Basic information

2006/2210(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources **Subject** 3.60 Energy policy 3.70 Environmental policy 6.30 Development cooperation	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	LIOTARD Kartika Tamara (GUE/NGL)	29/11/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Environment	2757	2006-10-23

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	DIMAS Stavros

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
21/12/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0670	Summary
07/09/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
23/10/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
28/02/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
05/03/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0054/2007	
24/04/2007	Debate in Parliament		

25/04/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0154/2007	Summary
25/04/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
25/04/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2210(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33974

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE380.809	07/11/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.725	05/12/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0054/2007	05/03/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0154/2007	25/04/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2005)0670	21/12/2005	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2005)1683	21/12/2005	

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources

2006/2210(INI) - 25/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report by Kartika Tamara **LIOTARD** (GUE-NGL, NL) in response to the Commission communication on a Thematic Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. It took reluctant note of the document and regretted the lack of a clear vision on how to meet the overall objective. Parliament felt that it should be seen as a first step in a process eventually leading to a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable use of natural resources. The Commission's action platform for the study of the Sustainable Development Strategy was too cautious and limited in scope and, in its present form, it would not be able to persuade the public or political decision-makers to pursue the crucial goals for which it provides. Parliament called on the Commission to establish goals and targets at political and at sectoral level for resource efficiency, and speed up the work on appropriate tools to maintain progress. Moreover, the Thematic Strategy failed to pursue the objectives of the European Community's 6th EAP.

Parliament went on to state that pollution, the increasing scarcity of natural resources and raw materials and the increasing difficulty of gaining access to them would cause price rises on such a scale as to more or less completely destabilise the economic and social systems of the EU, and will give rise to risks of conflict. The Commission must set binding targets and timetables for natural resources in the following way:

- develop and implement best practices for every production chain; and

- achieve a quantitative greenhouse gas reduction of at least 30% by 2020 and of 80% by 2050 against 1990 levels.

The Commission was also encouraged to define best practices for the major product groups, starting with the "top-ten" (defined by the Commission), to be completed within three years. The Data Centre for Natural Resources (proposed in the Thematic Strategy) must be responsible for defining best practices. Community policies must be proposed for the purpose of fostering stakeholder interaction and promote application of life-cycle assessments (LCA) and/or other methods among companies and provide information upon request; and develop CO2 targets on a national and a sectoral basis.

The EU should take the lead in the search for innovative solutions and in promoting more efficient use of resources, and it should aim to be the world leader in eco-efficient technologies. Parliament noted that the market for sustainable products would have to grow in order to meet the increasing demand from a rapidly growing 'middle class' for consumer goods and services which respect regional and global carrying capacity. While acknowledging that working towards the sustainable use of natural resources is a long-term process, Parliament felt that a time horizon of 25 years as outlined in the Commission's communication was too long.

Parliament did not agree with the Commission that no indicators are known which would enable specific, clear and time-tabled objectives to be included in the Thematic Strategy now. Indicators which are already known include GDP (Gross Domestic Product), DMI (Direct Material Input) and DMC (Domestic Material Consumption). Other indicators as available and detailed as these would be related to various aspects of the quality of life, such as public health conditions, social inclusion, social awareness of decision-making processes and an environmental "footprint". The challenge would be to improve the quality of life by pursuing more immaterial goals with the support of information and communication technologies, and in general less demanding technologies, and therefore reducing the pressure on natural resources.

Parliament then proposed that the Commission perform within three years an assessment regarding the possibilities and the instruments for decoupling natural resource use from economic growth. The revised Thematic Strategy should include these decoupling instruments. This approach should also be implemented in the revision of existing policies. The EU should adopt a clear target for the absolute reduction of resource use, given that the analysis in the Annex to the Thematic Strategy indicates that we need to go beyond a 3% annual resource efficiency improvement, and that halving resource use in the period 2005-2030 requires almost 6% annual resource efficiency improvement. All Community instruments and legislation must contribute overall to the conservation of natural resources and the pursuit of sustainable development in the EU and countries outside the EU. The EU should encourage the establishment of resource strategies in non-EU countries, which should also be reflected in its funds and aid policy.

Market instruments and subsidies, particularly of a fiscal nature, could be used to reduce the use of environmentally damaging resources, particularly by means of a re-allocation of subsidies and by reducing in stages, but quickly, any subsidies to unsustainable activities and supporting the introduction of ecotaxes. For example, more subsidies for small-scale hydroelectric power, as well as for wind power and solar energy, would promote the use of new technologies and improve Europe's competitive position in the world, as well as reducing dependence on fossil fuels imported from other parts of the world.

Parliament proposed that targets be set for resource use reduction in the following sectors: food, housing and transport, as according to recent studies, these cause the highest negative impacts. Agricultural policy, in particular, should be geared partly to reducing pressure on the environment by means of the sustainable use of natural resources including, but not confined to, land, water and fuels. In agriculture, genuine progress needed to be made in research into ecological production methods, regulation and monitoring relating, inter alia, to the use of fertilisers, pesticides and water, promotion of short chains, internalising external costs and attaching environmental conditions to economic support. The pioneering role of organic and sustainable farming should be acknowledged and supported.

Lastly, Parliament considered that the EU should do everything possible to provide consumers and producers with proper information on the sustainable use of natural resources, and that environmental education, particularly concerning sustainable consumption, should form part of elementary education. Producers should supply information to the public on the origin and production methods of their products and services and the production chains involved.

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources

2006/2210(INI) - 21/12/2005 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present a European strategy for the sustainable use of natural resources.

CONTENT : the "Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources" develops a policy framework to reduce the environmental impacts of resource use in a growing economy. It is aimed at “more value – less impact – better alternatives”:

- more value - creating more value while using less resources (increasing resource productivity);

- less impact - reducing the overall environmental impact of resources used (increasing eco-efficiency);

- better alternatives – if cleaner use cannot be achieved, substituting currently used resources with better alternatives.

This is to be achieved over the whole life cycle of resource use, avoiding that environmental impacts are shifted from one phase to another or to other countries. Since waste represents the last phase in the life cycle of a resource, the resources strategy will generate important information for the thematic strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste, supporting it in reducing waste.

Taking a time horizon of 25 years, the strategy proposes a number of specific measures. They include:

- a Data Centre run by the European Commission to bring together all available knowledge on natural resources and inform decision-makers;

- an International Panel to be set up in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide independent scientific advice on global aspects of resource use;

- the development of national measures and programmes by Member States under the guidance of a High Level Forum with representatives from the Commission, Member States and other stakeholders;

- the consideration of environmental impacts of resource use in economic sector action plans that the Commission intends to develop in the context of its strategy for growth and jobs;

- lastly, by 2008 the development of indicators to monitor and regularly review progress towards the strategy’s goal.

The strategy is focusing on improving knowledge, developing monitoring tools and fostering strategic approaches in specific economic sectors, Member States and internationally. The strategy is one of the seven 'thematic' strategies required under the 6th Environment Action Programme (2002-2012) and closely linked to the waste thematic strategy. Other thematic strategies to be developed by the Commission concern air pollution and marine environment as well as soils, pesticides and the urban environment.

Thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources

2006/2210(INI) - 23/10/2006

The Council adopted conclusions on the sustainable use of natural resources. It invites the Commission and Member States to endorse the following priorities for action:

1) Outline an ecological vision: focus efforts to outline the ecological dimension of the long-term vision anticipated in the renewed Strategy on Sustainable Development. The vision should combine sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable consumption and production with a view to the goal of increasing wellbeing while reducing the consumption of natural resources and environmental impacts related to their use. The vision should act as a catalyst for setting strategies to diminish Europe's dependency on fossil fuels and to increase resource efficiency, including material efficiency, significantly in order to break the linkage between the negative environmental impacts of consumption and the growth of the economy while at the same time creating new business opportunities by encouraging innovation.

2) Balance the use of natural resources: set targets for resource-specific impacts and eco-efficiency in order to complement the strategy by the year 2010. Targets and measures should address uses of natural resources that contribute most to negative environmental and social impacts. The focus should be to improve resource-efficiency and to decrease negative impacts, especially in crucial economic sectors such as housing, transport and food. Member States are called upon to deepen the understanding of the impacts of natural resource use throughout the whole life-cycle and as appropriate to implement national programmes and measures. The Commission is invited to facilitate the exchange of best practice and of information on national programmes for the sustainable use of natural resources at a high level with all Member States. The Council calls on the EU to take a leading initiatory role at global level towards the establishment of an international panel on natural resources under the auspices of the UNEP. The main idea of the panel should be to inform and support policy-makers globally and at EU level in questions of resource use and resource efficiency. It also recognises the importance of biodiversity for supporting ecosystems services vital to the use of natural resources and the negative impacts resource use can have on biodiversity; and underlines the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources for reaching the global target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

3) Find synergies between the strategy on natural resources and the action plan on sustainable consumption and production: the Council stresses that the Commission will draw up an EU Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Action Plan by 2007. The key objectives of the action plan should be to identify concrete steps to improve eco-efficiency aiming to bring resource use and consumption patterns within national, regional and global carrying capacities.

The Council highlights the fact that, to achieve these objectives, the SCP action plan should:

- launch targeted structured dialogues involving authorities, businesses, research institutes and NGOs to improve eco-efficiency, and formulate proactive strategies to promote best practices;

- inspire purchasers and suppliers to seek the most cost-effective environmental technologies and solutions and to give preference to products, services and technologies with optimised resource use;

- consider options for new market-based instruments that can also ensure that policy goals can be reached in a cost-effective way. Further progress is also needed on the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies;

- set long-term targets for the environmental performance of key products and services based on life-cycle thinking and encourage their uptake by business and consumers;

- motivate Member States and the EU to set indicative targets for the funding of research and development in eco-innovations;
- use effectively existing proactive policy tools that promote cleaner production and products, including eco-labels, environmental management systems, producer responsibility, and sustainable public procurement policies;
- integrate natural resources concerns into all policy areas relevant to SCP, such as in the 2007 mid-term review of the Communication "Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: A Policy Framework to Strengthen EU Manufacturing.