

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the 'Amended proposal for Council Directive on assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'

(1999/C 374/02)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

having regard to the list of Commission proposals pending at 1 May 1999 for which the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam implies a change in the legal base and/or a change in procedure (SEC (1999) 581 final);

having regard to Proposal for a Council Directive on assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (COM(1999) 73 final; 96/0304 (COD) — formerly 96/0304 SYN)⁽¹⁾;

having regard to the decision taken by the Council on 14 July 1999, under the first paragraph of Article 265 and the first paragraph of Article 175 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to consult the Committee of the Regions on the matter;

having regard to The Decision of its President of 2 August 1999 to appoint Lord Tope (UK), ELDR, as Rapporteur General to draw up an opinion on this subject, in accordance with Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Regions;

having regard to the Committee of the Regions Opinion on the Proposal for a Council Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (COM(1996)511 final (CdR 172/97 fin)⁽²⁾), (Rapporteur: Lord Tope, (UK), ELDR), adopted 20 November 1997,

adopted the following opinion at its 30th plenary session on 15 and 16 September 1999 (meeting of 15 September).

In its Opinion on the Assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment adopted on 20 November 1997, the COR welcomed the general thrust of the proposal put forward by the European Commission.

The COR is pleased to note that the European Commission in its amended proposal has taken account of some of the main points emphasised by the COR, for example:

- The COR is pleased to see that the amended proposal underlines the importance of sustainable development, which gives the proposal a broader perspective.
- The COR welcomes the new, less restrictive, writing of Article 2.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 83, 25.3.1999, p. 13.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 129, 25.4.1997, p. 14; OJ C 64, 27.2.1998, p. 63.

However, the COR regrets that the new proposal does not take into account some important comments made by the COR in its previous opinion. The COR reclaim that the following aspects should be included in the proposed directive:

- The COR recognises that the proposed directive will impose costs in widely varying degrees upon competent authorities within the Union and calls upon the respective Member States to ensure that these costs are fully funded.
- The COR notes that EU plans and programmes prepared, for example, under the Structural Funds are not covered by the proposed directive. Although the Structural Fund guidelines do contain environmental criteria, these are not as rigorous as full environmental assessment and there is currently no requirement for public consultation.

Brussels, 15 September 1999.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Manfred DAMMEYER