

Manual of European Environmental Policy

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Historic Legislation: Exchange of information

Formal reference 77/795/EEC (OJ L334 24.12.77) Proposed 1.4.78 – COM(76)118	Decision establishing a common procedure for the exchange of information on the quality of surface fresh water in the Community
84/422/EEC (OJ L237 5.9.84)	Amendment
86/574/EEC (OJ L335 28.11.86)	Amendment
90/2/EEC (OJ L1 4.1.90)	Amendment
Legal base	Article 352 TFEU (originally article 235 EEC Treaty)
Binding dates Notification date First submission of information Commission reports	12 December 1977 12 June 1978 (and every 12 months thereafter) – subsequently changed to before 1 October of the following year Annually – subsequently changed to every three years starting from 1987

Decision 77/795/EEC was repealed on 22 December 2007 as the Water Framework Directive [2006/60/EC](#) was implemented. Directive 2000/60/EC requires comprehensive reporting on the state of the water environment and pressures upon it, so that the requirements of Decision 77/795/EEC are no longer necessary.

Purpose of the Decision

Decision 77/795/EEC set up a system for the exchange of information on the quality of rivers and watercourses in the Community. A separate Decision [86/85/EEC](#) (see section on oil pollution at sea) established an information system concerned with resources to combat pollution at sea, which, following the accident at the Sandoz plant at Basle that polluted the Rhine, was extended to inland waters.

Summary of the Decision

The system and procedures set up by Decision 77/795/EEC provided for data on a number of parameters on water quality to be submitted by Member States annually from specified measuring stations. These stations covered the main rivers in each Member State. The Commission was required to draw up an annual report. There was also provision for amendment of the list of measuring stations at the request of a Member State. The parameters could also be changed through a Committee for adaptation to

technical progress.

Decision 86/574/EEC made a number of changes. The information received annually was to be sent by the Commission to those Member States requesting it. The Commission was to publish a report every three years commencing in 1987. A more detailed procedure for taking measurements was laid down. One more parameter (biological quality) was added and an additional Annex specified the reference methods of measurement to be used. A number of changes to measuring stations were also made.

Decision 90/2/EEC amended Annex I of Decision 77/795/EEC, which listed the sampling and measuring stations involved in the exchange of information. A number of stations in France, Italy, Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany were replaced with new sites.

Development of the Decision

The proposal for a Decision appeared after a number of meetings with national experts and met with general approval. The amendment proposed in November 1985 was the result of some six years experience and designed to put right some of the weaknesses of the original scheme. In particular, the procedures for sampling and monitoring were tightened up. Experience had also shown that an annual report for publication was beyond the capabilities of the Commission, which was dependent on national submissions and subsequent national approval.

Implementation

Annual reports were prepared by the Commission covering 1976–1980. Consolidated reports covered 1976–1981 and 1982–1986, which showed trends over time for each determinant at each measuring station. There was little discussion. The amending Decision required a report only every three years. The first report (covering the period 1990–1992) noted that only two Member States provided some information for each of the 19 required parameters for each year of reporting¹. The second report² (covering the period 1993–1995) represented some improvement, although only seven Member States provided information.

References

1 European Commission (1997) Quality of Surface Fresh Water: Synthesis Report, Common procedure for the exchange of information, 1990–92.

2 European Commission (2000) Quality of Surface Fresh Water: Synthesis Report, Common procedure for the exchange of information, 1993–95.