1. Introduction

Protection of the marine environment forms an essential part of European Community policy on environmental protection since the sea is in fact the ultimate destination of a large number of noxious substances.

The principal objectives of Community policy on the protection of the marine environment are:

- the protection and general improvement of the marine environment;
- a recovery policy for zones in which the situation is unsatisfactory;
- measures to combat accidental pollution.

All these objectives have been included in Community action programmes for the environment, with a view to meeting economic and social requirements on the one hand, and in order to maintain the vital ecological balance on the other. Because of the complexity and the abundance of the problems involved, this policy requires a large number of different instruments.

2. Measures taken

The measures taken to attain the above-mentioned objectives may be grouped under four main headings:

A. Regulatory measures

The aim of these measures is to reduce pollution by laying down, in respect of certain dangerous substances, limit values for discharges or quality objectives.


\(^1\) OJ No. L 129, 10.5.1976, p. 23.

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dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community, represents the corner-stone of this approach;
(b) there are certain implementing directives associated with this directive (mercury, cadmium, HCH);
(c) in addition, the Council adopted on 12 June 1986 Directive 86/280/EEC on limit values and quality objectives for discharges of certain dangerous substances, which are included in List I of the Annex to Directive 76/464/EEC. This should be considered as a framework directive intended to accelerate the implementation of the Directive 76/464/EEC. It determines all the general provisions for such implementation; from now on it will be sufficient to add new annexes to this directive for fixing limits to discharges for certain substances. It should be noted that this Directive has also fixed limits for DDT, carbon tetrachloride and pentachlorophenol.

The regulatory measures also include directives laying down "quality objectives". These specify the criteria which must be met by a given environment according to the purpose for which the water concerned is used.
(a) Council Directive 76/160/EEC of 8 December 1975 concerning the quality of bathing water; and
(b) Council Directive 79/23/EEC of 30 October 1979 on the quality required of shellfish waters are the only two measures of this type which have so far been adopted in respect of marine waters.

Mention should also be made of certain other regulatory measures, in particular:
(b) the proposal for a directive on the dumping of waste at sea. 6

B. Action programmes for dealing with large scale pollution

The Community policy for the protection of the marine environment was influenced in the late seventies by incidents involving massive oil pollution which provoked great public concern, namely the Amoco Cadiz wreck and the blow-out of the Bravo platform in the Ecofisk field.

Following these events, the Council adopted an action programme on the control and reduction of pollution caused by hydrocarbons discharged at sea. This programme was in fact a kind of mandate given to the Commission to undertake studies and to make appropriate proposals in different fields. Within this framework several major achievements have been made.

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2 OJ No. L 181, 4.7.1986, p. 16.
4 OJ No. L 281, 10.11.1979, p. 47.