General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020: 'Living well, within the limits of our planet'. 7th Environment Action Programme

2012/0337(COD) - 17/12/2012

The Council held a **policy debate** on the proposal for a decision on a general Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 "Living well, within the limits of our planet".

Member States **welcomed the proposal in general**. Many of them were in favour of the nine priorities set out in the proposal, albeit in different degrees, but some of them recalled that the **diverse situation of Member States must be taken into account** and others called for more clarity on certain implementing measures.

Some Member States considered that the EU should learn lessons from the 6th Environment Action Programme and try to address certain shortcomings that were identified. Most Member States agreed with the need to **improve implementation of current legislation** and a number of them also considered crucial to keep working towards integrating environmental concerns in other policy sectors.

In addition, several Member States considered:

- that the medium-term goal of the programme should be ensuring a **non-toxic environment**, in particular through stricter measures to protect air and water quality, as well as establishing sustainable consumption patterns;
- the7th EAP to be a concrete contribution to the **implementation of the Rio+20 outcome**;
- some of the 2020 targets were quite ambitious, in particular as regards **land filling**. The proposals regarding **environmental inspections** also raised some concerns.

Some Member States were **not in favour of adding new legislation or new targets**, recalling the "smart regulation" principle. However, the Commission underlined that if it appeared necessary to do so, any legislative proposal or new targets should be based on solid evidence and rigorous impact assessments. The Commission also:

- called on Member States to stay focused and consistent;
- recalled that the proposal is based on three sets of conclusions from the Council and that all priorities are operational;
- underlined that preserving EU competitiveness and promoting green growth and employment are major goals and that the 7th EAP is designed to contribute to achieve them.