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

2012/0337(COD) - 06/05/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Gaston FRANCO (EPP, FR) on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020: "Living well, within the limits of our planet".

The parliamentary committee recommends that the position adopted by the European Parliament at first reading according to the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission’s proposal as follows:

Members consider that the programme should ensure a **high level of environmental protection, as well as quality of life** through equitable and sustainable wellbeing for citizens. Action shall be taken with due regard for the **principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality** and all measures, actions and targets should be **based on reliable scientific research**.

The report emphasises the following points, in particular:

- Union priority objectives for 2020 should be established, in light of a **clear long-term vision for 2050**, in order to provide a stable environment for sustainable investment and growth. The programme should identify policy areas where there is a need to set additional targets;
- **the European Union’s pledges** should continue to apply on the basis of the existing climate and energy policy framework, which sets binding targets for 2030, in order to ensure that long-term climate policy objectives can be achieved in a cost-effective manner;
- by 2050, **the Union's biodiversity and the ecosystem services** it provides should be protected, valued and appropriately restored in a manner that reflects their intrinsic value and their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity; biodiversity threats also represent a challenge for the Union in terms of its responsibility towards the **outermost regions and the overseas countries and territories**, which are 'biodiversity hotspots';
- the programme should take into account that the Union has set itself the target of **halting global forest cover loss by 2030** and reducing gross tropical deforestation by at least 50% by 2020 compared to 2008 levels;
- **transparency-based engagement** with non-government actors is important in ensuring the success of the programme and the achievement of its priority objectives;
- it is important to recognise the considerable threat posed to the Union’s **marine environment**, of the degradation of the marine environment, including from ocean acidification, marine litter, and ocean noise;
- measures to improve the state of the environment should be encouraged **in all aspects of Union policy**;
- Union policy on climate change should pursue a **comprehensive approach**, recognising that all sectors of the economy have to contribute to tackling climate change on the path to achieving 2050 objectives; **additional action** is needed to unlock cost effective reductions of emissions covered by the Effort Sharing Decision, in ways that can stimulate green investment and encourage behaviour change in consumers and other actors;

- the use of **Public Private Partnerships** should be encouraged, in particular in the waste management sector, through the targeting of Union Structural Fund support in accordance with the Waste Framework Directive;
- the new general Union environment action programme should support the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the **2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Summit)**, at Union and at international level, aiming to transform the global economy into an inclusive green economy.

Lastly, in keeping with the European Parliament's resolution of 12 March 2013 on improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness, Members call for greater attention to be paid to the implementation of Union environmental law.