

Review of the 6th environment action programme and the setting of priorities for the 7th environment action programme

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the review of the 6th Environment Action Programme and the setting of priorities for the 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP) – A better environment for a better life.

Members note that for a decade the 6th EAP (which will expire on 22 July 2012) has provided an overarching framework for environment policy, during which time environmental legislation has been consolidated and substantially completed. However, Member States and the Commission have not always acted in accordance with this programme, and whereas it had some shortcomings which have to be addressed. Progress towards the objectives set out in the 6th EAP has been variable, with some objectives having been achieved (climate change, waste) and others not having been achieved (air, urban environment, natural resources), while the attainment of others depends on future implementation efforts (chemicals, pesticides, water).

The resolution underlines the **urgency of adopting as soon as possible a 7th EAP**, in order to address the environmental challenges lying ahead and calls therefore on the Commission to present a proposal for a 7th EAP without delay.

The new 7th EAP should:

- **describe in an unambivalent manner the environmental challenges** the EU is faced with, including accelerating climate change, deterioration of our ecosystem and increasing overuse of natural resources;
- provide a **positive narrative** on the benefits of stringent environmental policy to strengthen public support and political will to act;
- set **concrete targets for 2020** as well as setting out a clear ambitious vision for the environment in 2050 aimed at providing a high quality of life and well-being for all within safe environmental limits;
- provide the **right framework** to ensure adequate funding, including for innovation, research and development and that financing environmental objectives, in synergy with LIFE, and fully integrating protection of the environment should be an important part of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), of the Cohesion Policy and of Horizon 2020. The EU should allow new sources of financing to be created for the EAP, for instance through the mobilisation of market instruments and payments for ecosystem services;
- be an **overarching framework** that makes it possible to deal with both persistent and emerging environmental and sustainability challenges, with due regard for existing and planned measures.

Parliament invites the Commission to base its future proposal for the 7th EAP on the **following 3 'i's priorities**: (i) Implementation and strengthening; (ii) Integration; (iii) International dimension.

Implementation and strengthening: noting with concern that implementation of the environmental acquis is still insufficient, Members consider that full implementation and enforcement at all levels, and further strengthening, of key environmental and related policy priorities – climate change, biodiversity,

resources, environment and health, as well as social and employment policies, energy, sustainable transport, sustainable agriculture and rural development – are crucial. Parliament emphasises, therefore:

- the need for **clear, consistent environmental legislation**, based on public policy evaluations and feedback;
- the fact that **full compliance** with EU environmental law is a genuine Treaty obligation and a criterion for the use of EU funds in Member States;
- the fundamental **importance of informing citizens** about our environmental policies in order to involve them in the success of such policies.

The Member States are called upon to see to the **full and proper implementation** of EU environmental legislation and adopted policies and strategies, and to ensure adequate capacity and finances for full implementation.

Integration: taking the view that environmental considerations are gaining increasing importance in other sectoral policies, Members consider that environment policy should be further integrated into other policy areas. They invite the Commission to develop indicators in order to be able to measure improvement of integration.

Parliament takes the view that the objectives of [Roadmap 2050](#) can only be achieved if complementary strategies are implemented, including assessment of agriculture, reforestation and the introduction of policy incentives for innovation and rapid implementation of solar, geothermal and marine energy.

The Commission is called upon to:

- include in its 7th EAP proposal an **aggregated list of all the existing environment-related targets** for the different policy areas, notably climate change, biodiversity, transport, energy, agriculture, fisheries and cohesion policy, and examine them in conjunction with each other, so as to allow for an appropriate comparison and to ensure that objectives are coherent;
- when **reviewing the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and Directive 2001/42/EC**, to ensure that they contribute to a sustainable use of land as a critical resource in the EU and also to extend the scope of environmental impact assessments to cover not only large projects, while tightening and expanding the criteria of such assessments but also to include the notion of cascading use of resources and full life-cycle analysis;
- propose a procedure ensuring the **impartiality and independence of environmental impact assessments**, first of all by eliminating the direct relationship between project developers and the assessors.

The resolution recommends that an equitable balance be found between the need to combat climate change and to halt or mitigate biodiversity loss and the Seventh Environment Action Programme. It also stresses the importance of cohesion policy post-2013.

Members consider that the 7th EAP should:

- include a strict and detailed plan both at European and national level for the **phasing-out of all environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020**, for example those affecting biodiversity, in order to respect the Nagoya commitments;
- provide for the inclusion of environmental considerations beyond the current climate change and energy headline indicators in the **European Semester**;
- provide for the full implementation of the Aarhus Convention, in particular regarding access to justice;

- aim at supporting the **development of alternative models** to measure growth and welfare ‘beyond GDP’.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to: (i) promote the ‘**green economy**’ globally, integrating environmental, social and economic aspects such as poverty reduction; (ii) develop within the next Research Framework Programme a research and innovation programme targeting **new materials and resources** which could in the future replace existing raw materials that are in short supply.

The resolution takes the view that the **LIFE+ programme** should be managed by the Commission, with the emphasis being placed on international projects of innovation and excellence, promoting SMEs and R&D institutions and prioritising the maintenance of biodiversity with a systematic and integral approach and agricultural technologies compatible with the preservation of the soil and the food chain of animals’ ecosystems.

It underlines the importance of demonstrating to EU citizens, especially in the current economic climate, that environmental protection is **not contradictory to sustainable economic and social development**.

International dimension: Parliament considers that the 7th EAP should have as a goal to integrate environmental considerations into all EU external relations, in particular into development aid and trade agreements, in order to promote environmental protection in third countries. It urges the EU to promote joint programming of environmental research activities with its neighbours.

The Commission is invited to include in its proposal a goal for the EU to fully support the work on environmental accounting done by the UN, the World Bank and European Environment Agency, in order to equip the world with a harmonised environmental accounting system.

Lastly, Members consider that the 7th EAP should provide for timely implementation of EU international commitments, in particular in the framework of the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biodiversity.

Climate change: Parliament takes the view that the 7th EAP should ensure **full implementation of the climate and energy package** and provide for a strengthening of it.

The 7th EAP should:

- reflect the need for binding targets for energy efficiency and/or energy savings as this will contribute to combating climate change and to environmental protection; the proposed energy efficiency measures should take due account of the specificities in each Member State;
- take the debate **beyond 2020** and consider mid-term targets for emissions reductions, energy efficiency and renewables for 2030;
- address **maritime and non-CO2 emissions**.

Efficient and Sustainable Use of Resources: Parliament considers that the 7th EAP should be instrumental in achieving a long-term target, namely **reducing the Ecological Footprint by 50% within the next 20 years**. It considers that the objectives of the Roadmap towards a resource-efficient Europe should be fully included in the 7th EAP.

The Action Programme should:

- provide for the development of a legislative framework for mainstreaming into relevant policies, especially that of sustainable production, the notion of cascading use of resources, ensuring that our scarce raw materials are used to their full potential;
- include objectives on how to deal with the urban environment, where the majority of European citizens live.

Lastly, Parliament stresses the need to:

- act now, in order to set the EU on the right track to fully meet its own **biodiversity** 2020 headline target, as well as its global commitments on protecting biodiversity
- set specific goals to ensure that by 2020 the health of European citizens is no longer undermined by pollution and hazardous substances.