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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 536/76) for a decision adopting a research programme in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge (concerted action)

Rapporteur: Mr J. BAAS

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PE 48.837/fin.

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By letter of 24 January 1977 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision adopting a research programme in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge (concerted action) .

On 2 February 1977, the President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets for its opinion.

At its meeting of 31 March 1977, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection appointed Mr Baas rapporteur, to replace Mrs Kruchow who had originally been appointed rapporteur at the meeting of 14 February 1977.

It considered this proposal at its meetings of 16 March, 28 April and 18 May 1977. At the latter meeting the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement were unanimously adopted.

Present: Mr Schwabe, acting chairman; Mr Baas, rapporteur; Mr Edwards, Mr Evans, Mr Mitchell (deputizing for Mr Guerlin), Mr W. Müller, Mr Noè, Mr Schyns, Mrs Squarcialupi, Mr Veronaschi and Mr Veronesi.

The opinion of the Committee on Budgets is attached.

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection 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 adopting a research programme in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge (concerted 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. 536/76),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (Doc. 123/77),
1. Notes with great interest the structure and scope of the proposed research programme, which is intended to promote action in the field of the treatment and use of sewage sludge;
 2. Considers that this constitutes an important and urgent task for the Community in the field of environmental protection and that Article 235 of the EEC Treaty should thus be applied;
 3. Expresses its agreement, therefore, with the principle of coordination, but stresses the need for such coordination of research activities to be primarily carried out by specialists at Community level to make for greater efficiency;
 4. Considers it particularly important for this draft decision to take account of the Council directive of 4 May 1976 on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment²;
 5. Requests the Commission, pursuant to Article 149, second paragraph, to incorporate the following amendments into its proposal.

¹ OJ No. C 86, 6.4.1977, p.8

² OJ No. L 129, 18.5.1977, p.23

COUNCIL DECISION ADOPTING A RESEARCH
PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD OF TREATMENT
AND USE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE (concerted
action)

Preamble unchanged

Recitals 1 to 3 unchanged

After recital 4, add:

WHEREAS on 4 May 1976 the Council approved a directive on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment;

WHEREAS a Community concerted research action in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge is likely to contribute effectively to the achievement of the abovementioned aims, in particular with regard to the reduction of environmental pollution and to the economic use of resources;

WHEREAS a Community concerted research action in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge should contribute to the achievement of the abovementioned aims, in particular with regard to the reduction of environmental pollution and to the economic use of resources;

Recitals 7 to 9 unchanged

Article 1 unchanged

Article 2

The financial contribution by the Community to the realization of the coordination action will be determined in the budgetary procedure. It is estimated at 140,000 u.a., the unit of account being defined according to the financial regulation in force.

Article 2

The financial contribution by the Community to the realization of the coordination action will be determined in the budgetary procedure. The overall contribution is estimated at 140,000 u.a., the unit of account being defined according to the financial regulation in force.

Article 3 unchanged

Article 4

- (a) In accordance with a procedure to be adopted by the Commission in agreement with the Committee, the Member States
- (b) The Commission shall prepare yearly progress reports on the basis of the information supplied.
- (c) At the end of the coordination period

Article 4

- (a) unchanged
- (b) The Commission shall prepare yearly reports on the progress and outcome of coordination and transmit them to the European Parliament.
- (c) unchanged.

¹For full text, see OJ No.C 86,6.4.1977, p.8

Article 5 unchanged

Article 6

Annex I to this Decision may be amended by the Council on a proposal by the Commission, after consulting the committee, in the event of a substantial change in the financial or technical conditions governing the research which is covered by the coordination action.

Article 6

Annex I to this Decision may be amended by the Council on a proposal by the Commission, after consulting the European Parliament in the event of a substantial change in the financial or technical conditions governing the research which is covered by the coordination action.

Article 7 unchanged

ANNEX I unchanged

ANNEX II unchanged

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTA. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. This proposal for a Council decision, by raising the question of the disposal of sewage sludge indirectly focuses attention on the distressing phenomenon of water pollution. Cries of alarm are heard from all quarters about excessive pollution of this vital substance. Some Member States have already carried out pioneering work in this field, and have a well-structured water purification policy, while others, despite the existence of outline laws, have so far made little progress.

2. Sludge from sewage plants has a wide range of properties, depending mainly on the different components of the waste water. This means that many different methods have been developed for the characterization of sludge, thus making comparison difficult and rendering a standardized designation of quality still more difficult to achieve.

3. The need to standardize the characteristic values of sludge and the methods of determining them has been recognized by the Commission; this led in 1971 to the setting up of COST Project 68, which was the first attempt to coordinate, in 13 European countries, research into the treatment and disposal of sewage sludge.

4. This project lasted for two years. The Final Report on the research programme, which was in fact confined to certain selected aspects of the treatment and disposal of sewage sludge, appeared at the end of 1975. The reason given was that this was a first attempt at coordinating European research and the two year duration had proved to be too short in view of the very ambitious goals set initially.

5. Nevertheless this first attempt at coordination of European research is to be welcomed and its continuation therefore recommended. In view of the wider scope of the programme and its longer duration, your committee feels that a more professional approach to the coordination of this new programme is required than was the case for COST 68.

B. PARTICULAR OBSERVATIONS

6. It must be said that this programme of research into sludge covers a very wide area. The programme is certainly to be recommended but no clear direction emerges from the number of research themes listed in the proposal.

7. If it is found that the incineration of sludge is not the most appropriate means and if recycling is recognized as the best available solution, then it is clear that the proposed research themes pay relatively too little attention to this aspect.

8. Instead of a negative approach, i.e. research aimed at bringing to light all the bad properties of sewage sludge, your committee feels that a more positive attitude should be taken as the point of departure and as the point of emphasis. In other words, sludge also has a number of positive properties of which optimal use should be made. In this connection, it is therefore considered desirable for research to be carried out into the agricultural value of sewage sludge and ways of increasing it.

9. Your committee therefore considers it to be vitally important for the vast problem of water purification created by dumping - whose consequences are often unpredictable - of the wastes generated by our civilization to be brought back to a tolerable level, i.e. it must be possible to take preventive measures and examine carefully, if necessary upstream, how far it is permissible for industrial wastes, which, in the majority of cases, prevent the specified purification objectives from being attained, to be discharged into the aquatic environment in the light of the basic directive of 4 May 1976 (76/464/EEC) with a view to increasing the useful value of sewage sludge.

10. In addition to the above remarks and some editorial improvements to the draft decision, your committee feels that Article 4 should be amplified to the effect that, if the Commission undertakes to draw up a report each year on the implementation and coordination of the various research activities and also submits this report to the European Parliament, there will be ample opportunity for discussion, and where necessary, correction, of the choice of research themes.

11. In conclusion, attention should again be drawn to our frequently emphasized views on the setting up of new committees, a point which was also raised by the Committee on Agriculture in its opinion. We are concerned here with the need for high-level coordination of wide-ranging measures already taken or to be taken in future at national level, to increase the effectiveness of this research by the allocation of tasks and the pooling of knowledge.

C. CONCLUSIONS

12. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection recommends the European Parliament to approve this proposal for the coordination of national research programmes, which includes the setting up of a scientific committee, subject to the above remarks and the proposed amendments mainly concerned with a more preventive and positive approach to the use of sewage sludge to the text of the draft decision.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

Letter from Mr E. LANGE, chairman of the Committee on Budgets, to Mr A. AJELLO, chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection

Brussels, 17 March 1977

Dear Mr Ajello,

The Committee on Budgets was asked for its opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a Decision adopting a research programme in the field of treatment and use of sewage sludge (concerted action) (Doc. 536/76).

This proposal for a decision aims at coordinating the measures taken by the individual states in this field and at creating the necessary administrative infrastructure. It establishes a 'Treatment and Use of Sewage Sludge' Research Coordination Committee to assist the Commission with the coordination project.

The Committee on Budgets noted with concern that in the 1977 financial year there were around 80 such committees within the Commission. It considers this to be an unwieldy and not always efficient procedure.

Nevertheless, it approves the proposal for a decision, since it considers it appropriate to provide a relatively small sum - 140,000 u.a. over a three-year period - to coordinate measures in the individual states. It feels that the scheme could represent a step towards increased harmonization of environmental measures in the Member States. Moreover, it considers that the report on the execution and results of the coordination action, which under Article 4 (c) of the proposal is to be forwarded to Parliament at the end of the coordination period, will facilitate its control of the utilization of the funds.

However, it points out that in accordance with Article 2 of the proposed decision - reference to the relevant committee on the remarks on Article 351 of the budget, account to be taken of the estimated expenditure when determining the resources to be allocated to Article 351 - Parliament can only deliver its opinion concerning the budgetary policy measures which the decision entails within the

context of the budgetary procedures, since only then can an overall assessment of appropriations be made.

With this reservation the Committee on Budgets approves the proposal for a decision.

(sgd) Erwin LANGE

Present: Mr Lange, chairman; Lord Bruce of Donington, Mr Fröh, Mr Klinker (deputizing for Mr Van Aerssen), Mr Notenboom, Mr Schreiber, Mr Shaw, Mr Spinelli and Mr Yeats.

