rising, there is every prospect of further burdens being placed on the balance of payments of individual Member States. If successful, the research programme could, on the other hand, reduce this burden by an annual figure of 750 million EUA.
6. This research and development project would, at the same time, bring savings in timber resources. The forest is one of the basic elements of our natural environment. Its conservation is a fundamental ecological requirement. Every tonne of recycled paper saves the equivalent of 2 to 3 cubic metres of timber, which means that this research programme can make a significant contribution to forest conservation.

This is also of considerable importance for the energy sector. Excessive deforestation reduces to a dangerous level, if not entirely eliminates, the rainwater storage function of forests. The rate of flow in rivers then becomes extremely irregular, thus making the generation of hydro-electric power extremely difficult or uneconomic. These implications for energy policy should not be disregarded.

A further, very significant implication of this research project for energy policy is its potential for producing substantial savings in energy consumption. Recycled paper and board products represent a 75% saving in energy consumption by comparison with products manufactured

from wood (production from timber requires 1,000 kwh/t as against 250 kwh/t from recycled fibres).

In addition, it should be noted that water consumption is far lower for recycled paper also than is the case with wood-based production.

III. Legal basis

7. The legal basis of the proposed Council decision is Article 2 of the EEC Treaty, which specifies a harmonious development of economic activities in the Community as one of the objectives of the Treaty. In accordance with established practice, the legal instrument used is Article 235 of the EEC Treaty, since no powers in fact exist. In pursuance of the objectives set out in Article 2, recourse has already been had on several occasions to Article 235, the application of which has repeatedly been urged by this committee. At the instigation of the European Parliament, the precedent for applying this article was, in fact, successfully established vis-à-vis, the Council by the Commissioner then responsible for research, Mr Dahrendorf. This was also the case with the Council resolution of 14 January 1974 on an initial outline programme of the European Communities in the field of science and technology¹, which is referred to in the preamble of the present proposal. On 15 November 1973 Mr Flämig had, on behalf of the committee, presented a report (Doc. 219/73) on this programme², calling for a number of specific measures one of which we now have before us.

8. At the same time, the proposal also accords with a number of other Community legal acts. Particular mention needs to be made here of:

- the resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 17 May 1977 on the continuation and implementation of a European Community policy and action programme on the environment,

especially the appeal made therein for the conservation and management of water resources for the management of waste (Title III, Chapter 3, Sections 1 and 2)³.

These legal acts and other legislation of a similar nature had been called for in various reports of the European Parliament, e.g., that drawn up by Mr Jahn on the continuation and implementation of a European Community policy and action programme on the environment (Doc. 215/76, 7 July 1976)⁴.

¹ OJ No C 7, 29.1.1974, p.6

² OJ No C 108, 10.12.1973, p. 58

³ OJ No C 139, 13.6.1977, pp. 29-34

⁴ OJ No C 178, 2.8.1976 (Council resolution debated on 8 July 1976)

IV. Consequences of the programme

9. Increasing the proportion of recycled paper used in production undeniably has obvious, major advantages, details of which have already been given in this explanatory statement. Particular reference should be made to the considerably lower level of water pollution occurring when paper and board are recycled as against their production from wood.

The Committee on Energy and Research attaches particular importance to the energy savings already referred to, for it is a fact that such savings are very difficult to achieve in industry, where energy costs are in any case, like any cost factor, kept as low as possible. A saving of 75%, as is possible in this case, would be a particularly outstanding contribution in this important field.

On all this the public must be kept constantly and adequately informed. The fact that usable waste paper and waste board is already being collected more intensively than before is a step in the right direction. Tax incentives could be offered for such measures.

10. This is also in keeping with our repeated call for the most rational use possible of energy and we therefore greatly welcome the Commission's proposal. It ought to serve as an example for further measures with similar objectives. We therefore call on the Commission to identify other industrial areas in which energy savings could be achieved and to submit appropriate proposals. This is, in fact, one of those rare, yet specific, ways of achieving appreciable energy savings in the sphere of industrial activity.

11. Another positive point to note is that the preliminary work on the various projects was shared fairly evenly among six of the nine Member States, viz:

Belgium: projects 2, 3 and 4
Germany: projects 1 and 3
France: projects 2, 3 and 4
Italy: projects 3 and 4
Netherlands: projects 2, 3 and 4
United Kingdom: all 4 projects.

This means that in all the countries where a definite start had already been made on research work, meaningful preliminary discussions have also taken place, the outcome of which we see before us in the document submitted for Parliament's opinion (Doc. 254/77).

12. In the view of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, which had been asked for its opinion, one of the technological and environmental problems yet to be solved is that of reprocessing old paper which needs to be de-inked. This is the case with

newspapers, periodicals and other papers having an ink content. 800 kg of pulp reconstituted from this kind of waste paper leaves a residue of 600 kg of de-inking sludge. This pulp from de-inked newsprint can largely be used as a substitute for mechanical pulp. It appears, however, that the production of pulp from paper that has to be de-inked causes more pollution than the production of mechanical pulp. One of the aims of research topic No. 3 is therefore to study the process in question.

13. In these circumstances the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection calls the Commission to give special priority to research topic No. 3. In addition, it points out that treatment and use of industrial sludge is the subject of the research programme on the treatment and use of sewage sludge adopted by the Council in September 1977. It might be appropriate to study the question of treating and using de-inking sludge in coordination with the sewage sludge research programme.

14. A good deal of attention will clearly need to be devoted, under the heading of research topic No. 4, to the health hazards caused by the re-use of domestic waste. However, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection wonders whether the Community's reserves of bacteriologically pure waste paper from industrial, office and business use are really being reprocessed and re-used to the extent where it is essential to resort to domestic waste, which requires expensive bacteriological purification.

15. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection also draws attention to the fact that a Commission proposal for a directive concerning forestry measures to improve agrarian structure (Doc. 6/74), on which Parliament delivered a favourable opinion on 24 September 1974 (Doc. 169/74)¹, has been before the Council since February 1974. The importance of forestry for the Community's paper industry and the need for a dynamic and long-term forestry policy are self-evident.

16. Furthermore, a proposal for a directive, welcomed and endorsed by Parliament (Doc. 28/75)², concerning the reduction of water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States (Doc. 472/74) has been before the Council since January 1975. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, therefore urges the Council to do its duty and take a decision without delay on the abovementioned two proposals for directives.

¹ OJ No. C 124, 18.10.1974, p.5

² OJ No. C 111, 20.5.1975, p.30

V. Specific questions discussed in committee

17. Thus, as is so often the case, it has not been possible to find completely satisfactory solutions to all the problems. De-inking waste paper and board will, therefore, not be without its problems, nor will the use of household waste. On those points, the committee responsible has therefore quoted almost verbatim the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection. Nevertheless, the latter committee expresses its clear approval of the proposal since, viewed as a whole, it will contribute to improving the environment.

18. The question was raised in committee whether it might not be desirable to have a common policy on pulp. This question merits closer examination, although it would be better to await completion of the programme which is, after all, a research programme. When the findings of this programme are ready to be put to use in industry, it will be time to look at this question more closely, because only then will it be possible to calculate accurately the implications of the research findings that have been obtained.

How useful and desirable a policy on pulp would be is not, however, for this committee to decide.

19. The last of the specific questions to be raised concerned the delay in submitting this eminently desirable programme to Parliament for its opinion. This delay has a number of unwelcome consequences from the budgetary point of view. Here reference should be made to point 6 of the attached opinion of the Committee on Budgets, which we endorse. Although money must, of course, be discussed, our concern is quite different and by no means new:

20. Under item 3365 of the preliminary draft estimates for 1978 the Commission had entered 300,000 EUA in payment appropriations and 1.5 million EUA in commitment appropriations for this project. (Total Community expenditure for the 3-year programme is estimated at 2.9 million EUA,) The Council has, however, deleted these appropriations on the grounds that the European Parliament would no longer be able to adopt the proposed programme early enough for it to enter into force at the beginning of 1978. Consequently, all that remains under item 3365 now is a 'token entry'.

However, the Commission did not inform the committee responsible in good time of the priority to be attached to the programme here under discussion over the large number of other projects in hand. By the time the Committee on Energy and Research was able to appreciate the importance of this programme for the energy policy, it was no longer possible for it to influence the shaping of the budget.

The Committee on Budgets was also prevented by its heavy workload - just at the end of the year! - from completing its opinion with due thoroughness in time for the report to be presented to the December part-session of the European Parliament as originally planned.

21. Given these circumstances, the Commission will now be obliged to have these quite minor sums transferred - as and where possible - from other items and chapters of the budget, there being little likelihood of a supplementary budget. At the same time, the conclusion to be drawn by the Commission is that Parliament must in future be notified in all six official languages of proposals forwarded to the Council, early enough for Parliament, subject to the limits of its technical and staff resources, to give the requisite priority both to the matter itself and to its budgetary implications.

22. Nor is this criticism invalidated by the Commission's statement that it forwarded the programme to the Council in late July. Since it is well aware how long the Council takes to forward proposals to Parliament, the Commission ought in future in the interest of both parties, to take account of this delay and of the parliamentary recess, with which it is well acquainted.

23. However, in point 7 of its opinion the Committee on Budgets, as the committee asked for its opinion, also calls for the deletion of Article 2 of the proposal for a Council decision adopting the programme.

It justifies this on the grounds that at the meeting on 22 November 1977 under the conciliation procedure, the Council and Parliament called for a clear demarcation of the responsibilities of the budgetary authority and the decision-making body. From this it concludes that programme decisions should contain no financial amounts and that estimates of expenditure should be included in the financial statement.

24. For almost a year now the Committee on Energy and Research, with a view to preserving and strengthening Parliament's budgetary powers, has added at the end of all relevant motions for resolution a paragraph in which Parliament emphasizes that the information in the financial statement on financial implications and personnel requirements can only be taken as indicative until the budgetary procedure has been completed and that such information in no way imposes on the European Parliament any obligation in the exercise of its budgetary powers.

In view of recent developments it is prepared as from now, and starting with the present motion for a resolution, to refer in the abovementioned paragraph to 'all information on financial implications and personnel requirements'. It is also prepared to amend Article 2 of the draft Council decision so that the essence of the information referred to in paragraph 8 of the

motion for a resolution is expressly included in a second paragraph, that is, as a legislative text. It will therefore be doing what it can to see that Parliament does not have taken from it with the left hand, by any back-door method, powers officially and reluctantly granted to it with the right hand.

25. However, the Committee on Energy and Research cannot accept the Budget Committee's opinion that all information on estimated requirements regarding funds and personnel should be kept out of a programme decision. The financial statement alone, without reference to the budgetary powers in the legislative text, is not enough. Otherwise it will not be possible to draft a programme at all. After all, personnel and funds are not merely financial factors but primarily instruments for implementing the projected programme.

The abovementioned paragraph in motions for resolution (in this case paragraph 8) is, in the committee's view, well fitted to act as an additional safeguard against abuse by the (as yet) only Community institution vested with decision-making power.

26. Consequently, the Committee on Energy and Research, while fully appreciating the Committee on Budgets' reasons for making this amendment proposal, feels unable to meet the wishes of that committee in the proposed form.

VI. Other comments

27. The Commission asks for one A-grade and one C-grade official by way of additional staff for the coordination of the programme. In reply to questions, the Commission informed the committee that the A-grade official would probably be transferred from the existing staff, as a suitably qualified candidate was available. The C-grade official would, on the other hand, be taken on, in accordance with the appropriate staff regulations, as a temporary research assistant only for the duration of the programme. This C-grade official would require specialist knowledge in this field, and it would not therefore be possible to draw on existing staff.

The proposed Advisory Committee on Programme Management follows the usual pattern, and no specific observations need therefore be made in this regard.

28. No provision has been made for a review of the programme. This can be explained by the fact that this programme concerns projects which have already been formulated in detail. It is now merely a matter of coordinating these projects, since the work has by and large been carried out at national level. A reference to a special report to be delivered to Parliament is therefore not necessary. The committee takes it for granted, however, that the general public will be informed on completion of the separate projects and of the entire programme; the 1980 General Report would be the most suitable vehicle for this purpose.

VII. Conclusions

29. In the light of the foregoing, the Committee on Energy and Research recommends the European Parliament to adopt this draft programme, which has an incontrovertible legal basis in Articles 2 and 235 of the EEC Treaty.

30. The committee welcomes the objectives of the programme, which will mean reduced dependence on raw materials, energy savings, a reduction in the burden on the Member States' balance of payments and protection of the environment. It does, however, consider it necessary that the public should be kept adequately and constantly informed and that there should be a more intensive survey of what waste paper and waste cardboard there is already available for recycling, for which tax incentives could appropriately be offered by Member States.

It also welcomes the clear and well-arranged presentation of the proposals which make up the programme and calls on the Commission to give priority to the drawing up and submission of further projects designed to achieve energy savings in the industrial sector.

31. The Committee on Energy and Research is, however, critical of the delay on the part of the Community institution responsible in forwarding this document, tied as it is to specific dates, for Parliament's opinion. Even where such eminently welcome projects as the one under consideration are concerned, the committee refuses to be placed under pressure of time, since it would otherwise be helping to undermine its already limited powers of control, which are more restricted than in any Member State.

32. Neither the committee nor Parliament itself are therefore to be blamed if the budgetary consequences of this delay prevent the programme from being started on time.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

Draftsman: Mr SCHREIBER

At its meeting of 21 September 1977, the Committee on Budgets appointed Mr Schreiber draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 26 November and 6 December 1977 and adopted it by 10 votes to 2 at the latter meeting.

Present: Mr Lange, chairman; Mr Cointat, vice-chairman; Mr Schreiber, draftsman; Lord Bessborough, Lord Bruce of Donington, Mr Fuchs (deputizing for Mr H.-W. Müller), Mr Notenboom, Mr Ripamonti, Mr Santer (deputizing for Mr L'Estrange), Mr Shaw, Mr Spinelli and Mr Yeats.

1. Within the framework of the common policy in science and technology, the Commission proposes a multiannual programme of research and development on paper and board recycling. This project is designed to meet two of the priorities fixed by the Commission for this common policy: to increase the Community's self-supply potential in raw materials, in this case paper pulp, and to seek solutions to environmental problems, in this case waste management.

2. The Commission proposes that this project should be implemented as an indirect action: research would be entrusted to public and private national bodies under contracts providing for financing generally shared equally between the Member State concerned and the Community budget. Management of the programme and appropriations would be entrusted to the Commission assisted by a committee with purely advisory powers staffed by experts and officials of the Member States.

3. By a Council resolution of 17 May 1977¹, the Community declares that this sector should be given priority. In the same text (paras 189-190) the Commission is instructed to consider which sectors of research and development require support and coordination at Community level, the recycling of paper being declared the priority.

Moreover, in its resolution of 19 April 1977, Parliament came out firmly in favour of increasing the Community's self-supply potential in raw materials.

4. The appropriations earmarked for the implementation of this project are broken down into expenditure on staff, on management and on support for research contracts.

- Staff expenditure has been estimated on the basis of an establishment of 2 staff (one A and one C), allowing the Commission to manage the programme. It would amount to approximately 230,000 EUA for the whole of the period, and an appropriation of 71,100 EUA would be needed in 1978.

- Management expenditure covers secretariat expenses and the costs of meetings of the Advisory Committee. The latter is therefore not included in the list of committees under Article 251 reproduced on pages 232 and 233 of Volume 7 of the preliminary draft budget for 1978.

¹ OJ No. C 139/77, 13.6.1977.

- The cost of financing research contracts would be charged to the budget of the Communities to the amount of 2.575m EUA out of a total of 5.3m EUA. The Commission plans to commit most of the expenditure in 1978. Payments, on the other hand, would be spread over three years, most being made in 1979 and particularly 1980.

Opinion of the Committee on Budgets

5. The Committee on Budgets approves the principle of an indirect action, i.e. Community financial support on the basis of contracts for a research programme in the field of paper recycling. It notes that the competent authorities have declared this field a priority sector.
6. The Committee on Budgets welcomes and endorses the Council's wish to get the programme started quickly. But it does not see how the programme can start on 1 January 1978 if the necessary appropriation has not been entered in the budget. In the 1978 draft budget, however, the Council has taken the inconsistent and irresponsible decision merely to propose a token entry for this item. The Committee on Budgets therefore calls on the committee responsible to bring this point to the attention of Parliament, which can settle the problem within the framework of its budgetary powers.
7. Noting that at the conciliation meeting of 22 November 1977 the Council and Parliament favoured a precise definition of the powers of the budgetary and statutory authorities, the Committee on Budgets feels that programme decisions need not show any figures and that the financial statement is the place for estimates of expenditure.
8. The Committee on Budgets opposes the creation of two new posts. It suggests that the necessary staff should be made available through reassignment within the Commission.
9. Finally, it proposes the amendments set forth in the Annex so as to avoid any ambiguity as to the budgetary authority's powers.

Preamble and Article 1: unchanged

Article 2

The upper limit for expenditure commitments and for staff necessary for the implementation of this programme is evaluated at 2.9 million units of account and 2 staff, the unit of account being defined in accordance with the financial regulations in force.

Article 2

deleted

(justification: the financial implications of Community acts are established as part of the budgetary procedure)

Articles 3 and 4 unchanged

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH
AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Draftsman: Lord BETHELL

On 27 September 1977 the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Lord Bethell draftsman.

At its meeting of 23 November 1977, the Committee considered the draft opinion and adopted it unanimously.

Present: Mr Ajello, chairman; Mr Baas, vice-chairman; Lord Bethell, rapporteur; Mrs Squarcialupi, Mr Edwards, Mr Guerlin, Mr Emile Muller, Mr Ney and Mr Veronesi.

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the aims of the first Community action programme on the environment (1977-1981) is to improve waste management by recycling, reprocessing and re-using wastes.

The research programme submitted to the Council by the Commission forms part of this action programme and aims at improved utilisation of the various kinds of waste paper, particularly those of inferior quality. The plan is to use technological improvements to increase the amount of old paper recycled between 1980 and 1985 to 58% of paper production in the Community (compared with 42% in 1975).

2. This research programme has been established for economic and ecological reasons. The ecological advantages are to be found, on the one hand, in conservation of natural resources (forest stocks) and on the other, in environmentally safe waste disposal.

3. The programme will be implemented as an indirect action by means of cost-sharing contracts with private and public research organisations in the Member States, financed partly by the Community.

4. The research programme will run for three years (1978-1980) at an estimate of 2.9 million EUA.

5. The programme will be managed by the Commission departments. Close cooperation will be ensured with the Committee on Waste Management established in the framework of the action programme on the environment.

COMMENTS

6. The research project holds out the promise of short-term successes in combatting the waste of natural resources. Every tonne of recycled paper saves the equivalent of 3 cubic metres of timber, or some 15 medium-sized trees. This is all the more vital as forest land is an increasingly important factor in safeguarding the natural environment and providing recreation for the public. It is of especial importance for the storage, purification and drainage of water, filtering and improving the atmosphere, noise abatement and protecting against soil erosion. Hence the Community cannot afford an irresponsible and unnecessary depletion of its forestry reserves, already a scarce economic resource.
7. Recycling old paper is an effective element in the campaign to improve waste management. It reduces waste and so improves natural environmental conditions. The amount of waste of all kinds produced annually in the Community is estimated at 1,700 million tonnes. Waste paper accounts for a substantial part of this figure.
8. One of the technological and environmental problems yet to be solved is that of reprocessing old paper which needs to be de-inked. This is the case with newspapers, periodicals and other papers having an ink content. 800 kg of pulp reconstituted from this kind of waste paper leaves a residue of 600 kg of de-inking sludge. This pulp from de-inked newsprint can largely be used as a substitute for mechanical pulp. It appears, however, that the production of pulp deriving from de-inked paper causes more pollution than the production of mechanical pulp. One of the aims of research topic No. 3 is therefore to study the de-inking process, reduction of environmental pollution, treatment of effluents and the disposal of de-inking sludge.
9. In these circumstances the Committee calls upon the Commission to give special priority to research topic No. 3. In addition, the Committee would like to point out that treatment and use of industrial sludge is the subject of the research programme on the treatment and use of sewage sludge adopted by the Council in September. It might be worth announcing that the question of treating and using de-inking sludge is being studied in coordination with the sewage sludge research programme.
10. Research topic No. 4 is concerned with recycling fibres from domestic waste. In this topic area a good deal of attention will clearly need to be devoted to dealing with the health hazards caused by the re-use of those fibres.

However, the Committee wonders whether the Community's reserves of bacteriologically pure waste paper from industrial, office and business use are not sufficient to make it undesirable to resort to domestic waste, which requires expensive bacteriological purification.

11. Finally, the Committee notes with regret that a Commission proposal for a directive concerning forestry measures to improve agrarian structure (Doc. 6/74), on which Parliament delivered a favourable opinion on 24 September 1974 (Doc. 169/74), has been before the Council since February 1974. The importance of forestry for the Community's paper industry and the need for a dynamic and long-term forestry policy are clear enough.

12. Furthermore, there is a proposal for a directive before the Council since January 1975 concerning the reduction of water pollution caused by wood pulp mills in the Member States (Doc. 472/74), welcomed and adopted by Parliament (Doc. 28/75). The Committee on the Environment therefore urges the Council to do its duty and take a decision on the above-mentioned two proposals for a directive.

13. In view of the probability that this research programme will soon be approved by the Council, the committee regrets that no specific amount has been provided for it in the 1978 budget.

CONCLUSIONS

14. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection approves the proposal for a Council decision for a multiannual programme of research and development on paper and board recycling along the lines of the above-mentioned remarks.