MEPs vote to cap emissions of medium combustion plants

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EU countries would have to enforce sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emission limits upon medium-sized combustion plants, such as electricity generators or heating systems for domestic, residential or industrial use, under draft plans approved by the Environment Committee on Wednesday. MEPs voted to adapt the scheme to match the plants’ thermal input, so as to reduce the administrative burden on small businesses.

“There was an overwhelming majority in favour of most of the compromise amendments, and hence a strong mandate for our coming negotiations with the Council of Ministers, which start on 21 May. I would like to thank the shadow rapporteurs for their hard work on this difficult paper” said Andrzej Grzyb (EPP, PL), who is steering the legislation through Parliament. His first reading report was approved by 60 votes to 8, with 1 abstention.

The maximum emission values, listed in annexes, of sulphur dioxide (SO2), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and dust from existing combustion plants would come into force in:

- 2020 for existing combustion plants with a rated thermal input above 15MW,
- 2022 for those with an input between 5 and 15MW, and
- 2027 for those with an input of 5MW or less.

The legislation does not prevent member states from enforcing tougher standards. Stricter values are proposed for areas where air quality standards are not met.

Background

While small combustion plants can be covered by EU ecodesign legislation, and large combustion ones by the industrial emissions directive, emissions of air pollutants from medium combustion plants are generally not regulated at EU level.

Next steps

The committee granted Mr Grzyb a mandate (61 votes in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions) to start negotiations with member states directly on the 21st of May, with a view to reaching a first-reading agreement.

Facts

- There are approximately 143,000 “medium” combustion plants in the EU, i.e. those with a thermal input rated between 1 and 50 MW.
- They are used for a wide variety of applications such as electricity generation, domestic or residential heating and cooling and providing heat or vapour for industrial processes.
- These plants are an important source of SO2, NOx and particulate emissions.

Further information

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