

Union environment action programme (2021-2030)

2020/0300(COD) - 08/07/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 130, with 47 abstentions, **amendments** to the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 (8th Environment Action Programme).

The matter was referred back to the competent committee for inter-institutional negotiations.

The main amendments adopted in plenary are as follows

Overall objectives of the programme

As the EU's overall action programme for the environment, the 8th EAP should build on the **European Green Deal**, in line with the long-term objective 'live well, within the planetary boundaries' by 2050. It should also be consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enable a systemic shift towards a **sustainable welfare economy where climate neutrality is ensured** and inequalities have been reduced.

The 8th EAP aims at accelerating the transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based, resilient and competitive circular economy in a just, equitable and inclusive way, and at protecting, restoring and improving the quality of the environment, including air, water and soil, as well as protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems. It builds on and promotes the achievement of the objectives of the European Green Deal and its initiatives.

Thematic priority objectives

It is proposed that the 8th EAP should have the following six interlinked thematic priority objectives, to be achieved by 2030 at the latest:

- 1) swift and predictable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, enhancement of removals by natural sinks in the Union, to attain the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target, in line with its climate and environment objectives whilst ensuring a just transition that leaves no one behind;
- 2) continuous progress in enhancing and mainstreaming adaptive capacity, including on the basis of ecosystem approaches, strengthening resilience and adaptation and reducing vulnerability of the environment and of society as well as all sectors of the economy to climate change, while improving prevention of, and preparedness for, natural disasters;
- 3) advancing towards a sustainable well-being economy that gives back to the planet more than it takes, and ensuring the transition to a non-toxic circular economy where growth is regenerative and resources are used efficiently in line with the waste hierarchy;
- 4) pursuing zero-pollution in order to achieve a toxic-free environment, including for air, water, soil as well as in relation to light and noise pollution, and protecting the health and well-being of people, animals and ecosystems from environment-related risks and impacts, including by applying and promoting the 'One Health' approach;

5) protecting, preserving and restoring biodiversity, including by halting and reversing its loss both inside and outside protected areas, and improving the health of the environment, notably air, water and soil, as well as tackling the degradation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, in particular by implementing the targets outlined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 as well as those laid down in relevant Union legislation;

6) ensuring environmental sustainability, and significantly reducing key environmental and climate pressures related to the Union's production and consumption footprint, including Union-driven global deforestation, in particular in the areas of energy, industrial development, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and food chains, including agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, while internalising climate and environmental externalities.

Enabling conditions

The enabling conditions and actions proposed in the amended text relate mainly to the way in which the EU develops, assesses, implements and enforces legislation. In this respect, Parliament believes that a '**think sustainability first**' approach should guide the development of EU legislation and define, in the new list of concrete actions, the means to achieve it.

The Commission should ensure, at an early stage, that existing and future EU legislation is in line with the 8th EAP's objectives and that the **cost of inaction** is systematically taken into account, as well as the possible impact of measures on social inequalities, including gender inequalities.

In addition, Members proposed actions related to building a scientific knowledge base on the planet's limits and environmental footprints. On transparency and accessibility of information, they called for impact assessments to be published as soon as they are completed, and for the Commission to systematically show how it takes into account input from stakeholder consultations.

Indicators, monitoring framework and governance

Members proposed establishing an overarching Union framework to measure and establish progress towards a sustainable wellbeing economy that is in line with the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, without prejudice to the European Semester.

Following a consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, the Commission should, by 31 December 2021, present a streamlined framework in the form of a **single scoreboard**, including headline indicators, to monitor and track progress towards the achievement of the priority objectives.

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission should **exchange views annually** on the assessment and should identify, as part of the Union's annual programming, additional legislative and non-legislative measures and actions when progress towards the achievement of the priority objectives is considered to be insufficient or in order to overcome barriers which are identified.

Evaluation and ensuring continuity of the European Green Deal 2030

In order to ensure that the next Commission takes ownership of the 8th EAP, Members proposed a mid-term review by 31 March 2024 to take stock of the progress made so far.