

2050: The future begins today - Recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change

2008/2105(INI) - 02/12/2008

The European Parliament's Temporary Committee on Climate Change adopted the report by Karl-Heinz **FLORENZ** (EPP-ED, DE) , adopting its final recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change.

The committee recalls the essential objectives in combating climate change and stresses the importance of setting, for the EU and the other industrialised countries as a group, a medium-term target of a 25-40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, as well as a long-term reduction target of at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990, maintaining the focus on restricting the increase in average global temperature to 2°C over pre-industrial levels and thus achieving a 50% probability of meeting this objective.

The report stresses the urgent need –pursuing a horizontal approach – to incorporate global warming and ensuing climate change as new parameters into all spheres and policies, and to take the causes and consequences of global warming into account in every relevant area of European legislation. MEPs urge the Commission and the coming Council Presidencies to assume a leadership role in international negotiations towards a post-2012 agreement and to reach a conclusion by the end of 2009, so that sufficient time remains to ratify the forthcoming climate change agreement. Moreover, they stress that the new climate change agreement should come into being on the principle of a “common but differentiated responsibility”, with the countries of the industrialised world taking the lead in reducing their emissions while the developing countries also commit themselves, in accordance with the Bali Action Plan, to taking nationally appropriate mitigation actions.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to: (i) construct a foreign policy on climate change; (ii) repeatedly draw attention to the EU climate targets in the EU's and the Member States' diplomatic missions; (iii) incorporate the requirements of emission reductions, and measures to adapt to the consequences of climate change, into development aid programmes. The Commission is also called upon, in the context of the WTO negotiation rounds and the post-2012 process, to pursue coordinated negotiation strategies in the field of trade and environment policy.

The report recommends detailed measures in the main economic sectors. The main recommendations drawn up by the MEPs are as follow:

Energy:

- the establishment of a forward-looking common energy policy, both within the EU and in external relations, so as to ensure a high level of security of energy supply meeting the conditions of sustainability, resource efficiency and climate neutrality;
- the creation of a European renewable energy community to promote further research and pilot projects in this field;
- the development of, and investment in, a European energy transport infrastructure (including the so-called supergrid) needed to ensure diversity for the EU in terms of energy sources;

- support a sense of ownership among regions and citizens and promote the increased use of locally available renewable energy sources by means of legal and fiscal incentives;
- motivate electricity suppliers, by means of depreciation systems and tax incentive schemes, to carry out the necessary modernisation of fossil-fuel-fired power stations;
- secure network access for energy, gas and electricity from decentralised sources;
- the creation of solar energy partnerships with third countries in the Mediterranean region;
- invest in infrastructure, networks and grids for the production, transport and storage of solar energy and hydrogen;
- offer third countries, by way of energy partnerships, programmes for the creation of the necessary institutions, infrastructures and training programmes for locally based experts and network access for their own needs;
- step up still further the share in the energy mix of wind energy.

Biofuels:

- the Commission should rethink the notion of a quota for biofuels and develop flexible policies which take account of the complex nature of biofuels production;
- the Commission and the Member States should step up research and development of advanced biofuels and actively promote the development of a global biofuels standard.

Energy efficiency:

- the Commission should propose a binding goal of 20% in energy efficiency by 2020 and to accompany that proposal with concrete interim reduction targets;
- a broad, locally-based public information campaign and synergy between property owners, financial service providers, tradesmen and other operators in the property sector;
- European coordination with a view to the expansion of electricity cogeneration and trigeneration and their integration into industrial plants;
- reduced rates of VAT for renewable energy and for energy-saving goods and services;
- minimum EU energy-efficiency standards for new and refurbished buildings;
- minimum energy-efficiency criteria to be included in a comprehensive public procurement policy for public buildings and services at national, regional and local levels;
- active support for research and technological development relating to lighting technologies and intelligent lighting applications;
- adjust the energy-efficiency requirements for electrical and electronic equipment of all kinds to market developments at least every five years, to update existing labelling programmes or efficiency classifications;
- set stringent EU targets and establish integrated industrial policies designed to ensure market access and the uptake of energy-efficient technologies, including the development of common technological objectives (such as passive houses);
- implement consistently the ban on devices with high stand-by losses;
- early and rigorous implementation of the 2006 requirements relating to the installation of smart meters in order to raise consumer awareness of energy use.

Mobility and logistics:

- the European Investment Bank and its risk-capital subsidiary, the European Investment Fund, should broaden significantly their support for energy efficiency and renewable energy development;
- a comprehensive policy mix of mutually supportive measures aimed at a sustainable transport policy comprising the development of vehicle technology (eco-efficient innovation), increased use of alternative energy sources for transport, the creation of distribution networks for clean fuels,

increased use of alternative forms of propulsion, intelligent traffic management, changes in driving styles and car use, improved logistics, “green corridors” and ICT for transport, a CO₂ tax and the modernisation of public transport;

- the potential of rail transport as a low-carbon, energy-efficient mode of transport should be reflected in the criteria for the support of regional and cohesion funds;
- pricing measures and other incentives, to promote a modal shift from cars to local public transport;
- an integrated approach in the aviation sector which will commit the aircraft industry worldwide, airlines and airport operators jointly to an emission reduction target by 2020, without calling in question the benefits of emissions trading;
- car manufacturers are called upon to shift their fleets towards smaller, lighter, more efficient models;
- the adoption by the European Union and its Member States of a hydrogen-specific support framework.

Tourism and cultural heritage:

- draw up a uniform list, coordinated at European level, of European cultural heritage sites threatened by climate change;
- work on integrated strategies with a view to reducing emissions and improving the energy efficiency of the sector – particularly as regards transport and accommodation – and plan measures to promote ecotourism and to protect tourist sites from extreme weather conditions;
- the development of more ecological types of tourism, such as social tourism, sport tourism or cultural tourism, while stressing that the tourist destinations of excellence should be those which respect and protect the environment.

Emissions trading scheme and industrial emissions:

- all commercial and non-commercial entities should report publicly, on an annual basis, on the amount of greenhouse gas emitted, measures taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, activities undertaken to re-skill employees (in the event of closure due to proven carbon leakage) and revenues gained through emission trading scheme operations; the Commission should monitor these activities and report to Parliament on progress made by industrial sectors to curb emissions.

Agriculture and livestock breeding:

- the Commission should consider the explicit inclusion of agriculture in a future integrated European climate policy and the elaboration of binding reduction targets for the emission of greenhouse gases, including methane and nitrous oxide, exploiting all existing potential;
- research into new technologies, including biotechnology for seed and plant breeding and green gene technology, and the stepping up of plant protection;
- new land and water management know-how needs to be imparted, and vocational training for young farmers should cover the climatic relevance of agricultural production.

Forests:

- the objective of future European climate policy should be not only the conservation of tropical rainforests and of the surviving boreal forests but also the care and reforestation of the European forests;
- a clear economic incentive to be created for permanently preserving virgin forests or large forest areas by using them in a sustainable manner;
- set up aerial and satellite-based monitoring systems and the necessary infrastructure to secure the long-term survival of tropical forests in particular.

Soil protection:

- scientific studies of and monitoring of the condition of soils should be extended with a view to taking measures in good time to counteract erosion, the loss of agricultural land and biodiversity;
- adopt an ecosystem approach to avoid and lessen the effects of soil erosion, destruction of permafrost, desertification, invasive alien species and forest fires.

Water management:

- strategies for the improvement of water use efficiency, water saving, rationalisation and limitation of water consumption, and improved consumer awareness concerning sustainable water consumption (a demand-side approach should be preferred when managing water resources);
- cross-border coordination in water management and the rapid establishment of the European Observatory on droughts, desertification, floods and other effects of climate change.

Fisheries:

- a comprehensive framework plan for the sea in order to guarantee better and more sustainable management of the marine environment and resources;
- increase the resilience of fish stocks and of the marine ecosystem as a whole by establishing catch quotas for industrial fishing on the basis of sustainability criteria.

Waste treatment and resource management:

- the Commission should propose percentage reduction targets on reducing, reusing and recycling waste; these targets should be reviewed and tightened when necessary;
- cross-border transport of mixed domestic waste in the EU should be reduced to a minimum (after a phasing-out period, Member States should entirely cease in the medium term to landfill unsorted domestic refuse);
- enhance research and development in respect of waste treatment and resource management solutions.

Health:

- preserve and enlarge the existing – and to develop new – green zones in urban areas;
- the coordinating role of the EU, in particular in creating automatic or continuous pollutant monitoring and early warning systems for heat waves, prolonged frost and flooding, and in improving the systematic collation of health, meteorological, environmental and statistical data;
- acquire specific expertise on the effects of climate change on human health, especially in relation to certain infectious and parasitic diseases;
- research in medical science and in the pharmaceutical sector in order to develop drugs and vaccines for new diseases (which should be made available to all affected populations at an affordable price).

Growth and employment:

- create new and competitive businesses and new jobs in the fields of clean technology, renewable energies and green enterprises and green skills in order to counterbalance any possible loss of jobs in high CO₂-emitting sectors;
- examine the compatibility of existing rules with climate policy objectives and develop incentives to facilitate the shift to a low-carbon economy.

Promoting the technology of the future:

- a combined approach should be launched and developed comprising emission reductions and a separate process of technological renewal to secure resources for future generations;
- the environmentally safe use of CCS should be discussed extensively and with the involvement of private and public stakeholders;
- the promotion of international cooperation in order to encourage technology transfer, particularly with those emerging countries which still rely on local coal as a fuel;
- consider ways of accelerating the implementation of clean and energy-efficient technologies, such as direct subsidies to consumers investing in technologies, for instance solar panels, ground heat pumps, air heat pumps, water heat pumps and cleaner burning hearth appliance stoves;
- the establishment of a European Climate Fund and/or corresponding funds in the Member States.

Financing and budgetary matters:

- the EU should make a financial commitment not only in the core areas of promoting and developing technologies to combat climate change and of climate-related development aid, but also in supporting cross-border adaptation measures, increased efficiency and aid for disasters, in accordance with the Union's solidarity principle;
- the Commission must draw up an inventory of all existing funding instruments and their significance for European climate objectives and, on the basis of this “climate audit”, to devise proposals for the future financial framework so that EU budget lines can be adapted in line with the requirements of climate policy;
- the highest priority must be given to climate change and measures to combat it in the next financial perspective.

Education, training, reporting, labelling and awareness-raising:

- the Commission should develop communication strategies to spread information to the general public on the science of climate change, energy saving strategies, energy efficiency measures and the use of renewable energy sources;
- general and simple efficiency standards for all areas of everyday life, and for the creation of incentives (e.g. of a fiscal nature) for responsible energy consumption;
- make citizens think about their urban mobility and hence question their behaviour as road users in their cities, and not to confine the term “individual mobility” to the use of one's own car but extend it to all forms of individual travel (such as walking, cycling, car-sharing, car-pooling, taxis and local public transport);
- the Commission should declare a European Year of Energy and Resource Efficiency in order to raise citizens' awareness at all policy levels of more efficient use of resources.

Lastly, the Commission calls for an agenda for action to combat climate change for the period 2009-2014, to be implemented. It calls on Parliament's relevant bodies to draw up and publish a version of this report for the general reader within three months of its adoption.