

# Environment and health: the European Action Plan 2004-2010

2004/2132(INI) - 23/02/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Parliament adopted, by 576 votes in favour, 45 against, with 13 abstentions, an own-initiative report on the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004-2010. It denounces the major downgrading in approach and ambition between the Commission's Environment and Health Strategy and what should be its implementation, the Action Plan; considers that the Action Plan can at best be seen as a Research Action Plan, which is unlikely in itself to reduce disease burden by environmental factors.

Moreover, Parliament regrets that, of the thirteen actions set out in the Commission's environment and health strategy for 2004 to 2010, only four are concerned with specific measures and that none of them set any targets.

It notes that there is no mention of immediately putting in place a biomonitoring system across the Union, based on the tracking of biological markers, in order to measure exposure to environmental contaminants, to be linked to the observation of effects by specialists in environmental medicine.

Parliament considers that biomonitoring should contribute to a risk evaluation policy and should be used first and foremost in relation to infectious diseases, such as legionnaires' disease, and cancers caused by certain contaminants and for which 'cause and effect' can be more easily established: the link between asbestos and pleural cancer, between arsenic and kidney cancer and between some pesticides and leukaemia, lymph node cancer and prostate cancer.

Parliament believes that urgent consideration needs to be given to restricting the marketing and/or the use of the following dangerous substances, to which new-born babies, children, pregnant women, elderly persons, workers and other high-risk sections of the population are heavily exposed, as safer alternatives become available: six products from the phthalate family (DEHP, DINP, DBP, DIDP, DNOP, BBP) in domestic products for indoor use and in medical devices, except where such a restriction would have a negative impact on medical treatment; chlorinated solvents used in the manufacture of paint, coatings and polymers; mercury used in dental amalgams and in non-electrical or non-electronic measuring and monitoring devices; cadmium, in its different applications and three products from the organophosphate pesticide family (chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion) and endosulfan, an organochlorine pesticide, in all their uses.

The Commission is asked to give priority to research into the production and use of everyday consumer product categories that contain chemicals which can lead to allergies and cancer in humans;

Parliament calls for the Action Plan to define, as a matter of priority, acceptable environmental conditions for areas where children frequently spend long periods of time, such as nurseries, playgrounds and schools. It supports all the proposed measures to facilitate public access to information and repeats its call for the creation of national registers to record over large geographical areas both the major emissions and the most prevalent diseases. In addition, it considers that the Commission could use the new European geographical database, INSPIRE, for this purpose.

The Commission's willingness to continue to act to put an end to smoking in enclosed spaces or allow for designated physically separate smoking areas which are properly ventilated is welcomed and it is encouraged to designate environmental tobacco smoke a class 1 carcinogen. However, Parliament asks the Commission to give priority to cross-border problems and to health problems that are clearly related to

environment, and proposes that more funding be dedicated to research into chemical-related diseases, the results of which should be used for health improving actions.

The Commission is called upon to draft a Green Paper dealing specifically with domestic pollution.

Furthermore, Parliament asks the Commission to promote vigorously a new initiative that has been launched in some Member States, i.e. the setting up of mobile units named 'environmental ambulances', which aims to perform a global environmental analysis and to identify indoor pollutants likely to have adverse effects on human health.

Parliament repeats its call for particular attention to be paid to people living close to sources of pollution and calls on the Commission to launch an initiative to reduce industrial atmospheric emissions of toxic substances by 2010, the priority targets being dioxin, cadmium, lead, vinyl chloride monomer and benzene, according to percentages and reference years to be determined.

The Commission is called upon to present a specific financial statement on the implementation of priority actions for 2004-2007 and the forecasts for the implementation of integrated environment and health actions in the context of drawing up the new financial perspective of the EU.

Parliament stresses that, in order to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of the Action Plan, it is necessary to begin to establish adequate funding for the 2004-2007 period immediately. 'Environment and Health' projects should be a separate subject under the Seventh Research Framework Programme (2007-2010) and receive generous funding, which should not be less than EUR 300m given the huge expectations and socio-economic issues at stake in the field of environmental health.

Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Commission to inform it about the modifications to the Action Plan with the aim of presenting it and the Council with an annual report verifying the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the actions of the Action Plan in terms of the reduction of environment-related health problems.